

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: 111

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Page 126-127, 24/05/2017

Topic: Ms Abdel-Magied's post

Senator Abetz, Eric asked:

Senator ABETZ: Has anybody from ABC management spoken to Ms Abdel-Magied since her discussion with these 60 school students?

Mr Sunderland: I would have to take that on notice to find out what discussions she may have had with her own line managers in news, following that.

Senator ABETZ: She has a number of line managers, does she?

Mr Sunderland: Only in the sense that she would report to the executive producer of the program that she works for and that executive producer would report to another manager, and so there a number of layers. For any given role you would normally only have one line manager, but a conversation could involve a number of layers.

Senator ABETZ: What on earth has Ms Abdel-Magied been referring to when she says, 'Why is he allowed to say what he thinks and I am not?' What, specifically, was Ms Abdel-Magied referring to other than, of course, her Facebook post?

Mr Sunderland: I assume that is exactly what she is referring to.

Senator ABETZ: Right. So that is what she actually thinks, which means that the apology she gave was not sincere or genuine, because she actually thinks it. That is the difficulty we have, is it not? With this expose of her comments, I would have thought, if she had been counselled, she might have been very circumspect and said: 'Look I copped a lot of flak, and do you know what? I actually deserved it. It was a deeply offensive Facebook post, and if I had my time again I would not go near it.' But here she is in effect saying, 'Well, I should have been allowed to say what I did without any criticism.'

Ms Guthrie: Again, Senator, that is your characterisation of the media report. I was not there. You were not there. Mr Sunderland was not there. We can take on notice whether anybody at the ABC has had a conversation with her after that conversation.

Senator ABETZ: Clearly, Ms Guthrie, you had a conversation with her about the deeply offensive Facebook post on Anzac Day. You have just indicated that.

Ms Guthrie: Yes, and she acknowledged—

Senator ABETZ: Fine. I would invite you, then, to have another conversation with her, because clearly the counselling that was provided, and indeed the mentoring from Foreign Affairs, all at taxpayers' expense, has not led to any result other than her saying that she should be allowed to engage in this deeply offensive Facebook post. But you will take that on notice. Thank you for that.

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Answer:

Ms Abdel-Magied was spoken to by the Executive Producer of the *Australia Wide* program in response to Ms Abdel-Magied's comments at the "Mono or Multicultural?" conference in May 2017.