

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: 127

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Written, 14/03/2017

Topic: Radio National

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

1. Does the ABC accept that the Save RN Music campaign response to the axing of a number of music programs on Radio National last year demonstrates that these music programs had value and impact in the Australian music context?
2. Does the recent axing of a number of music programs from Radio National represent a net reduction in the broadcasting of any music genres over the ABC's broadcast platforms? If so, what genres?
3. How does the ABC expect audiences in regional, rural and remote areas to access specialised Australian music content on the ABC if they can't access digital radio, or if their internet service is unreliable?
4. Does the ABC believe that listeners in rural, regional and remote areas should be able to access ABC music programming when they are mobile – out and about? If so, how?
5. Does the ABC agree that listeners in regional and remote areas are impacted disproportionately by the decision to remove most music programming from Radio National, given the digital divide (inadequate service availability in those areas)?
6. What consultation did the ABC carry out with the Radio National audience prior to the decision to axe the majority of its music programming from Radio National?
7. What consultation did the ABC carry out with music and arts organisations prior to the decision to axe the majority of its music programming from Radio National?
8. To what extent was the ABC's decision to axe music programs from Radio National based on listenership statistics?
9. To what extent was the ABC's decision to axe music programs based on budgetary measures?
10. Why is music content considered by RN 'The Ideas Network', to be mutually exclusive from the concept of 'big thinking' and 'big ideas'?
11. Does the ABC consider specialised music content to be part of the concept of 'ideas'? If not, why not?

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12. Are podcast royalties and streaming royalties a hurdle for the ABC continuing to broadcast music on Radio National? If so, what is the ABC doing to address these issues?
13. How will regional and rural audiences be able to access ABC music content (independent, world folk, faith, jazz and alternative Australian music) outside Local ABC and FM radio?
14. What percentage of Australian music formerly presented on Radio National is now represented on other linear and DAB+ ABC music formats?
15. What percentage of faith music formerly presented on Radio National is not represented on other linear and DAB+ ABC music formats?
16. What percentage of music from Australia's non-English speaking, immigrant and indigenous communities formerly presented on Radio National is not represented on other linear and DAB+ ABC music formats?
17. Government reports have shown that the infrastructure necessary to make digital broadcast platforms accessible to most Australians is about 10 years away. How does the ABC plan to provide rural and regional listeners (who cannot access reliable internet or digital radio) with the same access to diverse content while this transition occurs?
18. Does the ABC think that it is adequate for regional, rural and remote listeners to listen to radio programming via their television?
19. Does the ABC have evidence that indicates where and when most people listen to Radio National? If so, what does that evidence show?
20. What evidence does ABC Radio have that indicates where and when regional, rural and remote people listen to internet streaming of ABC radio stations like double J, Triple J, RN, Jazz etc.?
21. Based on all 2016 surveys for all Radio National stations, what was the share, cumulative, average audiences and the average time spent listening for each of the decommissioned and removed Radio National (RN) programs: 'The Inside Sleeve', 'The Daily Planet', 'The Rhythm Divine', 'The Live Set', 'Jazztrack' and "Soundproof", in the capital cities, regional and country markets? Please include corresponding simulcast DAB+ stations in the capital city markets if available.
22. Based on all 2016 surveys for all Radio National stations, what was the share, cumulative, average audiences and the average time spent listening for each of each of the following standard sessions: Breakfast (5:30am-9am), Morning (9am-12noon), Afternoon (12noon to 4pm), Drive (4pm-7pm) and Evening (7pm-12mn) in the capital cities, regional and country markets? Please include corresponding simulcast DAB+ stations in the capital city markets if available.

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Answer:

1. ABC Radio's Head of Music acknowledged in an open letter last year that the music programs in question were valued by their audiences. The decision to decommission these programs was not taken lightly but in recognition that the world of broadcast music has changed significantly in recent years and that a new approach was required to clarify the position of RN as a spoken word service while at the same time boosting the role and profile of the ABC's seven specialist music networks.

ABC Radio management met with representatives of Save RN Music in early 2017 in order to discuss their concerns.

