

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
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Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 48

Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Written, 27/5/2015

Topic: ABC Regional division

Senator Xenophon, Nick asked:

1. Can you please update the committee on progress in setting up the ABC's Regional Division and how it will interact with other parts of the ABC?
2. What will be the staffing levels for the Regional Division, where will these staff be located?
3. Will the Regional Division have the ability to commission content cross the ABC's platforms, television, radio and online?
4. What is its annual budget?

Answer:

1. ABC Regional commenced operations on 1 July 2015. Director ABC Regional, Fiona Reynolds, gathered feedback over a four-month period earlier this year from staff, the community and key stakeholders on the role of the division into the future. The response was significant with hundreds of suggestions received on content and ways of working. Informed by this feedback, the division developed its mission, vision and strategic objectives. An Executive structure was developed and recruited for, with members based in locations across the country. Consultation with relevant unions is currently underway on a broader proposed structure for ABC Regional which will promote strong cross platform communication and collaboration between all team members in the regions.
2. ABC Regional has 426 Full Time Equivalent positions located in 48 locations across the country, outside the eight capital cities. It also includes metropolitan based staff working for rural, national programs like *Landline*, *Saturday Night Country* and *Australia All Over* as well as some centrally based ABC Open staff. There will be no net job losses associated with the creation of ABC Regional. A total of 52 new roles have been proposed to replace 50 existing roles and all staff have been invited to apply for the new positions which are being advertised internally. Regional staff will be part of the one team reporting to a local Chief of Staff who will be the editorial leader and manager for that region. The role will coordinate content and look for opportunities for it to be shared locally, across regions and nationally.
3. The sharing of regional content more broadly and across ABC platforms is a key objective of the proposed ABC Regional structure. The division will continue to have strong connections with the ABC's News and Radio divisions, which will be invited to participate in regular program and bulletin reviews, while the News divisions will continue to provide subbing support and editorial guidance. ABC Regional will also work with the Radio, News and ABC People (Human Resources) divisions to rollout training in editorial

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leadership and digital skills for its staff. ABC Regional has already commissioned content in the form of a new TV series due to air later this year. In partnership with Television, filming has begun on *Back Roads* – an eight part series exploring Australia’s smallest regional communities and the people who choose to call them home.

4. ABC Regional’s operating budget is \$52 million for 2015-16.