

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice
Budget Estimates Hearings May 2011
Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy Portfolio
Special Broadcasting Service

Question No: 59

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: Page 126 (25/05/2011)

Topic: Online Service Traffic and User Base

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM: Mr Brown, I owe you a significant apology for not being able to attend the last time you sat in front of us. I am very glad to be here this evening. I would like to start with something that I am not sure whether you mentioned in your initial remarks or not, which is your online service. There is a huge amount of material online there. It is very well presented. I think it is a great service that has changed quite significantly in the last little while. What can you tell us about the traffic that you get and what it tells you about your user base?

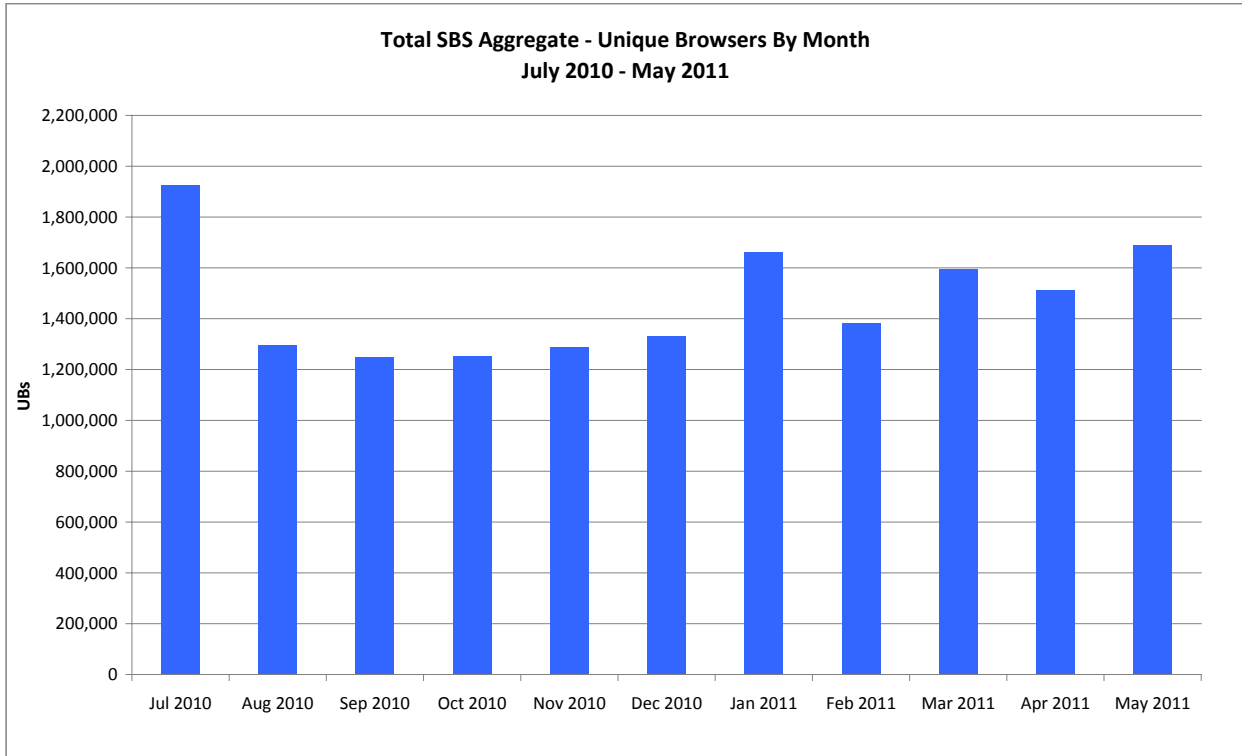
Mr Brown: I will probably take on notice the specifics in terms of unique browsers, although we have been consistently averaging a million in recent months, and that is a marked increase. We are now targeting two million. But I think in general what it demonstrates is the beginning of a change in audience behaviour towards an on-demand model. I think most of us in the industry have been aware that that is coming. Virtually all of our programming is now available on catch-up. That is getting significant use. We would expect that to expand.

