EDITORIAL REVIEW 11

Review of the impartiality and diversity of perspectives in the ABC's coverage of proposed changes to backpacker tax arrangements.

Background

The ABC Board has a statutory duty to ensure that the gathering and presentation of news and information is accurate and impartial: section 8(1)(c), Australian Broadcasting Act 1983 (Cth).

The ABC Editorial Policies set out the editorial and ethical principles and standards fundamental to the ABC's gathering and presentation of content. Standard 4.1 of the Editorial Policies requires news and information to be gathered and presented with due impartiality. Standard 4.2 requires that a diversity of perspectives be presented so that, over time, no significant strand of thought or belief within the community is knowingly excluded or disproportionately represented. The principles underpinning the standards in section 4 explain that, in applying the impartiality standard, the ABC is guided by several hallmarks including that of providing opportunities over time for principle relevant perspectives on matters of contention to be expressed. The Guidance Note on Impartiality further explains the concepts in and application of Section 4 of the Editorial Policies.

Scope and Subject

On 11th May 2015, the Australian Government handed down its budget. It included a proposal to change tax arrangements for international students and other young travellers working temporarily in Australia. The proposal was that anyone working in Australia on a working holiday visa would lose access to the tax-free threshold.

The measure was controversial and its introduction was delayed in the lead-up to the 2016 Federal Election. The Government announced that it would review the measure if it were reelected,

The Turnbull Government was returned to power following the July election, and on August 15th 2016 it announced a review of the measure.

Following the review, a compromise measure was announced by the Government and a new bill was introduced to Parliament in early October. Following further debate inside and outside Parliament and further changes to the proposal, the bill was passed on December 2nd 2016.

This review will focus on the coverage of the issue the ABC, to determine whether all perspectives on the issue were appropriately included and impartiality was achieved.

Time span: 15th August 2016 to 2nd December 2016.

<u>Programs & Services</u>: All news, current affairs and topical coverage of the issue across Radio and Regional programming on the ABC as well as coverage in news and current affairs content across all platforms.

Reviewer

Garry Bailey is a former Editor of the Mercury Newspaper in Hobart. Mr Bailey has more than 45 years' experience reporting and editing for rural and regional news publications.

Research Questions

The research questions to be answered are:

- 1. Were packaged reports, interviews, backgrounders, investigations and any other analysis impartial and constructed as objectively as possible, reflecting an appropriate diversity of relevant perspectives?
- 2. Were any perspectives either misrepresented or unduly favoured?
- 3. Were any relevant perspectives or context absent from the reports, interviews and discussions that should have been included to ensure appropriately accurate and balanced coverage of the issue?
- 4. Were the voices given a fair opportunity to express their views, having regard to the significance of the interest represented and to the amount of time given and prominence assigned to each interview?
- 5. Did the ABC's coverage succeed in appropriately covering the issue both as a political debate but also as an issue of substance affecting the community.

Methodology

A draft review, based on 84 program segments selected by ABC management, was submitted to the ABC and comments sought from program makers.

The News division and the Regional division submitted comments on the draft review.

As a result of the Regional division's comments, a further 48 program segments were submitted for review.

Of those 48 programs, only nine had links still available to the content online and there was one audio package submitted.

In the case of the 38 programs without online links or audio, the reviewer was supplied with notes from producers and interviewers, where still available.

The Regional response also submitted links to programs outside the review period and supplied a list of 69 separate regional programs that dealt in some form with the backpacker tax.

Reviewers can only act on the material put before them, so the strong response from Regional to the draft report raises a fundamental issue: how material for review is selected.

As ABC News, in its response to the draft report, said:

Because of the long lead-up to the final political resolution of the tax and the wide range of programs involved at various times, the scope of the review was necessarily limited and a significant volume of coverage has not been captured. This may have affected the perception that the coverage lacked a diversity of perspectives and 'voices'.

ABC Regional, in commenting on the task set for the reviewer by the ABC, as outlined in the section on Scope and Subject, said:

It's important that any review of content created by the ABC Regional network is understanding of the division's structure, ensuring its content is reviewed in its entirety and the breadth of its services are included. It is concerning to the Division that it is noted on Page 2 that the review takes in "all news, current affairs and topical coverage of the issue across Radio and Regional programming on the ABC as well as coverage in news and current affairs content across all platforms", however not one item is included from Local Radio programs in the Regional division or Capital City Network, which covered this issue extensively.

This final review is therefore the result of an initial review of 84 program segments, the comments by News and Regional on that first draft, and the analysis of a further 48 program segments selected following Regional's feedback to management.

Introduction

The voices were many in the long public debate on the backpacker tax in 2016. Politicians, farmers, backpackers, industry leaders, country folk, city folk.

There was anger, bemusement, puzzlement, pessimism, optimism.

There were many threads to the story, some of them if gently pulled by journalistic inquiry, unravelling arguments across the political spectrum.

