



Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Inquiry: Inquiry into the cultural and creative industries in Victoria

Hearing Date: 27 February 2025

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Received Date: 21 March 2025

1. Asked by David Davis, p. 30

Question Asked:

David DAVIS: I just want to explain why I am just about to talk about some figures, and I see some of your helpful figures here. I thought I might start with those: 937 paid staff – I make that, out of your annual report, 854 equivalent full-time.

Mark TAPLEY: That is probably a more recent statistic. I think that was December, we said in our submission.

David DAVIS: That is paid staff? But that is not equivalent full-time, is it?

Mark TAPLEY: No, I believe for FTE the figure – you lower the nominator and the denominator – is around 800.

David DAVIS: 800?

Mark TAPLEY: Yes. So it still works out to be in the order of 18 per cent of our staff that are Victorian based.

David DAVIS: Yes, I got around 18 to 19 per cent. I wonder if you could provide us with a comprehensive breakdown of that by state across the nation so that we can actually see the EFT, but the spending that goes with it, because I suspect that Sydney is also top-heavy on executives.

Mark TAPLEY: I can probably do some of that on notice, Mr Davis.

Response:

Please refer to the below table that provides a breakdown of ABC FTE staff nationwide along with the staffing costs associated with each state and territory.

State	Headcount		Full Time Equivalent (FTE)		Staff Costs	
	#	%	#	%	\$	%
ACT	189	3.8%	163.4	3.7%	23,192,860	3.6%
NSW	2414	47.9%	2149.6	48.9%	330,949,648	51.9%
NT	117	2.3%	102.4	2.3%	13,394,232	2.1%
QLD	611	12.1%	520.0	11.8%	71,739,060	11.2%
SA	325	6.4%	285.8	6.5%	37,055,270	5.8%
TAS	161	3.2%	131.9	3.0%	17,060,475	2.7%
VIC	937	18.6%	803.2	18.3%	111,498,816	17.5%
WA	268	5.3%	222.9	5.1%	29,630,576	4.6%
Overseas	18	0.4%	18.0	0.4%	3,442,442	0.5%
All ABC	5040	100.0%	4397.1	100.0%	637,963,380	100.0%

Headcount and FTE based on employees paid in the fortnight ended 1 December 2024.
Staff Costs based on employees paid in the 12 months to 1 December 2024.

2. Asked by David Davis, p. 30

Question Asked:

David DAVIS: And you mentioned that across four years you commissioned 75 projects to a value of \$157 million.

Mark TAPLEY: That was our contribution. The total value of those productions was –

David DAVIS: Okay. That is your contribution. I get that.

Mark TAPLEY: And just to clarify, they are productions where the majority of activity took place in Victoria. There will be other productions where there was still activity in Victoria, but it was not the majority.

David DAVIS: Yes. Well, what I would like are the equivalent figures for some of the other states, because certainly what everyone tells me is that New South Wales still gets a significantly greater share.

Response:

The Total ABC contributions for both ABC internal and external co-commissioned productions for the 5-year period of FY 2019/20 to FY2023/24 was \$728 million with the total yearly average of \$145 million.

The table below attributes expenditure to the state or territory where the majority of production activity and expenditure took place.

State or Territory	Total over 5 Year Period (FY20 to FY24)	5 Year Average (FY20 to FY24)	Percentage of 5 Year Average (%)
NSW	\$385.48 M	\$77.10 M	53%
VIC	\$243.57 M	\$48.71 M	33%
WA	\$14.57 M	\$2.91 M	2%
ACT	\$4.66 M	\$0.93 M	1%
NT	\$2.62 M	\$0.52 M	0%
SA	\$18.18 M	\$3.64 M	2%
TAS	\$18.73 M	\$3.75 M	3%
QLD	\$40.27 M	\$8.05 M	6%

3. **Asked by David Davis, p. 32**

Question Asked:

David DAVIS: With the radio networks, you have got the local radio stations as well, and with the content there, what is the share of local and – ‘imported’ is the wrong word.