Answer:

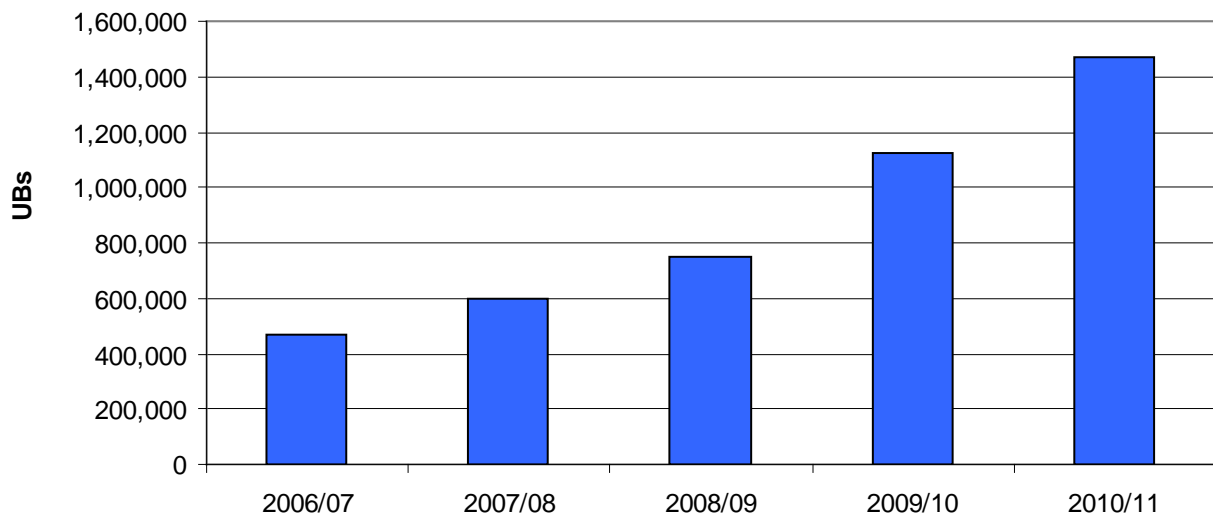
Average monthly	July 2010 – May 2011
Unique Browsers (UBs)	1,471,963
Page impressions	12,992,222
Video views ¹	1,988,163

1. Video and audio streams.
Source: Nielsen SiteCensus

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Monthly average UBs



The most popular portals are: SBS News and Current Affairs (*World News Australia, Insight, Dateline, Living Black*); The World Game (local and international football coverage); and SBS Food (food and lifestyle).

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The *Go Back to Where You Came From* website recently set new records for SBS's online performance. On the night the first episode was broadcast on SBS ONE (21 June), the website received almost 1,000 viewer comments (compared to the usual figure of 50-80), and had over 30,000 UBs, with 5,000 people viewing the first episode online in the 24 hours after it went to air.

In total the *Go Back to Where You Came From* website has had 186,272 UBs, 223,948 video views (episodes and related content on the website such as the interactive school resources) and over 4,500 comments since it was launched in June, with the majority of this interaction occurring when the program was broadcast.

This data indicates more involvement and interaction online from an expanded audience base, and growing expectations that SBS will provide opportunities for audiences to engage with SBS content online.

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Question No: 60

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: Page 127-128 (25/05/2011)

Topic: SBS Advertising Revenue

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM: Since you mention it, I just want to dwell on that very briefly—I think it was last October I asked this. You calculated an estimated \$36 million shortfall if you removed the in-program advertising in the current financial year and backed it off into the top of the hour or the half-hour. I am interested to know what kinds of assumptions you used and whether you would care to explain for us what assumptions and what evidence you could provide to support that figure, because it is substantial.

