

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications

Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice

Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2014

Communications Portfolio

Special Broadcasting Service

Question No: 469

Program No. Special Broadcasting Service

Hansard Ref: Hansard Page 98 20 November 14

Topic: Production inaccuracies

Senator Canavan asked:

CHAIR: Taking that one step back in terms of what you were trying to achieve there, I would be interested in how that actually fits with the SBS charter—in terms of advocating on behalf of labelling laws.

Mr Khalil: It is a good question. I think I mentioned in my answer that it does form part of a support to the overall food programming, which does have those multicultural and charter elements. We do independently—because we do have independence in editorial matters—try and determine how best to arrange the programming in order to fulfil those charter obligations. So, in a sense, putting a program like that on, which supports overall food programming, can bring in an audience that can then watch those other food programs and that other content. We believe that *What's the Catch?* strengthens that overall food programming suite. That is the decision around that particular investment around that program.

CHAIR: Can I take from your answers that the inaccuracies that have been brought to your attention have subsequently been corrected, not just the one about the wild catch versus farm catch?

Mr Khalil: We did a thorough review across the website when we got those complaints and we made sure that everything was accurate.

CHAIR: The stuff that was suggesting that 25 per cent of sharks were threatened with extinction, when it was actually six per cent, and those sorts of errors—and that tuna fish live to be 12, when they live to be 40.

Mr Khalil: I can take all of those on notice. I do not have the detail in front of me. I can check with the production team.

CHAIR: That would be great, if you could just come back and say that the factual information has been checked.

Answers

Australia imports a lot of seafood. It is important for consumers to be globally aware of the production methods in Australia and overseas and how they are relevant to Australians.

The SBS Charter demands content that informs educates and entertains all Australians, which this program sought to do on a topic that is relevant to Australian audiences and SBS strengths also supports food programming.

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SBS is not aware of any inaccuracies in the series itself, though this content sparked debate and some opinions differ on some issues raised by the show.

There were some inaccuracies on the website and these errors were pointed out by the audience and changed in the following ways:

| Site claim error | Correction | Action taken |
|--|---|---|
| “Current stock assessments have found that Southern Bluefin Tuna are at around 5% of their original level.” | The current figure is 9% | This has been corrected and the statement was removed. 5 per cent was the most up to date figure available when the show was filmed. While we managed to update this to 9% for the series, unfortunately the website stated the earlier incorrect figure. |
| “However, because Southern Bluefin Tuna migrates across international borders they are fished in Australia, Japan, Taiwan and New Zealand.” | There is no fishing for Southern Blue fin tuna (SBT) in Japan and Taiwan. | Upon audience feedback that no fishing for SBT occurs in Japan and Taiwan, the website was updated accordingly. |
| “If Australia were to stop fishing Southern Bluefin Tuna it would forfeit its place on this committee.” | To our knowledge, this can be only be misquoting a February 2010 ESSC Report on SBT. | Correction changed and noted. |
| Southern Bluefin Tuna are vulnerable to overfishing as they are a slow developing large fish, living for up to twelve years. | SBT live up to forty (40) years, not 12 years | Correction noted and changed |
| “Southern Bluefin Tuna are captured when they are juveniles and kept in sea ranches in South Australia, but are then fished before they are old enough to reproduce. As a result they are unable to replenish their already dwindling stocks.” | The stocks are not “dwindling” as shown by the CCSBT scientific model used to increase the global catch quota by 55% between 2011 and 2015 (see www.ccsbt.org). | Correction noted and site amended |
| “Around 15-20 kgs of wild fish is required to produce 1 kg of Southern Bluefin Tuna, the worst feed conversion rate | The actual feed conversion rate/ratio (FCR) in the farms is 10:1, not the 15-20:1 on the site. | Correction noted changed. In the television series it is clearly stated as a feed ratio of 10:1 |

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| of any fish.” | | |
| “Most of the Southern Bluefin Tuna are then exported to Japan where they are sold for a high price. An individual fish can be sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars.” | Site confuses SBT with the much higher price Pacific Bluefin Tuna. | Correction noted and changed. |
| Site stated a conversion rate of 3:1 for salmon feed. | This is inaccurate. | Correction noted and changed. This was a historical figure and not up to date. The statistic used in the series is 2kg of wild fish to 1kg of salmon. This is conveyed as a direct quote from Tassal. |

All inaccuracies were addressed and corrected. However, it should be noted that some inaccuracy claims were rebutted. These included the following:

| SBS site note | Comment on accuracy | SBS position |
|--|--|--|
| “The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources” | Is “Natural Resources” ever part of the IUCN Name? | There appears to be inconsistencies in how this is named, or rather abbreviated. On their own website they have the following: International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. |
| “As a result, despite being classified as critically endangered, Southern Bluefin Tuna are still fished in Australia.” | This endangered comment was by the ESSC in February 2010, but who still recommended Australia catch its quota. It is <i>not</i> the reason that SBT is still fished in Australia. | This is Listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/21858/0 |
| “For canned tuna, Greenpeace recommends choosing pole or line caught Albacore or Skipjack Tuna.” | | The site never included a statement that Southern Blue Fin Tuna is used in cans. |