And there was complexity that needed explaining and the essential immutable facts of the story that had to march in lock-step with the changing nature of the debate.

Overlaying that were the pressures across the ABC reporting teams to align their reporting with the ABC editorial policies, which this review seeks to examine and to test. And of course, within that framework, to deliver content that informs, entertains and stays fresh on the vine.

The context of this review is important: there is no information available to the reviewer on any of the daily challenges of journalism that might have weighed on reporters, producers, program hosts, and senior editors in compiling the 132 separate items evaluated here: time, space, availability of people important to the narrative and the balance, the pressures to deliver across multiple platforms, and to make coverage of a substantial public issue of national scope compelling listening, watching and reading.

The essential elements of the backpacker tax debate that needed to be addressed are the focus of this review. They were:

- The tax, its history, its complexity and the tax regimes for various visa categories for temporary foreign workers coming to Australia.
- The impact of the tax on farmers who say they rely on backpackers for a large part of their seasonal labour.
- The impact of the tax on the tourism industry which relies on backpackers as both workers and customers.
- The impact on rural and regional communities where businesses rely directly on backpackers for seasonal income or indirectly from relationships with farmers.
- The implications of the labour-force challenges in the horticultural sector, including questions of recruitment of local workers, automation and the use of foreign workers under various visa categories.
- The competition in the labour market for backpacker workers, not just in agriculture and tourism but in a wide range of other sectors.
- The politics of it all: how it would affect the Budget; how the Turnbull Government would deal with its own fractious backbench, particularly members of its Coalition partner, the National Party; and how it might guide the enabling legislation through the Senate. Debate over the backpacker tax highlighted the difficulties the Turnbull Government faced in negotiating with the Senate crossbench, where the views of some senators changed over time and alliances shifted. As Labor opposed the Government's measure the Government had to rely on Greens, One Nation, the Xenophon team and independents to get its proposal through. As a pool of diversity of views there was none richer than the Australian Senate in the 45th Parliament.

There was also an important element already introduced by the ABC itself in 2016: its reporting on the exploitation of foreign workers on Australian farms by some individual farmers and by some labour hire companies contracted to farmers. The Four Corners program was in the finest traditions of ABC journalism, as was a later 7.30 report on the same issue. One of the consequences of these reports was fear that this appalling mistreatment would discourage other foreign workers from coming to Australia.

In generating news and views, horticulture – directly impacted by the Government's tax proposal – was, like the Parliament, a rich source of diversity. It is Australia's third largest agriculture sector with a farm gate value at \$10 billion (retail sales value of at least \$50 billion). Horticulture is also Australia's largest agriculture sector employer, counting for one-third of agriculture workers. At August 2014, 61,100 were employed in the sector with a further 6,250 in fruit and vegetable processing. There were 29,504 horticultural producers as at June 2013. There are mainly small to medium-sized family businesses and, as Voice of Horticulture says, they are the backbone of Australia's rural and regional communities. In 2013-14 the value of horticultural exports achieved a high of \$1.544 billion.

Tourism, also affected by the backpacker tax proposals, employed 531,000, according to Tourism Research Australia. The Australian Tourism Labour Force Report: 2015-2020, compiled by Deloitte Access Economics, says there has been a reduction in the use of overseas workers. Only 10% of workers in the sector are currently from overseas, down from 13% in 2011.

There are also a wide variety of jobs advertised for backpackers year-round in Australia, from retail to hospitality to health. education, transport, child and aged care. This raises the question of how competition in the labour market might be influencing backpackers to turn away from seasonal work in horticulture.

Given those elements, one could expect a rich harvest of news from a wide cross-section of the community having their say and an audience not confined to the bush.

There are elements vital to a national audience: the impact on businesses regardless of their geographical location, the impact on consumers nationwide in terms of price and availability of farm produce, and the impact on tourism in all its forms, again regardless of geographical location, and how the issue played out in national politics.

With these elements, one would expect the delivery of diversity in keeping with the ABC editorial policies. It's important to draw the distinction between the number of people expressing their views and whether, through the selection of people to be interviewed and the questions they are asked, there a sufficient diversity of views are delivered to the ABC audience.

1. Were packaged reports, interviews, backgrounders, investigations and any other analysis impartial and constructed as objectively as possible, reflecting an appropriate diversity of relevant perspectives?

Considering the span of this review, the variety of programming and the different audiences, programs clearly strove to ensure objectivity and diversity over time.

Given the length of this substantial public debate, its complexity, and the variety of related issues raised by the ABC itself, or already in the public domain, the coverage reviewed at times fell short of providing an appropriate diversity of relevant and fresh perspectives.

This does not mean the coverage overall was partisan in any way. Rather, it reflects the pressures to produce daily programming on tight deadlines and finite resources.

ABC Rural, which, in the reviewer's view, was not treated fairly in the selection of material that comprised the first tranche of 84 program segments to be reviewed, met its brief.