Mr Brown: The new numbers that I have given you are not the result of a specific analysis in this area. As to the assumptions that are made, the first number is a calculation on what our revenue is currently expected to be, and the germane number is what it might be if we had ads between programs. I think that, when I talked to you about \$20 million being a possible base, that reflected the fact that when we moved ads to inside programs we were receiving about \$26 million or \$27 million, and both our view and the view of the external consultants who did some work for us was that that would be an amount of money that would gradually diminish because the advertising industry had no appetite for that particular model. I am now saying to you, when I adjust that number down to \$10 million, that my observation would be that there is even less appetite for that now and that some of the tension that exists for SBS in the market is that it is a highly commoditised market now, and the idea of having a premium because you are in a good environment or are associated with a distinctive programme is very hard, if not impossible, to secure now. Most of the buying is done on a highly computerised model operated by quite junior people who are making decisions on where to place ads simply on the basis of what the numbers tell them, and our numbers between programs would be appalling.

Senator LUDLAM: I do not want to lag here too long, but are you able to table any kind of methodology or the basis on which those were arrived at? I am not disputing them; I am just wondering if you could provide that for us.

Mr Brown: Certainly.

Answer:

SBS currently estimates that due to reductions in commercial revenues, removing in-program advertising would result in a shortfall of approximately \$45 million, or 90 per cent of SBS's revised forecast television advertising revenue of \$50 million for 2011/12.

SBS's consideration of how removal of in-program breaks would affect television advertising revenue is based on advice from an independent consulting firm. Based on the advice, SBS considers that its commercial model would be challenged if it were to revert to advertising between programs. This would contribute to a loss of confidence in SBS's product from media buyers. Coupled with increased competition from multichannels and their impact on SBS's share of audience, SBS considers these forecasts to be accurate.

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Question No: 61

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: Page 128 (25/05/2011)

Topic: Proportion of Advertising Funding received from the Government

Senator Ludlam asked:

Senator LUDLAM: What proportion of advertising funding do you receive from the government itself? Does the Commonwealth government or do any state governments run advertising on SBS and provide any fraction of your revenue stream?

Mr Brown: They do place advertising on SBS. I would have to take notice what current commitments there are in that area.

Senator LUDLAM: I would greatly appreciate that. That might be a way for SBS's funding to lift—if the fraction were shifted. I wonder, Minister, if I could ask you if that is something you have contemplated before? I know this is a whole-of-government question and I will get referred off to all sorts of other ministers and so on. But that is one way, without increasing the total spend of the Commonwealth budget, that advertising purchasing could be shifted across to this public broadcaster and perhaps even to community broadcasters. Could I ask if you could take on notice whether that has been contemplated or whether that might be a great idea.

Senator Conroy: I am happy to take that on notice.

Answer:

The proportion of Commonwealth and state government advertising revenue is approximately 14 per cent (2010/11 financial year to date).

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Question No: 62

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: Page 129 - 130 (25/05/2011)

Topic: Access to SBS via VAST

Senator Fisher asked:

Senator FISHER: Thank you. We look forward to hearing how you are going post your departure. On access to SBS via the VAST satellite service: do you have details, and maybe you want to provide this on notice, of the geographic areas that can only access SBS now—noting that digital is only partially rolled out—through VAST? And, of those geographic areas, which of them were not able to get you before because there was no digital terrestrial service even before?

Mr Brown: Or even analog.

Senator FISHER: And which have gone from basically terrestrial to satellite?

Senator Conroy: It would be fair to say, though, that there are many areas of Australia that cannot get anything at the moment. Is that right?

Mr Brown: Well, there are areas that have not received analog service either, so—

Senator FISHER: Yes, that is right; that is why I put it that way.

Mr Brown: So we see them in discrete groups.

Senator FISHER: If you were listening instead of wrapping up your cord, Minister.

Senator Conroy: I am listening.

Mr Brown: We have received funding in the latest budget to address some areas—I think about 46 or 47 sites—where analog self-help is now funded into a digital self-help proposition. And there are other ones that we are in discussion with the department about. That is in progress. But I will bring the details back on notice.

