

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings November 2014
Communications Portfolio
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Question No: 573

Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: In writing

Topic: ABC Facebook

Senator McGrath asked:

1. What standards apply to the ABC's Facebook posts?
2. Is it appropriate for posts to be overtly political?
3. Who is responsible for designing infographics?
4. On 25 November 2014, ABC News 24 posted the following with the graphic at Attachment G:

Just in: Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has committed to increasing ABC funding if Labor wins government in 2016.

Mr Shorten says an independent public broadcaster is fundamental to the democracy we wish to be.

Read more: <http://ab.co/1yP4wB9>

- a. Does the ABC believe that such an overtly political post is appropriate content from the independent and impartial national broadcaster?
5. Will the ABC conduct a review of its Facebook policies?
 - a. If not, why not?

Answer:

1. The ABC introduced the Use of Social Media Policy in 2011: <http://about.abc.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/UseOfSocialMediaPOL.pdf>
The following standards form the key guidelines within the ABC Social Media Policy. They apply to the use of both official ABC accounts and personal accounts by ABC staff and contractors:
 - a. Do not mix the professional and the personal in ways likely to bring the ABC into disrepute
 - b. Do not undermine your effectiveness at work.
 - c. Do not imply ABC endorsement of your personal views.
 - d. Do not disclose confidential information obtained through work.These guidelines are applicable in conjunction with the ABC's broader editorial policies, which provide content makers with guidelines for editorial decision making without comprising editorial independence.

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2. All posts are prepared in accordance with the Use of Social Media and Editorial Policies and guidance notes.
3. The News Online team, based in Brisbane, are responsible for designing infographics.
4. a) It is part of the ABC's remit to cover political discourse, which includes comments made by politicians. The Facebook post referenced was an infographic representation of a comment made by the Opposition Leader Bill Shorten. This format is consistent with the style of posts made on that social media site. The ABC regularly posts comments from MPs from across the political spectrum in this format on social media. For example, on 5 December, 2014, the ABC 7.30 twitter account posted the following infographic with a post from Prime Minister Tony Abbott:



5. The Use of Social Media Policy was last reviewed in 2013, during the preparation of guidance notes on both the official and personal uses of social media, and reviews social media guidance annually.