

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Additional Estimates February 2017
Communications Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 107

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Page 101, 28/02/2017

Topic: Radio National – Motion of no-confidence

Senator Ludlam, Scott asked:

Senator LUDLAM: ...Finally, regarding Radio National, your own staff passed a motion of no confidence in November as a result of the extraordinary cuts that are taking place inside RN. Can you tell us—on notice, if you like—how frequently that happens, whether that is a common event or whether that is very rare, and whether you have spoken to the staff of RN and what the outcome was.

Ms Guthrie: I would not characterise taking three music programs away from RN as being an extraordinary decision.

Senator LUDLAM: Well, do you consider passing a motion of no confidence extraordinary? Or is that a day-to-day affair?

Ms Guthrie: That is obviously not something we desire, but I also highlight that it does not represent the views of all Radio National staff, either.

Senator LUDLAM: It says:

This meeting of Radio National Staff in ABC Ultimo wish to express our lack of confidence in the senior management of ABC Radio in regards to the continuing erosion of specialist programming in music, features and religion.

Did you at least meet them halfway? What decision was—

Ms Guthrie: We are working with the RN staff as we plan our schedules for the year ahead.

Senator LUDLAM: We are out of time, so I will just ask you to take on notice whether or not you met with staff, or those who passed this motion, and what outcomes, if any, resulted from that meeting.

Ms Guthrie: I will take that on notice.

Answer:

A no confidence motion is an informal process. It is rare at the ABC, and has generally occurred in the past in response to the announcement of a major change. Last year's 'no confidence motion' by some staff coincided with a proposal for a change to Radio National programming.

It is important to note that as it is informal and there is not a set process for how a no confidence motion is taken, and accordingly a number of staff did not vote or supported this motion when it occurred in RN last year.

During the consultation process for the changes announced last year to Radio National, RN management held a number of team and individual meetings with staff to discuss the proposed commissioning changes and the rationale behind the proposed changes.

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RN management continue to hold workshops with RN staff to discuss possible ideas and opportunities for the RN network and the future direction of the RN so that both the needs of digital and linear audiences can be met.