Answer:

The SBS analog terrestrial television network consists of 254 analog television transmitters, reaching an estimated 97 per cent of the Australian population. To date, 237 of these transmitters have been converted to digital, and two new digital services have been installed, reaching an estimated 97 per cent of the Australian population. Three other sites are currently being converted.

The remainder of Australian households can access an SBS analogue television service via the Optus Aurora satellite service by installing a satellite dish and decoder, provided they have a 'line of sight' to the satellite.

The SBS Aurora analog satellite service has also been retransmitted by community groups on a self-help basis. SBS has provided financial assistance to some of these groups through the SBS Self Help Retransmission Subsidy Scheme to help set up the self-help service.

The inclusion of the SBS digital television service on the VAST platform means that if the SBS digital service is not available terrestrially, if a household has a 'line of sight' to the VAST satellite, this will provide an alternative source for the service. The availability of the SBS digital television service on the VAST satellite platform effectively means that this service is available across the whole of Australia.

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SBS was provided with funding in the 2011-12 Budget to convert 46 SBS self-help analog television services to digital at sites where all other analog services are (or will be) converted to digital by the commercial broadcasters. Where an SBS analog self-help service is not converted to digital, households in the coverage areas will need to install satellite reception equipment in order to receive SBS's digital television services via the VAST satellite.

SBS has identified at least 44 sites where the ABC and at least two commercial broadcasting services are likely to be available as digital terrestrial services, but SBS won't, because it was never available as an analog terrestrial service. In these locations, SBS's digital services will be the only services that viewers will need to access through the VAST service, or alternatively establish a community self-help service. SBS considers that all free-to-air television broadcasting services – commercial and national – should be available to all households in an area from the same platform, either terrestrial or satellite.

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Question No: 63

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: Page 130 - 131 (25/05/2011)

Topic: Events De-listed

Senator Birmingham asked:

Senator BIRMINGHAM: Yes. And we might come back to the asterisk during the course of tomorrow. Has SBS ever suggested that any events be de-listed?

Mr Brown: I think we might have put a couple into the list. In some respects of course we were saying that, by saying 'unbundle', because the idea that a free-to-air broadcaster should sit in control of content and then not show it but sublicense it—if that were an acceptable balance to the audience at large then it made more sense in our view that the vendor should be entitled to have a direct relationship instead of a sublicensing arrangement. So, in a way, we were saying, 'de-list half of the NRL and AFL'; 'Give effect legislatively to what is actually happening in an adult fashion.'

Senator BIRMINGHAM: On notice, if you could provide anything additional or any requests that you have made, that would be appreciated. From SBS's perspective, do you think there is a relative level of clarity as to how the new regime is going to operate?

Mr Brown: Yes. Our interest was to see it sustainable and to acknowledge that there are many parties and many interests to be protected. So I think the unbundling does provide a sustainable model for the future.

Answer:

In its submission to the Government's Sport on Television Review in 2009, SBS submitted:

The Australian sports market already operates in a manner that effectively 'unbundles' the broadcasting of coverage across most major codes. This has resulted in pay-TV having exclusive rights to a significant number of games in the NRL and AFL competitions. For example, Channel Nine has exclusive rights to three NRL games a week; the remainder are shown exclusively on Fox Sports.

This arrangement appears to satisfy public expectations, while also reflecting the limits that apply to free-to-air broadcasters' appetite for volume coverage.

SBS suggests it would be appropriate to formalise this arrangement by requiring the anti-siphoning list to carry only a proportion of the weekly games of the NRL, AFL and A-League competitions. The remaining bundle of games could be sold to any broadcaster direct by the relevant sports body.

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Question No: 64

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Staffing

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. How many staff retrenchments have been made at SBS in the last 12 months?
- b. In what service areas were these staff retrenchments made and what was the basis for the retrenchments?

Answer:

- a. 31
- b.
 - Subtitling (including editors, video captioner, business manager and subtitlers): 16
– excess capacity.
 - News and Current Affairs: 7
– cost savings.
 - Television and Online Content: 4
– management restructure; cost savings; technology efficiencies.
 - Broadcast Operations: 3
– technology efficiencies.
 - Audio and Language Content: 1
– management restructure.