However, the strength of its reporting on rural matters, and a deep well of knowledge and background on issues such as the backpacker tax, was not fully exploited across the great spread of ABC programming in framing approaches to the issue.

For example, there is substantial ABC Rural background material available online that would help inform an interviewer's approach to the backpacker tax issue, whether they be in regional or metropolitan networks.

Despite the fact these issues – the essential elements outlined on page 4 – were regarded by ABC Rural as important to the backpacker tax debate, there is little evidence that this resource was used to test people and policy outside the tax question.

The difficulties in reporting this long debate include the fact that the public utterances by farmers and their representatives, almost to a person, were highly critical of the proposed tax and the delays in getting a political resolution. There was a united front and therefore it may have been regarded as safe to assume a diversity of views simply did not exist or were such a small minority as to be not worth pursuing. The same applies to the views of backpackers.

As mentioned in the introduction, there were other issues at play aside from the tax argument and therefore opportunities to include a more diverse mix of voices. This was a case where scrutiny could have been applied more rigorously to farmers and to all sides of Federal Parliament. The key to that scrutiny is asking questions that are firmly based on the ABC's own reporting of those issues, particularly from ABC Rural.

For example:

- The number of backpacker worked was falling before the tax debate arose. Why?
- What influence has the negative reports of low wages, and mistreatment of foreign workers in the public domain before this tax debate because of the outstanding reporting by the ABC -- had on the intentions of backpackers.
- Are there farmers and sectors within horticulture that rely on hand-picking but don't use backpackers?
- Are the wages too low, even before the tax proposal, to attract seasonal workers and local workers?
- Is the tax applied to visa category 417 (backpackers) fair when compared to visa category 416 (seasonal workers from Pacific islands)?
- What are the labour-force challenges facing horticulture and what is the industry doing about it in terms of a stable seasonal workforce and the capacity for automation?

These wider questions, raised in a series of ABC Rural programs, offered an opportunity across the spectrum of Regional and News programs to question both the farming sector and politicians of all persuasions on the labour-force challenges. That background, however, was not fully exploited by other programs in the regional network and in the News network.

That reporting should form the knowledge base on the backpacker issue across the ABC divisions. It is equally important for a metropolitan audience to be informed not just on the tax issue but the other policy implications of an industry largely reliant on overseas workers.

The ABC Regional response to the draft report shows, a wide range of issues beyond simply the tax debate were reported on by ABC Rural, from the May 2016 Budget onward.

These include,

- The reasons backpackers were coming to Australia.
 http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-29/resolution-to-backpacker-tax-relief-for-fruit-vegetable-sector/8064188
- Exploitation of foreign workers.
 http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-18/417-labour-hire-companies-must-be licensed./8038872
- The ramifications of the May 2015 Budget for the horticulture sector http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-12/budget-working-holiday-visa/6464972
- An examination of the specific effects on horticulture
 http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-13/horticulture-industry-concern-about-backpacker-tax-fallout/6467084
- The effects on rural towns and tourism businesses http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-05-14/backpacker-tax-grab-hurts-rural-towns-and-farmers/6469910

Outside ABC Rural, these questions were largely ignored by the program segments subject to this review and, when they were raised, it was rare to find an issue expanded on by one program after being raised by another.

There was, however, one example of what could be achieved by moving away from a political debate about tax to issues that were equally fundamental to the future of horticulture.

On 7.30 on September 27, political reporter Sabra Lane raised the question of high regional unemployment and the difficulties in getting Australians to take over the work of backpackers.

She ended, perceptively, with this sign-off: "Another policy area that could be ripe for the picking."

Sharp-eyed PM picked up that theme the next day with Felicity Ogilvie's report tackling the issue. It mentions The Sweetest Job survey conducted in Queensland that showed the difficulties getting locals to do the work backpackers do. That gets an airing by ABC Rural, on November 29 that commendably drills down on an issue of substance, and explains the complexities at work.

As a result, there was a diversity of views, a new line of information for the audience, and an opportunity to lead the conversation through impartial and objective reporting -- even if two of the three voices in the PM report, strawberry grower Di West, and Sarah McKinnon from the NFF, have been heard from before.

The capacity of both programs to tap this diversity of views and open new lines of inquiry contrasts with the sharing of material across several programs, sometimes over the same day and sometimes the next day.

Countrywide, for example, repeated Rural stories from several days before; PM used rejigged reports by ABC Rural Canberra correspondent Anna Vidot that were essentially the same material.

