

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2015
Communications Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 39

Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Page 29 – 30, 27/5/2015

Topic: Article – Sam Armytage

Senator McGRATH, James asked:

Senator McGRATH: I have another article here. It is in the Australian on 4 May by Sharri Markson. It says:

Sunrise co-host Sam Armytage has deleted Twitter and made her Instagram account private after receiving Charlie Pickering-induced death threats.

Pickering edited a Sunrise clip from February to make it seem like Armytage was making racist comments. He then aired the misleading clip on the first episode of his new show, The Weekly.

The backlash against Armytage was immediate and haters on social media sent her death threats. Despite the misleading editing, Pickering and the ABC have not apologised to the Seven personality.

Is this story accurate, Mr Scott?

Mr Scott: I would have to take that on notice.

Senator McGRATH: Do you think it is funny that an ABC comedy show purportedly take someone's words out of context and makes them look racist?

Mr Scott: I will need to take it on notice. I must say that the phrase that I just heard you use there, though—did you say 'Charlie Pickering-induced death threats'? Was that the phrase that you used?

Senator McGRATH: The quote from the newspaper—

Mr Scott: I can assure you that I do not believe—if in fact people viewing a program responded inappropriately, then I think it is an unfair depiction of that to say that these were 'Charlie Pickering-induced death threats'.

Senator McGRATH: What the article says is:

Pickering edited a Sunrise clip from February to make it seem like Armytage was making racist comments.

Mr Scott: I have been informed that a complaint was made and that a response has been made to Ms Armytage, but I will have to get further detail and put that to you on notice.

Senator McGRATH: You do not think it is appropriate to apologise at the moment to Ms Armytage?

Mr Scott: I think I would like to check—there is a claim there—on the claim and the response. I have not seen the response that was made to Ms Armytage's complaint. So I would need to do that before providing detail.

Senator McGRATH: It is rather similar to the situation with Chris Kenny and The Chaser, is it not?

Mr Scott: No. I am not aware of the issue with Ms Armytage. The Kenny matter, long discussed in this forum, was an attempt at satire. But as we acknowledged, it was very strong and clearly hurtful to Mr Kenny. I need to come back to you on notice about Ms Armytage's matter.

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Answer:

On the 22 April 2015 the ABC broadcast a segment in *The Weekly with Charlie Pickering* titled 'A Weekly History of Casual Racism' that contained a clip from the *Sunrise* program. In the clip, *Sunrise* co-host Ms Armytage interviews twins with different skin colours and says "good on her" to the light-skinned twin. The footage in the clip was not edited or modified, it was simply a shortened version of the clip that went to air on the *Sunrise* program earlier that week. A bell sound was added to signify when the remark took place.

The ABC received a letter from a representative of Ms Armytage in late April 2015 in regards to this segment. The ABC responded in early May 2015 and has not received a subsequent response from Ms Armytage's representative.

The ABC has not received any complaints about the program broadcast on 22 April 2015.