

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Additional Estimates Hearings February 2016

Communications Portfolio

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 52

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Written, 19/02/2016

Topic: ABC News Division Funding

Senator Abetz, Eric asked:

- 1) Did the ABC news division received \$20 million in tied funding in two separate allocations in about 2013.
 - a) In which areas of the ABC were these monies expended stating how much in each area?
 - b) Was any of the funding employed on the 'Fact Check' unit?
 - c) If so, how much?
 - d) How many people does the Fact Check unit employ?
 - e) Was the \$20 million referred to above, a one-off payment?
 - f) When will the funds from that one-off payment be fully expended?
 - g) If already fully expended, please state when they were so fully expended?
 - h) From the \$20 million, how many extra staff were employed?
 - i) Please state the location of each of the extra staff so employed.
 - j) How is the ABC responding or how will the ABC respond to the 'news initiative' monies being fully expended?
 - k) Will this require programming cuts?
 - l) If so, please state which ones.
 - m) If it will require programming cuts, please also advise the staff number cuts stating their location by city or town.
 - n) Out of the \$20 million referred to above, how much was spent in the capital cities and how much was spent in regional Australia delineating the two?

Answers:

1. In 2013, the ABC was allocated \$69.4 million over four years to 2015-16 to expand the breadth and depth of its ABC News journalism, and to strengthen the range, quality and delivery of news and current affairs to audiences in the digital era.

\$10m was granted in February 2013 and the remaining \$59.4m was received from July 2013 to 30 June 2016.

 - (a) The monies were expended across a range of initiatives including but not limited to, the National Reporting Team, local digital news services, video journalists in regional locations, suburban bureaux, live linking capability, ABC Fact Check, and documentary programs including The Killing Season, Making Australia Great and

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The Nationals. It is not possible to provide data as there is not always discrete funding for each unit and resources are shared across content initiatives.

- (b) Yes.
- (c) \$1.2 million for the current financial year.
- (d) Nine people.
- (e) The \$20m per annum the ABC receives is considered a terminating program measure. The ABC was instructed in 2013 that it would need to reapply for funding when the program expires on 30 June 2016.
- (f) 30 June 2016.
- (g) The funds are contributing to a range of initiatives identified above and will be fully expended by 30 June 2016.
- (h) In the 2016 financial year, 106 staff are being employed with the funding.
- (i)

State	Staff
NSW	42
VIC	10
QLD	35
SA	4
WA	5
TAS	3
ACT	3
NT	4
Total	106

- (j) The \$20m funding the News Division receives is a significant amount of its annual budget. If the monies are not renewed as part of ABC's triennial funding, it represents a significant challenge to the Division. ABC News management is currently scoping contingencies in the event of further funding shortfalls. It would be premature to communicate how the ABC will respond if the funding is not renewed until the Budget outcomes are known.
- (k) If the tied funding is not renewed, it will inevitably result in cuts to programming, content and personnel.
- (l) As noted above, the ABC is currently working through a range of scenarios depending on the outcome of the triennial funding process. It is not possible to say what the final response will be, until the ABC knows the funding outcomes.
- (m) See above answer.

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- (n) As noted above, this funding supports 106 full-time equivalent positions. Over 50% of the positions (54), are located outside of Sydney or Melbourne. Of these, 11 are new positions for journalists and video crews in Bunbury, Renmark, Newcastle, Wollongong, Broome, Alice Springs, Geelong, Ipswich and Gosford.

Eight positions support live video linking capacity around the country which is often used to bring regional stories to state capitals, and supports regional coverage of stories such as natural disasters.

Another 41 positions, based in state capitals, produce regional and state-based reporting and state-based news specials. This includes 13 digital positions based in Brisbane dedicated to sub-editing and producing regional content for ABC News Digital.

The monies also support seven members of the National Reporting Team based outside of Sydney.

Of the remaining 46 positions, 36 are based in Sydney working primarily for the National Reporting Team and ABC Fact Check; as well as Four Corners, Foreign Correspondent, Australian Story and NewsRadio programming extensions; three are based in the Western Sydney bureau at Parramatta and seven are in the Interactive Digital Story Telling Team located in Brisbane.