ABC Regional defends this approach in the following terms in its response to the draft review:

- Each of these programs has different audiences and network reach. We know from our audience listening patterns that listeners do not listen all day, they dip in and out of the coverage. It is not the case that the same audience is listening to both the Country Hour (which airs only on Regional networks) and PM (which is on the metropolitan and regional networks) therefore listeners aren't hearing fresh perspectives. On the contrary, contributions by ABC Rural to programs such as PM help to explain the story to metropolitan audiences who don't necessarily understand agriculture, but appreciate the politics of an issue like this.
- Countrywide also takes rural coverage to metropolitan and international audiences. It is a "week-in-review" program, which is not resourced to source new material or "move the story on". The material used, however, is always current, and is reframed for its different outlets and audiences.
- Sharing content between programs ensures the best use of available resources, and reduces overall duplication by stopping reporters chasing the same talent.

This review accepts that the ABC regards this sharing of content this as proper practice. However, sharing content can equally stop reporters exercising a fundamental role in chasing new talent and seeking new perspectives by asking the right questions.

There is no doubt that, in light of the fresh evidence provided by ABC Regional, ABC Rural's coverage of the backpacker tax debate was substantial and that the essential elements, as outlined on page 3 of this review were subject to inquiry.

In its response to the draft review ABC Regional describes ABC Rural's role thus:

ABC Rural's focus for topical stories is on the news of the day and delivering what has happened on any day in the debate.

The nature of news coverage means we must seek out the comments of key politicians and key industry groups when there is a change in the debate. And yes, that means we will hear from some of the same voices.

The sheer volume of coverage from ABC Rural – stories and updates for primary producers – shows the effectiveness of Rural in covering this issue.

This review adds that news is also a result of interrogation and investigation, and the challenging of decision-makers and framers of policy.

ABC Rural, through its reporting, gathered considerable material that would form the basis of just such interrogation.

For example, ABC Regional, in its response, lists a series of segments that addressed the following issues:

- Locals doing the work of backpackers.
- Use of seasonal labour.
- A campaign to employ locals instead of backpackers.

What can't always be ascertained, because of the lack of accessible content in the 48 further program segments submitted by ABC Regional, is how other programs used these essential elements in framing their questions to agriculture industry leaders and political leaders.

There are several examples of taking a fresh approach that are hinted at in notes on the regional program where no audio or online content survives. On September 21 on ABC North and West South Australia Breakfast, journalist Tim Jeanes reportedly asks: "Is it just the proposed tax that is decreasing the number of backpackers seeking work in Australia? Unfortunately, the audio has not survived.

On September 28, ABC Radio Darwin Afternoons asked backpackers whether the tax rate is factored in to any travel decisions they make.

On 92.3 Coffs Harbour Breakfast on November 29, blueberry producer Ridley Bell is interviewed. There is no audio or online content. However, there existed a strong pointer to the issues that could have been explored with Mr Bell. On ABC TV News, he was interviewed at length on November 24, during which he describes the backpacker tax as more complex than just the tax rate.

Because of the national impact the tax would have, the range of people affected, the complexity of the tax and visa regimes, the ABC's own exemplary reporting on one aspect of foreign workers in Australia, the current complexion of the Senate where the final decision would be made, and the length of the debate covered by this review (August 15 to December 2,) a diversity of views were there for the taking, or asking.

THE impact on tourism was commonly cited as a reason the 32.5c in the dollar backpacker tax was a bad idea. It is an industry worth billions and employs thousands of Australians, and thousands of foreign workers in various visa categories.

However, the views of the tourism industry received substantially less coverage on the News network then it did on the Regional network.

The News network focus was substantially on the agricultural sectors, horticulture, and on the political ramifications.

In contrast to the Regional network, there were no interviews with backpackers working in tourism, no interviews with tourism operators apart from their representative body. It was reported that backpackers comprised 25% of the Australian agriculture workforce; there was no similar statistic for the tourism sector. All this data is easily obtainable and should have been a regular part of the narrative.

In the interviews conducted with backpackers there was only one that voiced an opinion that differed from all the other backpacker voices: Max the German backpacker (AM, September 29), who said he didn't examine the tax rate before coming here. He's here because Australia is a good place to visit.

ABC Regional, in its comments on the draft review, says reporters cannot make up dissenting voices simply for the matter of providing diversity. This review's rejoinder is that teasing out a diversity of views depends on the questions asked, based on the interviewer's understanding of the wider issues in agriculture, including the competition in the jobs market that might lure backpackers away from farm jobs or tourism.

Countrywide on September 30 went to backpackers for comment after the Federal Government revamped the backpacker tax. On this occasion, of the three interviewed, two knew nothing about the tax debate and the third said she gained her knowledge second-hand from her partner. These were not useful insights, although their lack of knowledge raises the question just how well informed backpackers were via social media. It was raised by several individuals in the debate that backpackers remained well-informed by social media and that, as a result, they would speedily change their travel plans. It was an observation worth testing with backpackers, given their initial response to questions.

In the original 84 program segments a diversity of questions are absent and there is simply insufficient material available to the reviewer to make any judgment on the further 48 segments submitted for judgment by ABC Regional.