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Question No: 65

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Government Advertising

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. What communications programs has the agency undertaken, or are planning to undertake FYTD?
- b. For each program what is the total spend?

Answer:

- a. Nil.
- b. N/A.

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Question No: 66

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Freedom of Information

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. Has the agency within the portfolio received any advice on how to respond to FOI requests?
- b. How many FOI requests has the agency received?
- c. How many have been granted or denied?
- d. How many conclusive certificates have been issued in relation to FOI requests?

Answer:

- a. No.
- b. Nil (2010/2011 financial year to date).
- c. N/A.
- d. N/A.

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Question No: 67

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Media Monitoring

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. What was the total cost of media monitoring services, including press clippings, electronic media transcripts etc. Provided to the agency in FYTD?
- b. Which agency or agencies provided these services?

Answer:

- a. For the FYTD the total cost of media monitoring services for SBS was approximately \$131,000 (ex GST).
- b. Media Monitors; Media Link (Community Relations Commission).

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Question No: 68

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Social Media

Senator Fisher asked:

Has there been any changes to agency social media or protocols about staff access and usage of YouTube; online social media such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter; and access to online discussion forums and blogs since October 2010? If yes please explain.

Answer:

No.

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Question No: 69

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Contractors

Senator Fisher asked:

1. Has the agency within the portfolio ever employed Hawker Britton in any capacity or is it considering employing Hawker Britton? If yes, provide details:
2. Has the agency within the portfolio ever employed Shannon's Way in any capacity or is it considering employing Shannon's Way? If yes, provide details:
3. Has the agency within the portfolio ever employed John Utting and UMR Research Group in any capacity or is it considering employing John Utting and UMR Research Group? If yes, provide details:
4. Has the agency within the portfolio ever employed McCann-Erickson in any capacity or is it considering employing McCann-Erickson? If yes, provide details:
5. Has the agency within the portfolio ever employed Cutting Edge in any capacity or is it considering employing Cutting Edge? If yes, provide details:
6. Has the agency within the portfolio ever employed Ikon Communications in any capacity or is it considering employing Ikon Communications? If yes, provide details:
7. Has the agency within the portfolio ever employed CMAX Communications in any capacity or is it considering employing CMAX Communications? If yes, provide details:
8. Has the agency within the portfolio ever employed Boston Consulting Group in any capacity or is it considering employing Boston Consulting Group? If yes, provide details:
9. Has the agency within the portfolio ever employed McKinsey and Company in any capacity or is it considering employing McKinsey and Company? If yes, provide details:

Answer:

1. 9. No.

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Question No: 70

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Government Payments of Accounts

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. Has the agencies within the portfolio paid its accounts to contractors/consultants etc in accordance with Government policy in terms of time for payment (i.e. within 30 days)? If not, why not, and what has been the timeframe for payment of accounts? Please provide a breakdown, average statistics etc. as appropriate to give insight into how this issue is being approached.
- b. For accounts not paid within 30 days, is interest being paid on overdue amounts and if so how much has been paid by the portfolio/department agency for the current financial year and the previous financial year?
- c. Where interest is being paid, what rate of interest is being paid and how is this rate determined?

Answer:

- a. SBS is not subject to Government policy in this respect. SBS's policy in respect of contractors/consultants is generally payment in 14 days. For other payments, SBS's normal payment terms are 30 days. Payments are made in accordance with agreed terms of trade (generally 30 days or less) and SBS policy.
- b. Accounts are paid within the terms of trade. No interest is payable.
- c. N/A.

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Question No: 71

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Media Subscriptions

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. Does your agencies within the portfolio subscribe to pay TV (for example Foxtel)? If yes, please provide the reason why, the cost and what channels.
- b. Does your agencies within the portfolio subscribe to newspapers? If yes, please provide the reason why, the cost and what newspapers.
- c. Does your agencies within the portfolio subscribe to magazines? If yes, please provide the reason why, the cost and what magazines.

