



Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Additional Estimates 2023-24
Tuesday, 13 February 2024
Daily summary

The committee met from 9.00am until 9.09pm.

The following agencies appeared before the committee: Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts (Corporate matters and outcome 5.1), Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Australian Communications and Media Authority; Australian Postal Corporation; Office of the eSafety Commissioner; NBN Co Limited; Classification Board; Creative Australia.

The following matters were discussed:

DITRDCA – Corporate

- Role of Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia;
- Expenditure on processing FOI applications;
- Update on security clearances for access to Minister’s office; and
- Funds to be recovered via the emergency services levy.

DITRDCA – 5.1

- How the Department is responding to the recommendations in the final report from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs’ online gambling inquiry;
- Interaction between the existing Ministerial power to direct ACMA to investigate matters and the proposed misinformation and disinformation legislation;
- Implementation of the Roadmap for Age Verification and potential for trial of age assurance technologies;
- Concerns regarding information provided by the department regarding failed 000 calls during the Optus network outage;
- Progress of ANAO audit of Mobile Black Spot Program; and
- Departmental monitoring and actions in relation to the prices of retail and wholesale broadband products.

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

- Management decisions regarding Antoinette Lattouf’s tenure as an ABC radio presenter;
- Editorial standards and guidelines relating to reporting on the Israel-Gaza conflict;
- Implementation of the ABC’s five-year plan;
- Editorial approval of ‘vertical video’ and social media content;
- Progress on ABC Racism review;
- Conventions for references to ‘Australia Day’ and ‘Invasion Day’ in reporting on January 26;
- Effect of online abuse on ABC staff;

- Risks to wellbeing of rural ABC journalists posed by adverse weather events;
- Processes for review of executive remuneration;
- Reflection of diverse political perspectives; and
- Cost of promotional content.

Australian Communications and Media Authority

- Details on ACMA's advice to the Department regarding the Misinformation and Disinformation Bill 2023;
- Ministerial powers to instruct ACMA to conduct investigations on Minister's behalf;
- Scope of the ANAO audit into ACMA;
- ACMA's role and participation in the Department's review into the Optus Outage as well as scope of ACMA's own investigation into the Optus Outage;
- ACMA's response to breaches to the Broadcasting Services Standards code by ABC and Sky News;
- Number of sign-ups and feedback received from key stakeholder groups on Bet Stop initiative; and
- Progress of SMS ID pilot to combat scammers.

Australian Postal Corporation

- Welfare and advancement of senior female staff;
- Distribution and viability of rural, regional and urban post offices;
- Staff diversity programs;
- Review of cost allocation processes and models; and
- Legal matters underway relating to underpayment of Australia Post staff and licensed post offices.

eSafety Commissioner

- Enforcement powers available for removing fight videos posted on social media;
- eSafety commissioner attendance at the World Economic Forum;
- Appropriateness of links to third party websites on the eSafety commissioner website;
- Progress on online age verification;
- Regulating the use of deepfakes;
- Capacity for eSafety Commissioner to enforce infringement notices against multinational technology corporations; and
- Entities that assist the eSafety Commissioner to engage with schools and other relevant stakeholders to improve eSafety for schoolchildren.

NBN Co

- Comparison of uptake and cost of rollout of NBN networks in greenfield and brownfield developments;
- Market share of satellite and terrestrial services;
- Trajectory of NBN Co cashflow and services provided;
- Developments in low orbit satellite technology and the implications for NBN services; and
- Composition debt and equity on NBN Co balance sheet.

Classification Board

- Progress on the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development;

- Communications and the Arts review of Australian classification regulations; and
- Self-classification.

Creative Australia

- Levels of grant funding in regional areas; and
- Accessibility of grants process to smaller arts organizations.