It was therefore a dominant theme in the reporting of the debate that backpackers were deeply concerned about the impact of the tax on them. This of course aligned with the concern of farmers.

There was, however, a strong pointer in the Monash University survey, reported on August 24 by ABC Rural, that not all backpackers were concerned about the tax. The survey, in which the YHA "helped facilitate the research" showed that 60% of the 335 backpackers surveyed in three locations – Melbourne, Mildura and Cairns -- would not have come to Australia on a WHM visa if they were taxed 32.5c in every dollar they earned.

This survey should be approached with caution. As Monash University says in its documentation: "Note that the 'backpacker tax' sample is only 335, so the results should be seen as indicative. The WHM data collection in North Queensland was supported by YHA."

As the report used the survey as an authority on backpacker intentions, the substantial minority of respondents – 40% -- cannot be ignored. It points to the need to gather a diversity of views from backpackers. The comment by Max the German indicates likelihood such a diversity of views would be captured if one cast the net wide enough and asked questions that might elicit a different response.

As it transpired, there was one backpacker, Kajsa Holmbom, interviewed by ABC Rural in its report on the Monash survey, along with YHA Chief Executive Officer Julian Ledger. Again, given the survey's explanatory notes by Monash University, and the fact the YHA, a vested interest, assisted the survey in only one of the three centres surveyed, Cairns/Port Douglas, there was scope to exercise some caution and construct the interviews accordingly.

It would have been prudent to discuss the survey with the author, or to make the audience aware of the cautionary note, which reveals it was only the first stage of a larger project. Dr Jarvis was interviewed on RN Breakfast on May 5, 2016, on this survey so there was background material available for the reporter to understand more fully the survey.

To quote the Editorial Guidance Note on opinion polls. "It's pertinent to your story if there appears to be a clear majority in favour of one position or another, but it does not give you licence to ignore or marginalise other perspectives . . ."

The link to the detail of the survey by the National Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University is below.

http://www.agriculture.gov.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/ag-food/working-holiday/submissions/jarvis-jeff-dr.pdf

It's to the credit of ABC Murray Goulburn Breakfast on August 26 that Dr Jarvis is given the opportunity to talk about this study. He was interviewed again by the same program on November 30, 2016.

THE voices of farmers and their organisations are widely canvassed in the reports subject to this review. They reveal a range of views about the backpacker tax: no tax at all or a lower rate than 32.5c in the dollar, and again a range of views on what is a fair and reasonable level. The farmers' benchmark is 19c in the dollar, as championed by the National Farmers Federation and supported by Growcom, a Queensland horticultural group.

This review begins by examining ABC Rural's August 15 report that covers the backpacker tax history, summarises succinctly the views of farmers, regional communities, backpackers and tourism, includes the Federal Opposition.

Although it does not include the Government's perspective it, properly, reports that it sought comment from the two relevant Government ministers. This report neglects to explain the NFF's position and does not make it clear the debate is not simply about a tax or no tax but about what should be a reasonable rate of tax.

The NFF's position, as ABC Regional points out in its response, first reported on the NFF's position on March 31, 2016.

The draft review's criticism of the August 15 report by ABC Rural is that the NFF's position was not properly put on that occasion. It was an essential fact properly reported earlier by ABC Rural and therefore it was an essential fact for every report. Without that there was a risk the NFF position could be misunderstood or misrepresented by others.

The NFF's position is not fully explained on the News network until December 1 on AM when it reveals its rationale behind a 19c in the dollar rate is based on fairness and international competitiveness.

A consistent thread is that any reasonable member of the ABC audience would conclude that farmers want a backpacker tax scrapped when in fact there is an argument on the rate of tax at the commercial level from farmers and at the political level in Canberra.

Even when interviewing the same person, 10 days apart, ABC Rural revealed conflicting views. Rachel McKenzie of Growcom says on ABC Rural on August 28 that her organisation supports the NNF's proposal of a tax of 19c in the dollar. On September 2, on PM, she says the tax should be off the table, but the apparent change of position is not challenged. McKenzie's views should have been well-known at this stage of the debate, being quoted twice within 10 days giving essentially the same views. She also features in a related story online from July 19 (pointed to online on August 23), which the September 2 report largely repeats.

The September 2 PM report is a version of Anna Vidot's Rural report earlier in the day, which raises questions about whether a diversity of views was pursued vigorously enough with each program seeking to keep the story moving and to offer new voices and new perspectives.

Contrast this with two excellent pieces:

- PM's report of September 27 by Peta Donald which deftly backgrounded the issue in a tight narrative, including the depth of opposition to the backpacker tax within the Government. This report also gave its audience a wider diversity of views, including tourism.
- Anna Vidot's incisive report on ABC TV 7pm news on September 29. It's packed with
 essential facts and bold graphics, covers the political spectrum and tourism as well as
 agriculture and gets the interesting fact that a quarter of Australians farm workers
 are backpackers and that the numbers have been falling.