Mark TAPLEY: You are asking how much is networked across the state versus local?

David DAVIS: Yes, how much is networked?

Mark TAPLEY: I would have to get that on notice for you. I know most locations have a local breakfast show. Some places –

David DAVIS: That is my experience, but I am not just relying on my experience; I would be interested to see some figure work on that.

Response:

The ABC operates the following local radio services in Victoria.

ABC Melbourne
ABC Goulburn Murray
ABC Shepparton
ABC Gippsland
ABC Central Victoria
ABC Ballarat
ABC South West Victoria
ABC Wimmera
ABC Mildura Swan Hill

These services provide 14 hours of local and Victorian programming and 10 hours of network programming

LOCAL PROGRAMMING:

6.15am: Rural Reports (East and West reports on all Regional Vic stations)
6.30am: Local breakfast programs including local news bulletins at 6.30am, 7.30am and headlines at 8.30am.
9.00-11.00am: Statewide Regional Victoria Mornings program, hosted by Nic Healey.
12.00-1.00pm: Statewide Regional Vic Country Hour program, hosted by Warwick Long

3.00-6.00pm: Statewide Regional Victoria Drive program, hosted by Prue Bentley

ABC Melbourne PROGRAMS ON REGIONAL VICTORIAN STATIONS:

11.00am: Conversations from 774

1.30-3.00pm: Afternoons with Bridget Duclos from 774

7.00pm: Evenings with David Astle from 774

NETWORK PROGRAMS ON REGIONAL VICTORIAN STATIONS:

6.00am: AM with Sabre Lane (30 mins)

1.00pm: The World Today (30 mins)

6.00pm: PM with Samantha Donovan (30 mins)

6.30pm: Australia Wide (30 mins)

10.00pm: Nightlife (4 hours)

2.00am: Overnights (4 hours)

FRIDAY AFTERNOON:

1.30-3.00pm: Friday Review from ABC Melbourne

3.00-5.00pm: Local Drive Statewide regional Vic with Prue Bentley

5.00-6.00pm: Thank God It's Friday, with Charlie Pickering from ABC Melbourne

SATURDAY MORNING:

6.00-9.00am: Regional Victoria Statewide Breakfast program with Gavin McGrath

9.00-11.00am: Regional Victoria Stateside Mornings program with Matt Tribe (rest of day is from ABC Melbourne)

4. Asked by Richard Welch, p. 34

Question Asked:

Richard WELCH: Thank you, Sacha, and thank you, Mark, for coming in. With the figures that you have presented in your submission, it is very hard to calibrate them because they are not against any benchmarks. For example, under economic contribution here, you mention the fact that you have made 102 projects over the last three years, so that is 30 ABC-commissioned projects per year, and in content production with the independent sector, 75 over roughly five years, so roughly 15 programs per year. That is 30 and 15 per year. How many –

Mark TAPLEY: Sorry, Mr Welch, they are different time periods. The first set of numbers you referred to –

Richard WELCH: No, but I am averaging them – both.

Mark TAPLEY: Okay.

Richard WELCH: The average is 15 per year for the five-year one, and the average is 30 per year for the three-year one. What is the equivalent number coming out of New South Wales?

Mark TAPLEY: That is a similar question that I got from Mr Davis, and I will come back to the committee with some more data on that. The data that I do have is referred to in that Deloitte report, which is footnoted. In the first set of numbers, the three-year period you talked about, that was 102 in Victoria versus 433 nationwide, so it was around 23 per cent that.

Response:

In reference to the three-year period FY2017/18 to 2019/20 from the Deloitte report, Victoria had 102 (24%) projects which contributed \$208 million (28%) to the state economy and supported more than 2,433 FTE roles (28%) across multiple sectors. Comparing to NSW there were 247 (57%) projects which contributed \$353 million (47%) to the state economy and supported more than 3,839 FTE roles (46%).

