

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: 223

Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Local Content

Senator Xenophon asked:

In the Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings last year, I asked about the average percentage of Lateline and 7.30 stories originating from each state or territory. The information provided to me by the ABC indicated overwhelming weighting to the Eastern States.

In the period between 2 September – 5 December 2013, the percentage of the origin of stories appearing on 7.30 (Monday-Thursday) in NSW, ACT and VIC combined was 83.8 per cent. Similarly, during the same time period, the percentage of the origin of stories appearing on Lateline in NSW, ACT and VIC combined was 93.3 per cent.

1. Given the ABC receives funding from the Commonwealth, can you advise me of the ABC's policies with regards to equal and/or fair representation of current affairs across all the States and Territories?
2. Can you advise me of the reasons for this dramatic discrepancy in coverage between the Eastern and other states and territories on 7.30 and Lateline? Are resources equally allocated between states for these programs?
3. Given these figures, is the ABC reviewing the allocation of resources and policies to ensure fairer representation of current affairs across the country? Are any immediate measures being taken on Lateline and 7.30 to rectify this?

Answer:

1. The ABC has a commitment to national and statewide coverage. In regards to the programs 7.30 and *Lateline*, 7.30 has reporters and resources in Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide. *Lateline* has seven dedicated reporters; five based in Sydney where the program is produced, three of which are part time, one based in Melbourne and one in Canberra. The program makes every attempt to incorporate major stories from around the country in its national program from Monday to Thursday. That will, however, vary according to the news agenda both nationally and locally.
2. In order to cover stories from around the country, *Lateline* and 7:30 draw upon ABC News resources in the states and territories for its general news stories. It also has access to stories commissioned through ABC News' National Reporting Team, which has journalists in Perth, Brisbane and Darwin as well as in Sydney and Melbourne.
3. The coverage of national programs should not be considered in isolation. The ABC makes considerable provision for state coverage, with a local version of 7.30 in the same prime-time slot on Fridays; radio current affairs reporters in all states and territories; and primetime 7pm TV News broadcast seven nights a week with a mix of local, national and international news. This is in addition to the extensive spread of reporters filing for ABC radio news and ABC online in regional and metropolitan newsrooms across the country.