In summary, there is a predictability about the coverage over the period of review. Farmers and farming organisations essentially use the same language, the same descriptions.

The Editorial Guidance Note on impartiality describes the danger well: "the temptation to rely on the usual predictable sources, and miss opportunities to include a more diverse mix of voices."

And yet, as outlined above, there are several reports that open the door to the pursuit of a diversity of views and an examination of the bigger picture, and the opportunity for the ABC to bring something new and fresh to this important debate.

In essence, to again quote from the Editorial Guidance Note on Impartiality: "We want audiences to sit up and take notice of what we produce."

There's no better reaction from a listener or reader who can say "I didn't know that!". In the voices of farmers, the audience knew from the beginning of the reports under review that farmers faced a massive cut in their labour force, fruit would rot on the ground, they might delay plantings, and they were frustrated with the politics. Over the 132 reports, apart from a handful of fleeting insights, audience heard the same questions being asked to elicit the same answers.

As the Editorial Guidance Note on Impartiality says: "Scrutinise closely and equally the views of all those in the story; ask the tough questions, assume nothing, and always look for the uncomfortable fact that delivers depth and nuance to the story."

Overall this opportunity for a fresh approach was not fully explored, even though the knowledge foundation had been set by ABC Rural and was there to be tapped into by other programs.

Standard 4.2 requires that a diversity of perspectives be presented so that, over time, no significant strand of thought or belief within the community is knowingly excluded or disproportionately represented. "Over time" is the key in reporting on the backpacker tax. That gives reporting staff to opportunity to pursue that diversity of perspectives, to ensure that one perspective is not unduly favoured over another. (Standard 4.5).

2. Were any perspectives either misrepresented or unduly favoured?

There was a clear imbalance between the reporting by News programs on the consequences of the backpacker tax on the agricultural sector and the reporting of the impact on the tourism sector.

The Regional network covered the tourism issue comprehensively across 69 different programs from January 2, 2016 to December 1, 2016. It aired the views of tourism operators, industry leaders, and backpackers working in the sector. Some of these feature in the second tranche of program segments but there is insufficient detail in the program notes to evaluate the interviews in any detail.

As ABC Regional says in its response to the draft review, tourism was not ABC's Rural brief.

While the views of farmers and backpackers employed on farms were well canvassed by News, there was only one tourism business operator interviewed and no backpackers employed in tourism were featured.

The PM report of September 2, 2016, was headed" Agriculture and tourism operators makes submissions to review the backpacker tax", but only agriculture was featured.

The report summarised submissions to Deloitte, the consultancy handling the public consultation on the backpacker tax, and says it heard from farmers, tourism operators and local communities. However, the PM audience heard only from farmers.

It's not until PM's report on September 27 that tourism gets a mention on News programs, quoting the Chief Executive Officer of the Tourism and Transport Forum Margy Osmond. Osmond's views were also covered in the ABC News 7pm TV bulletin.

In contrast, on the regional network on September 1, NSW Statewide Drive interviewed Ms Osmond on the impact of the backpacker tax on tourism. She appeared again on ABC Radio Darwin Drive on September 27, 2016; ABC Radio Darwin Mornings on October 12, 2016 and November 8, 2016.

We then have to wait until October 26 for PM to report on Ms Osmond's evidence to the Senate inquiry into the backpacker tax. Tourism is mentioned again on November 30 on PM, but only in these terms at the end of the report: "The tourism industry is just as frustrated as both sectors plead with the Parliament to find a solution . . ." There was no spokesperson quoted and no detail on the industry's arguments.

The views of those in regional Australia who were not farmers were also not canvassed in any detail on the News network.

The perspectives of regional local government and non-farm businesses in how a decline in the number of backpackers might affect local economies were only lightly touched on across the 132 segments reviewed and overwhelmingly this was in Regional radio. There was no mention of what the impact the presence of temporary foreign workers in other visas categories (416 and 457) have had on regional communities.

There was also no mention across the 132 reports on how competition in the labour market was affecting the decline of backpackers seeking work in horticulture. There were therefore no views from employers and backpackers working in these other sectors on the impact of the backpacker tax. There is ample evidence that the job choices are vastly broader than simply fruit picking or tourism work and that the wages earned may be more than those earned on farms.

These are just two of the websites that advertise backpacker jobs in Australia.

http://www.backpackerjobboard.com.au/

http://www.workstay.com.au/backpackers-job-board

3. Were there any relevant perspectives or context absent from the reports, interviews and discussions that should have been included to ensure appropriately accurate and balanced cover of the issue.

Taken as a whole, the reports from August 15 to December 12 comprehensively cover the concerns of the agricultural sector and backpackers. The anti-tax sentiment is the strongest voice by far.