After the Deloitte report over the last 5 years, FY2019/20 to FY 2023/24, the ABC has commissioned 91 external projects with the independent sector where the majority of production has taken place in Victoria. The ABC has committed \$170 million to these projects. Collectively they will generate over 350 hours of content. The total production budget of these projects is almost \$330 million. In addition to these external projects, over the same period the ABC spent \$73 million on 53 internal projects.

By comparison over the same period the ABC has commissioned 168 external projects with the independent sector where the majority of production has taken place in NSW. The ABC has committed \$217 million to these projects. Collectively they will generate over 600 hours of content. The total production budget of these projects exceeds \$497 million. In addition to these external projects, over the same period the ABC spent \$177 million on 199 internal projects.

5. **Asked by Evan Mulholland, p. 38**

Question Asked:

Evan MULHOLLAND: I had a similar question to David and Richard in terms of particularly the numbers you have pointed out – the full-time equivalent roles and the economic contribution numbers – to see if we can at least match that against New South Wales, who we are often in competition with.

I also note, while we are on the topic of numbers, there are about 151 staff at the ABC who earn over \$250,000. It would be interesting for the committee to know how many of those people are based in Victoria. Obviously we want economic benefit flowing to the state as well, and it is always good to have people who can earn that much, but it would be nice to know if it is that top-heavy elsewhere or in Victoria.

Mark TAPLEY: I can take that on notice for you.

Response:

Please refer to the response in Question 1 in regards to the state comparison of full-time equivalent roles and associated costs between NSW and Victoria.

The 2023/24 Annual Report shows that there were 166 ABC staff earning over \$250000. This included 25 based in Victoria.

6. **Asked by Evan Mulholland, p. 38–39**

Question Asked:

Evan MULHOLLAND: And just on the point that Gaelle raised about Parramatta, were any other options considered?

Mark TAPLEY: I am not an industrial lawyer, but there is an issue that arises around redundancies if you are trying to move people. And please, I know it is going in Hansard, so I do not want to be quoted on this, but there is a hook around how far you can direct people to move beyond where they work now.

David DAVIS: So we have to live with them all in Sydney forevermore – is that the conclusion?

Mark TAPLEY: We have a head office, like most other institutions, and it is in Sydney. I think what I would say on that is we do have to balance this desire to represent the board and management have to balance the desire to represent the breadth and diversity of the country with also an imperative that is in the legislation about efficiency. So there is this tension around –

Evan MULHOLLAND: Yes, I just would have thought if you are conscious of geographical share, given that almost 50 per cent of staff are in New South Wales and about 20 per cent are in Victoria, it might have been a good way to even that out. I understand the reasons for Parramatta – very multicultural, different perspective to Ultimo – but I would have thought in somewhere like Broadmeadows you would have got the same outcome and an equal number, or you could try to at least match those numbers a bit for the people of Victoria.

Mark TAPLEY: I think there were cost and industrial implications around moving people. I understand the committee’s interest in the headcount, and I will take that on notice. I would just emphasise that the ABC’s impact does go beyond that headcount. Most of the things that Sacha has been talking about, that working with the independent production sector, we do not make drama in-house, but we are able to use the money and invest it in partnership with local cultural institutions and the independent production sector. So we can have an impact around the country that is beyond just the headcount in the relevant cities.

Response:

The ABC announced in June 2021 the intention to relocate around 300 employees from its Ultimo headquarters to new facilities in Parramatta. Approximately 1 in 10 Australians live in Western Sydney, and it is one of the fastest growing corridors in the country.

With rapid changes in the media sector, this initiative was an opportunity to create a new, inclusive work environment utilising the latest technology, and designed to improve engagement with more parts of Sydney.

In determining Parramatta as the location for the move the ABC was mindful of its obligations under the ABC’s Enterprise Agreement 2022-2025 (the **Enterprise Agreement**). The Enterprise Agreement provides the processes that the ABC must comply with in relation to managing change and redundancies, which includes considering the impact of relocating staff to another workplace.

Under the Enterprise Agreement an employee is redundant when their function is transferred to another location that is not within reasonable commuting distance of their current location, they are not willing to relocate and there is no suitable alternative position available within reasonable commuting distance.

