

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: 142

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: Written, 07/06/2017

Topic: ABC Rural

Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:

1. Does ABC Rural have a stand-alone travel budget?
2. If no, what are the measures that the ABC is taking to ensure Rural reporters and content makers have access to a stream of funding that allows them to continue to travel and make distinct and unique specialised local content?

Answer:

1. A discrete budget is currently maintained for ABC rural reporters as a transitional measure, as rural and regional staff from the News and Radio divisions have moved across to the ABC's Regional division, which was established in 2015.

However, with the success of the whole-of-team approach to gathering and delivering regional content and the ABC's increased investment in its regional operations, including for travel, it no longer makes sense to divide budgets into genres (or types of content). Rather, ABC content makers from across the Corporation work together to cover news stories as they arise, in order to share the best stories with the biggest audiences. Accordingly, travel budgets are managed depending on the story and the staff and travel required. On any assignment, the ABC aims to avoid duplication and maximise the value of every trip for audiences, such that content makers from one team may gather content for another program or platform while in the field.

2. ABC Regional has a mission to deliver outstanding content, services and activities to reflect and develop regional communities and enrich national conversations. Travel is allocated in accordance with that mission.

Further, under the ABC's Connecting Communities investment, an additional \$15 million a year has been allocated to regional news and information. This is in addition to up to 80 more staff - including an extra two Rural reporters and a further \$4 million for tools and equipment. All of this will enable regional reporters – whether they have a Rural, News or Features specialisation – to spend more time in the field finding and filing distinctly Australian stories.