Answer:

- a. As the owner of two subscription television channels broadcast on the Foxtel and Austar platforms, SBS subscribes to Foxtel (all channels) at a cost of \$2,100 per month.
- b. & (c) SBS purchases newspapers and magazines (mainly newspapers – domestic and international) at a cost of approximately \$7,900 per month in order to keep abreast of local and international industry developments and news and current affairs coverage.

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Question No: 72

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Legal Costs

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. What sum did each portfolio agency within the portfolio spend on legal services FYTD within the department and agency? Please provide a list of each service and costs.
- b. What sum did each portfolio agency within the portfolio spend on legal services FYTD from the Australian Government Solicitor? Please provide a list of each service and costs.
- c. What sum did each portfolio agency within the portfolio spend on legal services FYTD from private firms? Please provide a list of each service and costs.
- d. What sum did each portfolio agency within the portfolio spend on legal services FYTD from other sources? Please provide a list of each service and costs.

Answer:

- a. \$898,986 (excl. GST). To provide a list of services and costs would be a very onerous task that would involve significant resources.
- b. Nil.
- c. \$316,298 (excl. GST). Unable to provide a list of services and costs as this information is commercial-in-confidence.
- d. Nil.

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Question No: 73

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Education Expenses

Senator Fisher asked:

Please detail all education expenses (i.e. in house courses and tertiary studies) for each portfolio agency. Include what type of course, the cost and how many participants.

Answer:

Cost of external professional development courses attended by SBS staff in 2010-11:

Course	Cost	No. participants
Coaching for Success	\$163,500	156
Personal Effectiveness	\$7,236	27

SBS is unable to provide any information regarding expected costs for 2011-12 as it has not finalised its learning curriculum for 2011-12, and approvals are made on a case by case basis.

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Question No: 74

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Executive Coaching and Leadership Training

Senator Fisher asked:

In relation to the purchase of executive coaching and/or other leadership training services purchases by each portfolio department or any agency within the portfolio, please provide the following information FYTD:

1. Total spending on these services.
2. The number of employees offered these services and their employment classification.
3. The number of employees who have utilised these services and their employment classification.
4. The names of all service providers engaged.

For each service purchased from a provider listed under (4), please provide:

- a. The name and nature of the service purchased.
- b. Whether the service is one-on-one or group based.
- c. The number of employees who received the service and their employment classification.
- d. The total number of hours involved for all employees.
- e. The total amount spent on the service.
- f. A description of the fees charged (i.e. per hour, complete package).

Where a service was provided at any location other than the department or agency's own premises, please provide:

- i. The location used.
- ii. The number of employees who took part on each occasion.
- iii. The total number of hours involved for all employees who took part.
- iv. Any costs the department or agency incurred to use the location.

Answer:

1. \$44,438.
2. 24; SBS Band 3 – 1; SBS Band 4 – 4; SBS Band 5 – 1; SBS Band 6 – 2; SBS Band 7 – 1; Contract – 14; SBS senior executive – 1.
3. 24; SBS Band 3 – 1; SBS Band 4 – 4; SBS Band 5 – 1; SBS Band 6 – 2; SBS Band 7 – 1; Contract – 14; SBS senior executive – 1.

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4. .

Potential Unlimited

- a. TeamWORKS Building Your Team – first line leadership.
- b. Group.
- c. 13; SBS Band 3 – 1; SBS Band 4 – 3; SBS Band 5 – 1; SBS Band 6 – 2; SBS Band 7 –1; Contract – 5.
- d. 190.
- e. \$5,538.
- f. \$5,538 (complete package).

Change First

- a. Change Practitioner’s Certification Program – middle level leadership.
- b. Group.
- c. 11; SBS Band 4 – 1; Contract – 9; SBS senior executive – 1.
- d. 167.
- e. \$38,500.
- f. \$38,500 (complete package).
 - i. Australian Institute of Management, North Sydney.
 - ii. 11.
 - iii. 167.
 - iv. \$400.