Consequently the ABC did have to consider the possible costs if the location was not within a reasonable commuting distance of a current ABC location.

The number of state departments and agencies within the Parramatta area such as the Department of Planning, Department of Education, Environment Protection Authority and NSW Police Headquarters was a key draw factor along with the need to better represent the population of Sydney.

Parramatta has had significant cultural projects, including the Power House museum and Riverside Theatre developments which also supported our relocation to Parramatta.

ABC Southbank was redeveloped around 7 years ago to enhance the ABC's presence in Melbourne and capacity to serve the people of Victoria, provide greater offering to ABC staff in Victoria and provide a greater connection to the Victorian people.

7. **Asked by Evan Mulholland, p. 39**

Question Asked:

Evan MULHOLLAND: ABC spends quite a lot on advertising. I think last round it was about \$12.52 million on advertising and quite a bit on audience research, promotions and things like that. Would you be able to let me know what your spend is – because we see a lot of signs at tram stops and things like that – if you spend at all in regional newspapers?

Mark TAPLEY: I will have to take that on notice. There is a spend there – I would say it is pretty small relative to other competitors in the category. We do feel like we have an obligation, given taxpayers have paid for the content, that they need to be made aware of what is available to them. But I take on board your question about regional spend, and I will come back to you.

Response:

It is important for all Australians to hear and know about the content and services the ABC offers, to deliver as much value back to taxpayers as possible. The ABC's modest budget for marketing is significantly lower than our commercial competitors. The changes in expenditure also reflect significant cost increases for data research that are affecting the entire industry. Industry data costs for video, audio and digital have all increased over the past year as the industry seeks to make improvements to measurement. Other increases include rising costs for ABC iview to remain discoverable on specific platforms on new smart TVs.

For the last financial year (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024), the ABC spent \$21.4m on advertising, promotions and audience research as split below:

Type	TOTAL (\$m)
Advertising	12.5
Audience Research	7.5
Promotions	1.4
TOTAL (\$m)	21.4

Advertising spend includes paid advertising across channels including out of home, cinema, online video, social and search. The ABC did not run any paid advertising in regional newspapers in FY24.

Audience Research mainly covers the amounts the ABC pays to be included in OzTam Ratings, but also includes amounts paid to Commercial Radio Australia and Nielsen Online.

Promotions covers a range of items including newsletters, presentations and database management.

- **Asked by David Davis, p. 40**

Question Asked:

David DAVIS: Over time or something. The other point that I think would be helpful is a detailed organisational chart to understand these divisions and the classifications of the various people. I do not expect you to have that now, so that would be something to take on notice. And the board – it is only just recently that the ABC appointed a Victorian. There was a significant hiatus where there was no Victorian at all on the board.

Response:

The ABC has staff based in offices and bureaux Australia wide.

Appointments to the ABC Board are a matter for the Government of the day. Over the last 20 years, the ABC Board has had an almost continuous service of Victoria-based members, including Steven Skala (2005–2015) and Joe Gersh (2018–2023). In October 2024, the Government appointed the Melbourne-based director Katrina Sedgwick to the ABC Board.

There are a number of senior ABC management and decision-making roles based in Victoria including:

Content (Screen)

- Chief Partnerships & Negotiation Officer
- Head of Commissioning & Content Planning
- Head of Production

Audio

- Manager, Radio National
- Head of Capital City Network & Sport
- Head of triple j, Double J & ABC Country
- Manager, Double J & ABC Country
- Content Director, triple j
- Content Director Sport
- Group Content Director, CCN
- Manager, ABC Local Melbourne
- Content Director, ABC Classic & ABC Jazz
- Executive Producer, Programs

News

- Managing Editor, Asia Pacific
- Editor, Specialist Reporting Team

- Victoria Metro Editor
- Deputy Metro Editor
- Regional Editor, Victoria
- Deputy Regional Editor
- Bureau Chief, 7.30
- Manager, Community Impact & Events
- Manager, Digital Content & Strategy
- Executive Producer, News Breakfast
- Executive Producer, Insiders
- Deputy Editor, Indigenous Affairs Reporting Team
- Election Co-ordinator
- Key Stories Editor

