

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2014

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications

Question No: 325

Program No. 1.3

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: ABC and SBS Efficiency Study

Senator Urquhart asked:

In relation to the ABC and SBS Efficiency Study:

1. As efficiency relates inputs to outputs, will the study pay due regard to the special nature of the ABC including its regional obligations?
2. What “better practice broadcasting operational models and practices” will be used as a benchmark? On what basis has it been pre-determined that there are better practice models?
3. Does “better practice” include paying convicted criminals for interviews as the commercial broadcasters are alleged to be doing?
4. What will be the cost to the ABC of preparing for and providing information to this study?
5. Will full report be made available to the public (unlike the 2006 KPMG report) which is funding it? If so, when?

Answer:

1. As noted in the *Terms of Reference*, the study will have regard to “the ABC and SBS Charters, legislated obligations and editorial and operational independence from government” and should “quantify, as far as possible, the costs of operating at locations across Australia”.
The full *Terms of Reference* can be found at http://www.communications.gov.au/television/abc_and_sbs_television/abc_and_sbs_efficiency_study_terms_of_reference
2. The study will consider a broad range of operational models and practices drawn from both the commercial and public broadcasting sectors.
3. The study focuses on the 'back of house' day-to-day operational and financial operations, structures and processes applied to delivering ABC and SBS programs, products and services. The study is not investigating the quality of the national broadcasters' programs, products and services.
4. The ABC has seconded two officers to the study team for the duration of the project. One officer has been seconded from SBS. The Department anticipates that most information requested will be drawn from the national broadcaster’s operational systems. The national broadcaster’s costs associated with participating in the study will be drawn from their existing resources.
5. Any release of the study’s final report will be a matter for the Minister for Communications, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, and the ABC and SBS.