2. The ABC is unable to quantify the amount of programming allotted to individual genres, however, collectively across ABC Radio specialist music programs will continue to cover roots, blues, world, metal, punk, hip hop, dance, electronic, alt-country, indie, funk & soul, jazz, opera and country. ABC Radio will also cover specific genres via campaigns, festival broadcasts and the ABC's own events.

Artists and genres that featured on RN music programs in the past will be heard on music network programs such as triple j's Roots N All and Home & Hosed, Double J's Tower of Song, Beat Eclectic and Sky High, ABC Jazz's Jazztrack, Saturday Night Country and the general playlists of both Double J and ABC Local Radio.

3. See below response at question 5.
4. See below response at question 5.
5. In response to questions 3- 5, the ABC notes that ABC Radio covers 99% of the Australian population via terrestrial analogue broadcasts. Listeners in the most remote locations who do not have access to the terrestrial network are able to tune in to all ABC Radio networks, including the digital only services, through VAST satellite.

All ABC Radio networks are also available as live Internet streams and through the ABC Radio app. In addition, both ABC Jazz and Double J are available through the terrestrial digital television platform.

The provision of ABC Radio networks across a number of platforms ensures that all Australians are able to access the full complement of ABC services through various means.

6. The changes were the result of annual radio scheduling adjustments, made annually. These are made by ABC Radio management's consideration of ratings figures, download statistics, listener correspondence and all other forms of feedback.
7. See above response to question 6. Additionally, the ABC notes that Standard 1.3 of the Editorial Policies requires the ABC to 'ensure that editorial decisions are not improperly influenced by political, sectional, commercial or political interests'.

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8. There were multiple factors behind the changes made to the RN schedule for 2017, and these included the low reach and share figures for the majority of music programs. These figures are supplied in response to question 21 (below).
9. Budgetary factors were among the many issues taken into account as this decision was being made. ABC Radio has limited funding and must make decisions in consideration of competing priorities. This was particularly relevant for the *Live Set*, as recording live music is a relatively expensive undertaking and the program was not returning the audience figures to justify it. Some of the savings from these cuts have been redirected towards Double J, which will enable it to develop deeper expertise in music programming, recording and festival coordination that will ultimately flow back towards all radio networks, including RN.
10. See response to question 11 (below).
11. While the 'Rhythm Divine' discuss theological ideas around music, the RN music programs primarily contained the presentation of live or recorded musical performances rather than the explicit discussion of musical theory, history or philosophy.
12. Online broadcast rights, whether for audio on-demand or simultaneous linear streaming services, are an issue for broadcasters around the world.

The ABC, together with the rest of the Australian radio industry, has been negotiating with both the PPCA and APRA/ AMCOS for many years over licence payments to address this issue.

13. Please see the following table regarding the presentation of the music genres in questions on ABC programs and networks:

Music genre	ABC Network
Independent	triple j triple j Unearthed online community Double J general playlist via TV, online and VAST. Local Radio playlist RN Music Show Local Radio - Saturday Night Country Local Radio Christine Anu national evenings program (Fridays & Saturdays)
World	RN Music Show, including festival broadcasts triple j Roots N All Double J general playlist via TV, online and VAST. Double J Fat Planet program. Double J Sky High program Local Radio festival broadcasts.
Folk	RN Music Show

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Music genre	ABC Network
	Local Radio general playlist Local Radio festival broadcasts. Local Radio Christine Anu national evenings program (Fridays & Saturdays) triple j Roots N All Double J Tower of Song program
Faith	Classic FM For The God Who Sings RN Music Show RN God Forbid Local Radio Evenings (TBC).
Jazz	RN Music Show ABC Jazz via TV, online and VAST.
Alternative Australian	triple j triple j Unearthed online community Double J general playlist via TV, online and VAST. Local Radio playlist RN Music Show

14. While it is not possible to provide an answer on the movement of Australian music between services because of these changes, the table below notes the ABC's commitment to the promotion of Australian music across each of its networks.