Outside ABC Rural, there is little reference to, or examination of, issues such as the difficulties in getting local people to do the work backpackers are currently employed to do, and the long-term labour-force issues the horticulture sector has to address.

They are touched on in several reports, the best of them the September 28 report on PM. Tasmanian employment expert John Klug, who has a wealth of experience in this area, and Tasmanian orchardist Howard Hansen outline their concerns on September 22 on The World Today.

Tasmanian cherry grower Tim Reid takes up the same issue on PM on September 28 and ABC Rural deals with it much more comprehensively on November 29 in covering the results of the Growcom survey in Queensland which shows how few locals are willing to take on seasonal jobs in horticulture.

On Countrywide on September 30, Adelaide University academic Joanna Howe gave fresh insights into the long-term ramifications of farmers relying on backpackers for their seasonal labour force.

She has been reported on previously by ABC Rural in 2015 in relation to other visa categories for temporary overseas workers and in 2016 in relation to the Four Corners expose of the mistreatment and exploitation of overseas farm workers.

If they were important threads to those stories earlier in 2016, then they should have remained so in relation to the coverage of the backpacker tax.

If backpackers were reacting to the prospect of paying more tax, then it's reasonable to ask them whether low wages and reports of exploitation and ill-treatment might also have a bearing on their decision whether to come to Australia for seasonal work.

Given that backpackers were regarded as being well-informed through social media – and the evidence in several reports that they can therefore decide quickly to go elsewhere – it was a key question.

It was also not put to farmers and their representatives whether they can continue to rely on a backpacker workforce and what structural changes might be required.

As Joanne Howe says, this workforce changes year to year, and is one that fluctuates based on exchange rates and backpacker holiday destinations and intentions.

The World Today on December 1 returned to Joanna Howe as part of the coverage of the Government's deal with the Greens to get the backpacker tax passed by the Senate on the last day of the Parliament in 2016.

It was a substantial and informative interview that teased out and explained the issues confronting the horticulture industry in Australia.

With this material, The World Today was right on its brief to analyse, interpret and encourage debate, but it would have been of greater value to the audience and to the national debate had these issues been explored in the months before.

There does not appear, over the period of the review, to have been any consideration by any of the programs outside ABC Rural of a deeper examination of these other relevant influences at play in the horticultural sector. These are important issues for a national audience as they influence food prices, the labour market, and regional economies and test the capacity of Government to tackle important, long-term policy issues.

For example, the drive to increase automation in horticulture has accelerated because of the high labour costs facing farmers – costs that they could see rising even more because of a new tax regime and competition for the backpacker labour market from New Zealand.

There is no question about its relevance, as this example from the Australian Financial Review in March 2016 from one quick search, reveals.

"In much the same way as the mining industry introduced driverless trucks to reduce high wage costs, Australia's tree-crop industry is experimenting with forms of field robotics that could drastically reduce their reliance on costly, seasonal labour. "Economic water doesn't flow uphill for long," John Lloyd, chief executive of Horticulture Innovation Australia, says. "We have probably the highest labour costs in the world for horticulture, which is very labour-intensive." Professor Salah Sukkarieh, head of the Australian Centre for Field Robotics at The University of Sydney, was responsible for pioneering driverless trucks for Rio Tinto in the Pilbara and is now adapting his work for the horticultural industry."

ABC Regional, in its response to the draft review, cites a report by ABC Rural Queensland Country Hour on October 21, 2016, as evidence that the issue of automation was tackled as part of the ongoing examination of labour-force challenges for agriculture. However, there is no context given regarding the backpacker tax debate.

It also offers two excellent pieces outside the review period that examine the future of automation in agriculture.

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-26/wa-first-cabbage-harvester-put-to-work/8210660

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-23/seasonal-worker-program-aims-to-fix-farm-labour-issues/8195110

The question for ABC Rural on the January 23, 2017, item, which examines the New Zealand backpacker experience, is whether Lisa Herbert's explainer would have had greater value to the public discourse on the backpacker tax had it appeared during the debate.

A significant part of the argument by farm groups in 2016 was that a backpacker tax would drive visitors to New Zealand and the January 2017 interview with Horticulture New Zealand chief executive Mike Chapman, provides vital information. However, in the time span under review, the New Zealand perspective was not explored until AM interviewed Mr Chapman on November 26, 2016.

The January 23 report is a standout example of the value of background, analysis or explanation on the extensive ABC online platforms, where, unlike on air, there are no restrictions on time and space.

As ABC Regional points out in its response to the draft report, ABC Rural contributed a series of such background reports, including:

• The history of migrant workers and their effects on labour markets and industries.

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-12/how-migrant-workers-are-critical-to-agriculture/7922368.

