

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**

**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**

**Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings 2015**

**Communications Portfolio**

**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

**Question No: 173**

**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

**Hansard Ref: Written, 7/12/2015**

**Topic: Reporting – Regional division**

**Senator Urquhart, Anne asked:**

1. I understand the Regional Division would result a greater share of resources for Regional ABC with more staff and more local content. Can you provide an update on regional staffing levels and the amount of local content aired since the creation of the Regional Division?
2. In October, changes were outlined to the news bulletin programming. Will these changes have any impact on staffing numbers? Could you provide data on how the changes have impacted on the number of regional news bulletins since the creation of the regional division?
3. I'd like to look at the merging of the breakfast and morning programs. Can you tell me the number of FTEs working on these programs before the merger? What will be the combined number of FTEs after the merger?
4. In the hearing, you said that the Regional Division's relative share of resources has increased since the cuts have occurred. Could you provide the data that supports this in terms of staffing and overall budget.

**Answer:**

1. When ABC Regional was created, approximately 424 FTEs were transferred from News and Radio to the new division. They include staff in 48 regional locations as well as those producing programs from the capital cities. The division's objectives are to work more efficiently and effectively to continue to provide local audiences with high quality news and information while sharing regional stories and conversations more broadly - between regions and nationally across ABC TV, ABC Radio and ABC Online. The amount of local content on ABC Radio has not reduced since the creation of the Regional division.
2. The news bulletin changes announced in October have no effect on staffing numbers. Bulletin schedules vary across the country, however the 6.30 am and 7.30 am flagship local bulletins remain and ABC Radio will be delivering news at other times in a different way and in a format that fits into the flow of the local radio programs. The number of regional news bulletins aired is different across the country, however there is no reduction in the amount of news content being produced.
3. There will still be two local programs before 11.00 am in 2016 in regional markets which broadcast a breakfast and mornings program in 2015 – there is no merger of these

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programs. There will be no change to the number of FTEs working on these programs in 2016 in comparison with 2015.

4. The Regional Division was created by extracting ABC staff and budgets from ABC Radio and News in regional locations. The budget for the Regional division for 2015-16 is \$51.6 million (including indexation). Taking into consideration the costs across the organisation for content, transmission costs and other support spending, the investment in serving regional and rural Australia is approximately to \$390 million, or 36 per cent of the ABC's budget. Unlike other ABC divisions, ABC Regional was not asked to find internal efficiencies to meet the 2014 budget cuts and so, in real terms, has received a greater proportion of a smaller budget base.