Network	Target	2015/16
ABC RN	25%	38%
ABC Local Radio	25%	46.86%
ABC Classic FM	30%	43 %
triple j	40%	51.69%
<i>Double J</i>	35%	32.23%
<i>ABC Jazz</i>	25%	30%
<i>ABC Country</i>	25%	67%
<i>triple j unearthed</i>	100%	100%

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15. *The Rhythm Divine* was a 30-minute program broadcast weekly in two timeslots on RN. Specialist presenter Geoff Wood is now appearing weekly on Local Radio throughout Australia on the Saturday evening program with Christine Anu, presenting religious music, and discussing music and music makers inspired by faith, religion and belief. Mr Wood will also be appearing regularly on the new weekly RN religion program *God Forbid* on Sunday mornings (and repeated late on Sunday nights).

Radio's other program devoted to faith music, *For the God Who Sings*, continues on Classic FM on Sunday evenings.

16. The ABC does not keep figures on music from NESB or immigrant communities. There is no agreed definition of what would constitute 'NESB music', and no easy means of determining the cultural heritage or self-identification of individual musicians. However, ABC Radio is committed to increasing the diversity of both its staff and its output, which of course includes the mix of music.

ABC Radio overall aspires to a quota of 2-3 per cent Indigenous music.

17. This question has been answered in part above at question 5.

Currently, the ABC's terrestrial DAB+ radio service is available to 55 per cent of the population, and this proportion will rise to over 60 per cent when ABC rollout is extended to Canberra, Darwin and Hobart in the next 12 months.

Listeners living beyond the reach of terrestrial DAB+ are able to access the ABC's full suite of radio networks through a variety of other means, including the ABC Radio mobile app and via internet streaming.

Listeners outside terrestrial DAB+ coverage, mobile coverage or with poor internet connection have access to the full suite of ABC Radio services through VAST satellite.

18. The provision of Double J and ABC Jazz through the terrestrial digital television transmission network complements the provision of these music networks on the DAB+ terrestrial, VAST satellite, online streaming and mobile platforms. The provision of these networks on multiple platforms ensure that they are accessible to all Australians through various means.
19. Listener surveys of the five largest capital cities, conducted eight times each year by the market research company GfK, confirm that the most popular time of listening to RN, as with all radio stations, is during the weekday breakfast timeslot (6am to 9am).

While independent regional audience surveys are less frequent and comprehensive, figures from a representative range of country towns indicate that RN's listener patterns are consistent with the capital cities.

20. The ABC does not have the capacity to isolate users with regard to location.

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21. While there are no program by program figures available as yet for any DAB+ stations in Australia, the analogue audience data is supplied below. The ABC notes that ‘Soundproof’ was not a music program, but rather a show devoted to experimental audio features.

Analogue audience data for the specified programs is as follows:

RN Radio Programs and Timeslots 2016 Ave					
	Cume Reach (000s)	Cume Reach %	Ave Audience	Share of Listening %	TSL (Hrs:Mins)
The Inside Sleeve	113	0.8	24	1.0	1:05
Daily Planet	50	0.4	12	3.2	1:12
The Live Set	18	0.1	10	1.4	0:33
The Live Set Rpt	36	0.3	25	1.6	0:41
The Rhythm Divine	26	0.2	21	4.6	0:25
The Rhythm Divine Rpt	12	0.1	9	1.8	0:21
Soundproof	18	0.1	11	1.8	0:37
Soundproof Rpt	15	0.1	11	2	0:43
Jazztrack	42	0.3	11	3.2	1:01
<i>Source: GfK, 5 Cities, Ppl 10+, 2016 Ave (S1-8)</i>					

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22. This information is only available for analogue broadcast services in the five capital cities.

	Cume Reach (000s)	Cume Reach %	Ave Audience	Share of Listening %	TSL (Hrs:Mins)
Breakfast	380	2.8	87	3.3	4:00
Morning	251	1.9	38	1.6	2:15
Afternoon	228	1.7	26	1.3	2:19
Drive	282	2.1	44	2.4	2:20
Evening 7pm-12mn	208	1.6	19	3.2	2:14

Source: GfK, 5 Cities, Ppl 10+, 2016 Ave (S1-8)