

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Budget Estimates Hearings May 2015

Communications Portfolio

Special Broadcasting Service

Question No: 61

Program No. Special Broadcasting Service

Hansard Ref: Page 47, 27/5/2015

Topic: Struggle Street – Meeting with Blacktown mayor

Senator Dastyari, Sam asked:

Senator DASTYARI: Then they wrote to you requesting a longer period where they could actually put some of the community concerns to you before it was aired? Mr Ebeid, did you respond to that letter?

Mr Ebeid: I am sure I would have. I respond to all of our letters.

Senator DASTYARI: Do you have a copy of that response here?

Mr Ebeid: No, I do not.

Senator DASTYARI: Do you want to take on notice the response and what response you actually gave?

Mr Ebeid: Yes. I am happy to send you my response. There is no way I would not have responded.

Answer:

SBS has provided a copy of this correspondence (attached).



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1 May 2015

Mayor Stephen Bali
Mayor's Office
Civic Centre
Blacktown NSW 2148

Email: mayor@blacktown.nsw.gov.au

Dear Councillor Bali,

SBS observational documentary *Struggle Street*

Thank you for your letters of 29 April, 2015 to myself, the SBS Chairman and the Minister for Communications, regarding the SBS observational documentary series *Struggle Street*. Thank you also for taking the time to view the first episode and provide your feedback. I am responding on behalf of all of us.

I very much appreciate your concerns that *Struggle Street* represents a potential for significant community concern as it is set in Mount Druitt. I am sympathetic to your concerns regarding the general perception of the suburb. May I emphasise that the focus of *Struggle Street* is on the personal lives of a small segment of the community who live in Mount Druitt.

Reflecting the diversity of experiences and fostering social cohesion within Australia is an important part of SBS's Purpose. Through our content, SBS seeks to provide our audiences the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of different people and cultures which make up the Australian community. *Struggle Street* provides a voice for people who live a life not often observed by many Australians or in the media, and are usually poorly understood.

SBS commissioned KEO Films Australia to produce *Struggle Street*, with the intent of recognising and providing a voice to a segment of society who are living through immense hardship caused by multiple factors like unemployment, teenage pregnancy, family dysfunction, physical and mental illness, and alcohol/drug abuse.

Struggle Street explores these lives from a very personal perspective. People and families living in circumstances similar to those depicted in the documentary are located in a wide range of locations across Australia not just Mount Druitt. However for the documentary to be believable, it cannot be devoid of a place setting.

In the lead up to the transmission of the documentary, we continue to be focused on ensuring that viewers are correctly informed. SBS appreciates working with the council in this



endeavour to ensure the documentary is portrayed as a story of the small section of the community struggling to get by, rather than a story of the whole community of Mount Druit.

As a gesture of goodwill we are dropping the TV promotion that opens with the sign of Mount Druit.

I thank you again for your comments and engagement in this important but difficult topic.

Sincerely,



Michael Ebeid
CEO & Managing Director

cc Mr Nihal Gupta, Chairman SBS
The Honourable Malcolm Turnbull MP, Minister for Communications
Ms Prue Car MP, Member for Londonderry