



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

PROOF

Federation Chamber

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

SPEECH

Monday, 5 February 2018

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

SPEECH

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Speaker Wilson, Josh, MP	Question No.

Mr JOSH WILSON (Fremantle) (10:36): It's no surprise that the ABC continues to be far and away the most trusted source of news in this country, including in my electorate of Fremantle. It's no surprise that Australians from every part of this continent look to the ABC for essential information, especially in rural and regional areas. I know that the ABC has a distinctive function in WA, as the largest and most remote state in the Federation. But, despite promising there would be no cuts to the ABC, the truth is that under this government more than \$250 million of funding has been ripped out and more than 600 jobs have been lost, and that damage has been disproportionately inflicted on the ABC in the west.

Way back in 1974, 8.3 per cent of the ABC workforce was based in WA—remembering that we have about 10 per cent of the population. Last year, that was down to 4.6 per cent, and under this government ABC staff numbers in WA have plummeted. It's not because new technology has made jobs or tasks redundant; it's because jobs are being centralised unnecessarily in Sydney and Melbourne and because local services and capacity are being dropped. In WA at present, there is no front-of-house reception, there is no general manager position and there are no workplace relations, human resources or finance personnel, which makes life hard for WA staff, especially when there's a three-hour time difference. And in rural WA, which is one-third of the continent, there is no WA reporter for *Landline*. Instead, a Sydney-based reporter is flown across three times a year.

There is currently no outside broadcast capability in WA. If the OB van is requested and approved for use, it is literally driven across the Nullarbor. And when bureaus around Australia were asked to pitch for new programs through the ABC Content Fund, WA got exactly zero projects. Indeed, all were in Sydney and Melbourne.

ABC staff are being asked to maintain an incredible tradition of service and quality while made subject to relentless restructuring, redeployment and job losses. They are regularly under fire from those who don't like independent journalism, who don't like scrutiny, who don't believe in climate change and who think there shouldn't be a fair examination of those in privilege and power, and yet they push on doing work that is intrinsic to who we are and intrinsic to how this nation works at its best.

I want to pay tribute to the work of the Community and Public Sector Union across Australia, but particularly the WA branch of the CPSU and its regional secretary, my friend, Sue Bowers. The CPSU continues to fight with, and on behalf of, ABC staff but, in essence, they are fighting on our behalf in defence of Australia's national broadcaster. They are fighting on our behalf in defence of a foundation stone of our democracy and our culture. People should never forget that the Abbott-Turnbull government promised they wouldn't touch funding to the ABC. That was a lie. Our ABC has been damaged, and we are all the poorer for that.