



Legislative Council Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Inquiry: Inquiry into the cultural and creative industries in Victoria

Hearing Date: 12 March 2025

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Special Broadcasting Service

Received Date: 10 April 2025

1. Asked by Gaelle Broad, p. 42

Question Asked:

Gaelle BROAD: The previous witness from the Association of Artist Managers called for SBS to increase representation of Victorian artists in their programming, and they mentioned ensuring spending aligns with population and cultural contribution in Victoria. What is your response to their submission? I am not sure if you had a chance to hear them live.

Chris IRVINE: I am afraid we did not.

Clare O'NEIL: No, I am afraid we have not. I am happy to take that on notice if you would like us to read it, look at their evidence and then address it directly.

Response:

To respond to this question, SBS has reviewed the publicly available submission from the Association of Artist Managers (AAM) to the Inquiry into the cultural and creative industries in Victoria and the transcript provided for the AAM's appearance before the committee on Wednesday 12 March 2025. In its submission the AAM calls for both the SBS and ABC to ensure that the representation of Victoria music artists in programming, and associated spending, aligns with the state's population and cultural contributions. In its appearance before the committee, the AAM notes that it does not have data available on this topic.

SBS acknowledges the request for information relating to the representation of Victorian music artists compared to other states and territories. SBS and NITV are devoted to telling stories the stories of, and reflecting, Australia's multilingual, multicultural and First Nations communities. This includes programming of music from Australia and from countries around the world, much of it in languages other than English.

SBS's internal systems do not track or capture location-specific data for SBS's spending on, or representation of, music artists across the network.

SBS provides significant platforms and representation of music artists in various ways and in doing so, play an important role in boosting the visibility of Australian music artists from diverse communities, including those from Victoria. This includes interviews with music artists and features on artists, festivals, and events, which are delivered through multi-platform services that reach audiences across Australia, including SBS News, NITV News (Nula), and SBS Audio which provides content in over 60 languages. Examples include NITV's coverage of Always Live, the live broadcasting of the National Indigenous Music Awards (NIMAs); and a wide range of other events including the St Kilda Festival, Yirramboi Festival, and Treaty Day Out.

2. Asked by Michael Galea, p. 44

Question Asked:

Michael GALEA: Thank you, Chair. It is another party. Thank you very much, both, for joining us today. It is great to have an iconic broadcaster such as the SBS join us. I note from your submission that you noted that there are 192 full-time employees equivalent in Victoria, 14 per cent of your staff. Do you have that breakdown by each state and territory?

Clare O'NEIL: I do not have a breakdown of FTEs. In our annual report is the breakdown of –

David DAVIS: 172 is what you say in the annual report.

Clare O'NEIL: Yes. That number does not include casuals. A number of our staff are casuals, so that is the differential in the number. It is 192 FTE. I do not have that breakdown state by state, but I can take that on notice.

Michael GALEA: Sure, if you can take that on notice, that would be terrific.

Response:

'Full time equivalent' (FTE) is a measure of total hours worked by employees relative to a full-time workload. This includes all full-time and part-time employees and casual staff. FTE is calculated by employees'

total hours of work in a fortnight divided by the standard full-time fortnightly work hours.

FTE is a different measure to the ongoing and non-ongoing employee headcount that SBS regularly reports on through its Annual Reports. The ongoing and non-ongoing employee headcount measures the number of individual staff members, excluding casual staff and Board members.

As at 31 January 2025, SBS had the following FTE count (note, this is a point in time figure capturing FTE for all active employees):

- 192 in Victoria (14%)
- 1,108 in New South Wales (82%)
- 18 in the Australian Capital Territory (1%)
- 3 in the Northern Territory (<1%)
- 16 in Queensland (1%)
- 7 in South Australia (<1%)
- 2 in Tasmania (<1%)
- 7 in Western Australia (<1%)
- 2 Overseas (<1%)

**Note: numbers may not add to 100% due to rounding.*

When calculating the FTE count as a **year-to-date average** (i.e., the average FTE count between 1 July 2024 and 31 January 2025), the proportion of FTE across each state and territory is the same as the proportions above.

3. Asked by Michael Galea, p. 45

Question Asked:

Michael GALEA: Sure. There is immense community work that you do in supporting many wonderful festivals across the state, and I do notice there are some in the outer suburbs of Melbourne in the list you have provided us as well. I could not see any in the south-east, though. Are you aware of any in the south-east suburbs that you have supported in the previous financial year?