Strategy

- Director of Strategy
- Head of Communications
- Head of Corporate Affairs

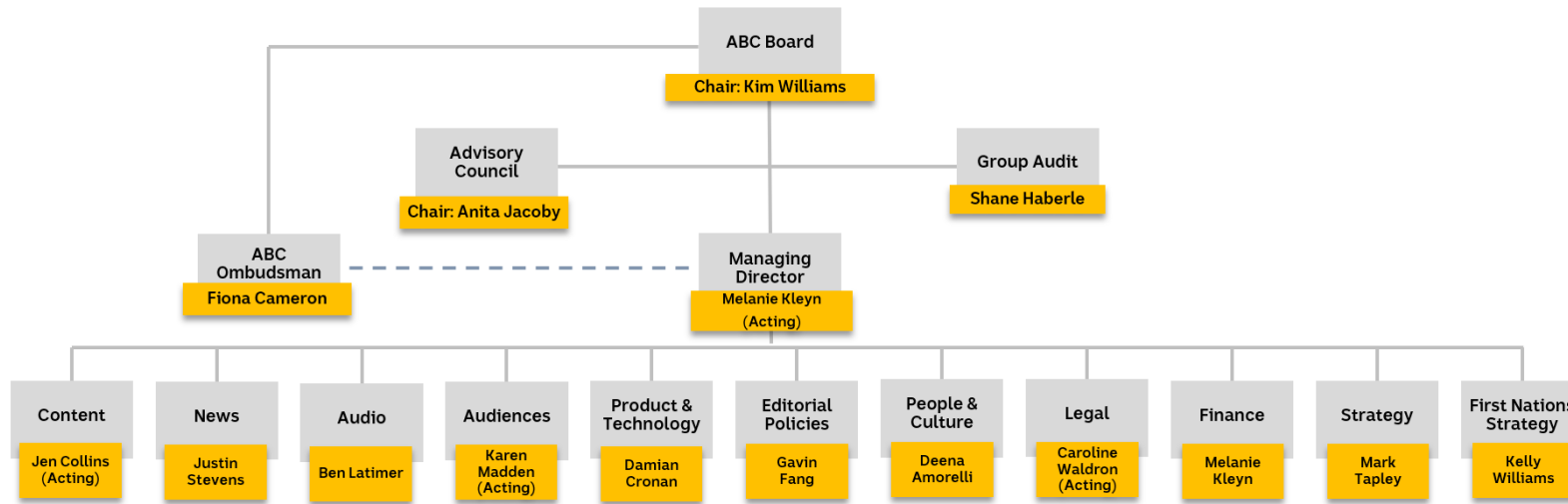
Product and Technology

- Head of Content Management & Distribution



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The ABC: Organisational structure (as at February 2025)





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8. Asked by David Davis, p. 40

Question Asked:

David DAVIS: I am hoping that is picked up. Finally, what was the cost of the move to Parramatta?

Mark TAPLEY: I will confirm that number for you, but the net cost, as I said, was borne by the ABC.

David DAVIS: It is still public money.

Mark TAPLEY: I understand that. But I want to get the number right for you, so I will take that on notice.

Response:

The Sydney Accommodation Project brings together the elements of work required to deliver the new ABC site in Parramatta along with the staged refurbishment and restack of the Ultimo site, allowing the ABC to sub-let up to 7 floors of the Ultimo tower.

There will be nil additional cost to the taxpayer in the delivery of the project, as the costs for delivery are supported via the sale of aging assets and the sub-leasing of up to seven floors of the ABC's Ultimo facility.

Total project spend to date is \$66.4m at February 2025, with some \$0.8m still to be incurred in finalising the project within the budget of \$67.2m.

Of this, Parramatta spend to February 2025 is \$39.1m with some \$0.4m still to be incurred, mostly within the Technology fit out component of the work.