



Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Budget Estimates 2021-22
Wednesday, 26 May 2021
Daily summary

Here is the summary of today's proceedings in the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee estimates hearing.

The committee met from 9.00am until 9.36pm.

The committee examined the communications and arts outcomes of the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications portfolio, including:

- Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications; Australian National Audit Office; Australian Broadcasting Corporation; and Special Broadcasting Service Corporation.

Topics discussed by the committee included:

- funding in the Budget for women's online safety;
- number of complaints received by the e-Safety Commissioner;
- update on the newly announced Adult Cyber Abuse Scheme and the type of behaviours addressed by the scheme;
- procedures for reporting online abuse;
- Government's position on responding to the online behaviour of parliamentarians;
- funding for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and negotiations on triennial funding;
- questions on the News Media and Digital Platforms Mandatory Bargaining Code, including in relation to Google and Facebook;
- costs of COVID-19 broadcasting coverage;
- adequacy of the Public Interest News Gathering (PING) program and the Department's guidelines on eligibility requirements for the program funding;
- impact of the closure of regional newspapers;
- update on the Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE) fund and the distribution of funding for projects;
- board appointments of agencies within the communications portfolio, including nomination panel arrangements, diversity on boards, and conflict of interest statements;
- support for the arts sector, including jobs, live music funding, and the future of the sector;
- update on the Show Starter Loan Scheme, including loans issued and loans versus government guarantee;
- Amount of funding allocated to regional broadcasting support measures in 2020;
- vacating the terrestrial spectrum for community television for alternative uses by 30 June;
- completion of the Green Paper consultation process after the vacation of the spectrum for community television;
- locations included in the current Regional Connectivity Program and when round two will commence;
- siting of towers and selection of carriers in the Mobile Black Spot program, including the Archer River and Musgrave River roadhouse examples;
- access to minimum download and upload speeds on the NBN network, including consumer complaint mechanisms, structural insulated panels (SIPs) performance reporting requirements, and the Australian Communications and Media Authority's (ACMA) enforcement role;

- questions in relation to the regulation of sport and gambling advertising;
- Department's approach to addressing safety and misinformation in relation to 5G;
- update on the Alternative Voice Services trials program;
- NBN Co's Hybrid Fibre Coaxial (HFC) upgrade;
- Boston Consulting Group extracts tabled by Ms Holgate during the Australia Post inquiry;
- Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's Digital Platforms inquiry and how it relates to media literacy;
- update on the request to the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) for an audit into the broadcasting of women's sport and the grant to Foxtel;
- questions on the audit controls and process undertaken by the ANAO with regard to the financial statements in NBN Co Limited's (NBN Co) 2020 Annual Report;
- complaints received by the ABC, the process for handling complaints and the ABC's position on a complaints ombudsman;
- ABC payment for footage of the Capitol Hill riots;
- plans for ABC iView personalisation log-in on the digital platform;
- ABC's coverage of the Israel-Palestine conflict;
- impact of the Enhanced News Gathering Fund not being extended on the ABC;
- timeframe for the end of the "indexation freeze" on ABC's funds;
- questions in relation to the ABC's documentary on iView *EXPOSED: The Ghost Train Fire*;
- code of conduct governing ABC journalists use of personal social media accounts;
- relationship between the ABC's Code of Conduct and Enterprise Agreement;
- ABC's cyber security arrangements and funding requirements;
- number of ABC foreign bureaus and pop-up bureaus in response to international events;
- ownership arrangements of the New Daily;
- SBS board deliberations and confidentiality rules;
- SBS cyber security arrangements, compliance and budget;
- *See What You Made Me Do* documentary series on SBS;
- popularity of SBS productions overseas or in international markets;
- RISE fund grant payments made to recipients to date, assessment process for applications, a breakdown of recipients by postcode, and process for informing unsuccessful applications;
- number of LGBTQIA+ applications approved through the RISE fund;
- funding in the Budget for collecting institutions' capital works;
- national collecting institutions funding arrangements;
- impact of the removal of the Gallipoli Clause from the Producer Offset for the production of Australian content; and
- release of the Exposure Draft Bill and Explanatory Memorandum for public consultation on the proposed legislation to implement the *Media Reforms Package – screen sector support*.