Clare O'NEIL: I can take that on notice. My Melbourne geography is not good enough, I am afraid, to be able to know which are the south-east suburbs.

Response:

SBS participates in a wide range of cultural celebrations and community events that are hosted across Victoria, and Australia, by different organisations. SBS's program of events across Victoria changes year to year, as we seek to engage with a diverse range of communities while working within our resource constraints. As SBS is a participating organisation in these events, rather than the organiser, we do not choose their location. However, we endeavour to participate in a wide range of events across the state.

SBS did not participate in a community festival in the south-east metropolitan region of Melbourne in the 2023-24 financial year. We participated in an event in the region in April 2023 (the Sinhalese and Tamil annual new year festival in Dandenong) and will be participating in events in 2025 (including the Holland Festival 2025 in Scoresby on 15 March 2025, and the Sinhalese and Tamil annual new year festival in Dandenong on 6 April 2025).

4. Asked by David Davis, p. 47

Question Asked:

David DAVIS: But we actually think that – and I might be speaking for a few members here – there is probably a good understanding that this is the sort of information that we would be interested in. I finally want to just understand the forward projections by SBS of its audience and so forth and the viewership. Is there any material that you can provide us on, with respect to Victoria, what the viewership is and what your projections for it are?

Clare O'NEIL: Chris, do you want to have a go at that?

Chris IRVINE: I am not sure I understand the question in terms of projections. We can certainly break down audience metrics geographically.

David DAVIS: That would be helpful, thank you.

Chris IRVINE: We can take that question on notice. In terms of the projection part of that question, I am not sure we can answer that.

Response:

SBS's network reaches 3.42 million people every month in Victoria via TV broadcast and its broadcast video on demand service, SBS on Demand.

This translates to 49% of the Victorian population, according to the OzTAM VOZ database.

5. Asked by Richard Welch, p. 50

Question Asked:

Richard WELCH: Just on that, it says here that you have commissioned over the last four years 83 hours in Victoria. So that – I am doing quick maths – is about half an hour a week over those 4 hours. How does that compare to what is commissioned in New South Wales?

The CHAIR: That can maybe be taken on notice if you prefer.

Richard WELCH: I am happy for that to be on notice.

Clare O'NEIL: SBS commissions very few premium dramas. I could –

Richard WELCH: Sorry to interrupt; I do not want to. Just qualitatively, it is not the fact of the volume; I want to see what the proportion is.

Clare O'NEIL: Yes, we can take that on notice.

Chris IRVINE: The question specifically was New South Wales. I have got the global number in front of me in terms of what that 83 hours is of the whole four-year delivery, but I do not have the New South Wales number, so I will take that on notice.

Response:

SBS's total external content production hours amounted to 414 hours between July 2021 and February 2025. Of those hours, about 20% were produced in Victoria and about 33% were produced in New South Wales.

SBS further produces commissioned content for audiences across Australia from its established studios in Artarmon, Sydney, which is highly cost efficient. SBS produced 487 hours of unscripted TV content from this studio over the past four years, including shows such as *Mastermind Australia* and *The Cook Up with Adam Liaw*.

6. Asked by Richard Welch, p. 51

Question Asked:

Michael GALEA: Thank you for indulging me. Just on Ms Copsey's question earlier around opt-outs for advertising, you have said that you are a leader in that. I was actually only aware of that because you or a colleague mentioned that in a Senate estimates hearing. What is the take-up rate of that and are you doing anything to more widely publicise that option?

Clare O'NEIL: We are actually in the middle of a big push now of emailing all of our SBS On Demand subscribers to advise them of the availability of the service. I think that has resulted in a reasonable uptick in the number of people that have taken it up. I could not tell you the figure today because I am sure it is different to what it was last week, but I can take that on notice.

Response:

In 2024 SBS launched a new feature on SBS On Demand that gives audiences the capability to opt-out of advertisements for particular products, and services (betting/ wagering excluding lotteries, alcohol, and quick service restaurants).

In addition to publicity when the service was originally announced and launched, we have publicised this feature online with information on SBS's website (on our help centre) and sent our 4.5 million SBS On Demand email subscribers a newsletter between late February to early March 2025 that included a reminder about this feature.

This recent mailout resulted in an additional 50 subscribers choosing to opt of an advertising category on SBS On Demand, bringing the total number of users who have chosen to opt out of certain advertisements to 1,827 as of 11/3/25.