Note: SBS is not a Australian Public Service agency and employees are not employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*. SBS does not classify staff as SES/non-SES.

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Question No: 75

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Paid Parental Leave

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. Please list how many staff in each portfolio agency within the portfolio are eligible to receive payments under the Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme?
- b. Please list which portfolio agencies are providing its employees with payments under the Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme. Please list how many staff are in receipt of these payments.

Answer:

- a. Eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis by the Family Assistance Office.
- b. Nil.

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Question No: 76

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Workpoint Space

Senator Fisher asked:

1. For each portfolio agency office please list the occupied workpoint space allocated per person.
2. Does this adhere to the Government's Property Management Guidelines (the Guidelines)?
 - I. If yes, please explain if any refurbishment was required to meet the Guidelines and what the costs were.
 - a. What savings did each portfolio agency achieve by meeting the Guidelines? Please itemise each portfolio agency separately.
 - b. How much of these savings has each portfolio agency kept? Please itemise each portfolio agency separately.
 - II. If no, please give details why it does not, including whether an exemption has been received by the Finance Minister.
 - a. What funding has been taken from each portfolio agency because they do not meet the Guidelines? Please itemise each portfolio agency separately.
 - b. Are there plans to meet the Guidelines? Please explain.

Answer:

1. N/A. SBS is not subject to the Guidelines.
2. N/A. SBS is not subject to the Guidelines.

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Question No: 77

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Staffing

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. How many permanent staff recruited this FYTD?
- b. What classification are these staff?
- c. How many temporary positions exist or have been created this FYTD?
- d. This FYTD, how many employees have been employed on contract and what is the average length of their employment period?

Answer:

- a. 41.
- b. SBS Band 1 – 2; SBS Band 2 – 5; SBS Band 3 – 16; SBS Band 4 – 5; SBS Band 5 – 6; SBS Band 6 – 4; SBS Band 7 – 3.
- c. 69.
- d. (i) 20. (ii) 2½ years.

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Question No: 78

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Staffing – Efficiency Dividend/Budget Cuts

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. Have staffing numbers been reduced as a result of the efficiency dividend and/or other budget cuts?
- b. If so, where and at what classification.
- c. Are there any plans for staff reduction? If so, please advise details i.e. reduction target, how this will be achieved, services/programs to be cut etc.
- d. What changes are underway or planned for graduate recruitment, cadetships or similar programs? If reductions are envisaged please explain including reasons, target numbers etc.

Answer:

- a. SBS is not subject to the efficiency dividend and has not had its budget cut.
- b. N/A.
- c. No.
- d. In 2011, four cadetships were offered in the SBS News and Current Affairs journalism cadetship program. This included one Indigenous cadetship.

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Question No: 79

Program No. SBS

Hansard Ref: In Writing

Topic: Hospitality and Entertainment

Senator Fisher asked:

- a. What is the agency's hospitality spend FYTD?
- b. Please detail date, location, purpose and cost of all events.
- c. What is the agency's entertainment spend FYTD?
- d. Please detail date, location, purpose and cost of all events.

Answer:

The table below details the hospitality and entertainment spend for the FYTD

Date	Location	Purpose	Cost
23.09.10	Sydney	Media Federation Awards – advertising industry awards: table – commercial clients	\$2,000
19.11.10	Sydney	Andrew Olle Media Lecture 2010: table – corporate stakeholders	\$1,545
03.12.10	Sydney	B&T Awards – advertising, marketing, media and communications awards: table – commercial clients (also included sponsorship of an award and advertising)	\$10,000
13.04.11	Sydney	2011 Sydney Institute Annual Dinner: table – corporate stakeholders	\$2,400
27.05.11	Melbourne	Melbourne Hall of Fame – advertising industry event: table – commercial clients	\$2,000
15.06.11	Canberra	Federal Parliament Press Gallery Midwinter Ball: table – corporate stakeholders	\$17,500

Note: All figures provided are GST exclusive