

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: 577

Program No. Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Hansard Ref: In writing

Topic: Gough Whitlam news item

Senator McGrath asked:

1. In an ABC TV news item on the night of Wednesday 22 October 2014, a student from North Sydney Girls High said: ‘As a woman coming into my eighteenth year, the fact that women were able to get the vote during Gough Whitlam’s reign ...’
 - a. Was this story fact checked by anyone?
 - b. Why did the journalist who interviewed the girl include her interview in the story when it was obviously inaccurate?
 - c. Why did the ABC run this story when it was obvious it contained a serious factual error?

Answer:

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- a) This story went through the standard sub-editing process, whereby the bulletin producer or story producer on duty checks the script.
- b) The journalist who interviewed the student in question believes that she meant to refer to the fact that Gough Whitlam granted the right to vote to 18 year olds, but confused her words. The ABC acknowledges that the student’s words were inaccurate and the journalist did not correct her
- c) Unfortunately, this error was not picked up by the bulletin producer before going to air. That being said, it was not the ABC’s intention to deliberately mislead the audience by using that sound bite.