

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings March 2015

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications

Question No: 69

Program 1.1

Hansard Ref: Page 10-11, 19 March 2015

Topic: 69 - Meetings for SBS chairman appointment

Senator Dastyari, Sam asked:

Senator DASTYARI: Mr Clarke, because we are going to be doing this for a while, can you take on notice and bring back to us in detail whatever you can in terms of all the dates, times and meetings that were held in the decision process for SBS? I do not think it will be surprising or require extreme deliberations for you to be able to tell us what times and when the selection panel met with Mr Gupta and for how long. I am not asking you about anyone else. If your concern is that you want the process to be private, it is on the public record already that Mr Gupta applied for and was awarded the position. I think that is pretty clear on the public record. I am not asking what I would like to ask; you are telling me that I cannot ask what happened in those deliberations, or you are not going to answer if I ask what happened in those deliberations. I want to work out when, at what times and on what dates as you went through the process for Mr Gupta's selection as chairman of SBS.

And perhaps you can also take on notice two more questions. Firstly, what is the review mechanism to review decisions once they have been made? I would believe—and without knowing how the board is made up—that it can review decisions it has made itself if it has been given information that is false and misleading.

Mr Clarke: I will have to take advice on that.

Senator DASTYARI: Secondly, what oversight is there of this independent panel?—be it the Ombudsman or the department. Perhaps you can take that on notice. I assume the Ombudsman will play a role, but take that on notice....

Senator DASTYARI: What you are saying is that the panel—and you are getting all of that information on it. And there is one other question I might actually add to that list that I gave you before: who was present at those meetings? You are saying that the process the panel went through resulted in three names being given to government, and government chose from those three names?

Mr Clarke: For this particular position, for the record, the panel was assessing two vacancies on the SBS board and one on the ABC. So it was a package. But in regard to the SBS chair, they did, indeed, put forward the minimum of three names.

Answer:

The Nomination Panel conducted interviews for the three non-executive Director positions on the ABC Board and SBS Board on 7 and 11 August 2014. The Panel allocated one hour for each candidate. Mr Gupta was interviewed on 7 August 2014. The interviews were attended by members of the Nomination Panel, Amanda O'Rourke from Amanda O'Rourke Executive Search and a scribe.

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings March 2015

Communications Portfolio

Department of Communications

The Nomination Panel finalised its report on the selection process on 21 August 2014.

In regards to the Senator's questions about review processes, the Senator is referred to the answer to Question on Notice 68.