

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates Hearings February 2014
Communications Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 211

Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)

Hansard Ref: Page 107 (25/2/2014)

Topic: Regional Radio station resourcing

Senator Urquhart asked:

Can you also describe the radio services you provide in regional areas: how many local radio stations are there, and what resources are dedicated to radio broadcasting in regional areas?

Mr Scott: Yes, we can provide that information. I can tell you now.

Senator Urquhart: Just give me a brief overview.

Mr Scott: We have 60 local radio stations, 51 outside major metropolitan centres.

Senator Urquhart: Okay. And what resources are dedicated to those radio stations?

Mr Scott: I will give that on notice.

Senator Urquhart: You will give that on notice? Great. Were you provided with any additional funding in the 2013-14 budget to improve regional news gathering services?

Mr Scott: Yes, we were given money for news gathering.

Senator Urquhart: What was that funding, and what news services were provided?

Mr Scott: I can provide you with a detailed note on that, but one of the things we were able to do was invest in reporting skills and technology based at our regional radio stations to allow there to be far more stories that we could access and link back into the rest of the ABC, and through News 24 as well—so quite significant further investment in journalism in regional centres. Through some of the other funding we got for news we were able to invest in some specialist reporting areas, our national reporting team. You are seeing their stories on television in our current affairs programs and on our radio networks as well.

Answer:

The ABC has 375 full time equivalent staff based in 51 regional stations. The 375 FTE staff comprises: 85 ABC News journalists and 290 ABC Radio & Multiplatform broadcast and online content makers.

In 2013, an additional \$10m was allocated to the ABC to increase its capacity to deliver high-quality regional news content to local, state and national audiences. This additional funding allowed the ABC to invest in resources, enabling new and existing staff to better gather stories from the field and to provide television interviews from ABC locations around the country via new linking equipment. The ABC did this by:

- Creating new video journalist positions in Bunbury (WA), Renmark (SA) and Newcastle (NSW); and new camera operator positions in Broome (WA), Wollongong (NSW) and Alice Springs (NT) and equip them with appropriate equipment to allow them to travel within their regions to cover original and breaking news.
- Recruiting new camera operators/editors and live links operators.
- Improving live linking capacity ensuring faster and more reliable distribution of regional breaking news content to the ABC network.
- Investing in new camera kits in regional areas.
- Establishing new ABC News bureaux in Geelong, Parramatta and Ipswich.