

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2015

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications

Question No: 6

Program No. 1.1

Hansard Ref: Page 59, 24/02/2015

Topic: SBS Budget

Senator Ludlam, Scott asked:

Senator LUDLAM: I have a couple of follow-up questions. I just want to bring you back, Mr Ebeid, to questions around funding for SBS and how you were treated in the last budget, with foreshadowed legislation to allow SBS to effectively shift the balance of advertising on your stations. Can you maybe just quickly provide us with an update as to your understanding of how the legislative process is going to run from here when that bill needs to be through to provide certainty for the station.

Mr Ebeid: That is correct—the proposed legislation is to allow SBS to have some flexibility around the number of minutes of advertising throughout the day, with a maximum cap per hour of 10 minutes. The next steps for the legislative process is a question for the department, but my understanding of it is that a proposal will go before the Senate sometime in the next couple of months for consideration. Then the impact that it would have on SBS would be considered after that.

Senator LUDLAM: Does it have to be through before the next budget—the 2015-16 budget?

Mr Ebeid: I would certainly hope so, but I am not aware that a date has been set by the minister—

Senator LUDLAM: We are a bit fortunate that we have got that Manager of Government Business in the Senate sitting here with us. Are you able to wear that hat for us for a moment, Senator Fifield? What is the government's expected timetable for passage of that bill?

Senator Fifield: I will seek advice from Minister Turnbull on that. As Manager of Government Business, my role is to seek to give effect to the agenda of my ministerial colleagues, so I will seek that advice from him.

Answer:

The Government introduced the Communications Legislation Amendment (SBS Advertising Flexibility and Other Measures) Bill 2015 (the Bill) on 25 March 2015.

The Selection of Bills Committee subsequently recommended that the provisions of the Bill be referred immediately to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee for inquiry and report by 8 May 2015.