

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

Question No: 105

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Page 111-112, 24/05/2017

Topic: WA Journalist

Senator Williams, John asked:

Senator WILLIAMS: She was in Bob Katter's anti-gay-marriage ad. She was working for ABC on a casual basis. She had not sought or received permission to undertake external work. She was stood down, an inquiry carried out et cetera. I think that that is pretty harsh.

Mr Sunderland: I am happy to take that on notice and provide more detail. It is important to point out that we aim to apply consistent principles on a case-by-case basis. Without knowing what you mean by an advertisement—the context, background and nature—

Answer:

In June 2009, Suzanne McGill was employed by ABC Radio as a casual announcer. Ms McGill also worked as a voice-over artist outside the ABC. This arrangement was permitted and managed on a case-by-case basis as Ms McGill's employment at the ABC was casual.

In 2012, Ms McGill was temporarily employed on a full time basis by the ABC. During that period that the ABC became aware that, without seeking prior approval, Ms McGill had voiced a political advertisement for Bob Katter's Australia Party to run during the Queensland Election.

The ABC investigated the matter and determined that the voice-over work on that particular occasion was not compatible with Ms McGill's role as a morning presenter on ABC Radio, and she was taken off-air.

That decision is in keeping with the ABC's editorial policies, which set out guidelines requiring that any external activity by ABC staff such as commercial work does not conflict with the ABC's standards of editorial independence.