A campaign to get locals to do the work of backpackers:

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-05/locals-targeted-in-tasmanian-harvest-backpacker-campaign/7904774

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-05/sweetest-jobs-update-employment-backpackers-strawberries/7800986

- How seasonal labour from Timor Leste was helping to alleviate the stress: http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-27/seasonal-workers-from-timor-leste-fill-backpacker-void/7971054
- Vanuatu offering to fill vacancies:

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-11-09/vanuatu-steps-up-to-the-plate-to-offer-overseas-workers/8008498

Where Australians were being employed instead of backpackers

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-22/backpackers-not-welcome-at-remote-top-end-pub/7530646

This was an under-utilised resource in the News content online during the backpacker tax debate. In every case, the related stories posted with the online reports reviewed are news

stories, containing essentially the same arguments from farmers, backpackers, and industry groups.

Relating these news stories to the current online report may well be judged as giving more depth. However, it can also highlight the one-dimensional flavour of the coverage and the repeating of the same voices.

In the realm of background and explanation, there was no explanation of the decision of the Administrative Appeal Tribunal's ruling that was behind the Government's decision to legislate for a 32.5c in the dollar tax on backpackers from the first dollar they earned.

The Federal Government can share some of the burden as it also failed to properly explain the decision and its ramifications until the final weeks of Parliament in 2016.

Of course, no news organisation should wait on a Government to do the explaining. It has a responsibility to its audience to do so free of any government imperative.

Anna Vidot's ABC Rural online report of December 13 (not the subject of this review) explaining the tax once it has passed the Parliament, was a fine example of using an online platform to give an interested audience the full picture. The link is below and I highlight it with the proviso that I have not checked its accuracy.

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-12-13/backpacker-tax-changes-what-now/8115630

Using the same practice as the debate progressed from mid-August would have given the audience, and ABC reporting staff across News and Regional, a clear picture of the wider ramifications of the tax, and the important background of other visa categories, the tax regime for those categories, and the positions of the key players.

4. Were the voices given a fair opportunity to express their views, having regard to the significance of the interest represented and to the amount of time given and prominence assigned to each interview?

Viewed as a whole, the reports reviewed, on balance, gave a fair opportunity for the expression of views.

There were, however, several exceptions.

One politician who would have no complaints about the opportunity on the ABC to express his views is Liberal National party Queensland Senator Barry O'Sullivan. He was interviewed for nine minutes and 13 seconds on ABC Rural on September 29.

It was a genial conversation where the Senator has plenty of opportunity to repeat himself – indeed he was encouraged to do so with the first question he was asked. If it was revelatory and news-breaking there may have been justification for devoting so much air time to the exclusion of other views.

The Senator's views on the backpacker tax were well known, having been well aired in the Central and North Burnett Times some months before. And he was just one of several very vocal National Party MPs urging the Government to reduce the tax from 32.5c in the dollar to 19c in the dollar. There was no suggestion in this report that other views were sought.

There are following examples where those opposing the tax outright, or seeking a lower rate, are given extensive air time.

- Tasmania's Primary Industries Minister Jeremy Rockcliff was granted two minutes uninterrupted on ABC Rural on September 6 to expound on his reasons for opposing the backpacker tax.
- On the same program Glynn Williams, the president of Primary Employers Tasmania, was given 11 minutes to voice his opposition to the tax and the reasons why.

There was no explanation attached to the Rockliff segment: was it an interview, a speech, a grab from a press conference? It was also getting to be old news, as it was from the previous day. There was therefore ample opportunity to seek other views – from the Labor Opposition in Tasmania, for example, particularly as Labor nationally was prevaricating over the tax.

Based on this report the Tasmanian Government opposed any tax. However, it transpired that the Government, in a media statement on September 27, welcomes a reduction in the tax to 19%. Asking a question of the Minister might have provided clarity.

Applying Editorial Standard 4.2, with its key words "over time", gives programmers the opportunity to square the ledger. There is no evidence before the reviewer that this occurred.

5. Did the ABC's coverage succeed in appropriately covering the issue both as a political debate but also as an issue of substance affecting the community?

Across the 132 reports reviewed, the politics of the backpacker tax was, on balance appropriately covered. It captured the political manoeuvring, the changing alliances in the Senate, the divisions within the Government, and the anger of the farming sector.

There was a greater concentration, except in the finals days, on the divisions within the Coalition and on Labor's prevarication, and the political pressure being brought to bear by the agricultural sector.

However, in the final days, where the actions of the Senate crossbench became critical, the full picture of the shifting alliances did not become completely clear and there was little scrutiny of them. The ABC revealed that the Greens were open to a deal but, in glorious hindsight, was there sufficient scrutiny of that pronouncement from a Greens source? That might have led to revealing

early the deal that finally transpired and led to the passing of the tax legislation on the final day of Federal Parliament for 2016.

The political story may have taken on new momentum if the wider questions around the future of the horticulture industry's labour force had been put to politicians and the industry over the course of the debate.

The effects of the tax on the community were also not explored to their full potential, which would again have widened the political debate from just one of tax to one of the long-term impact of labour-force changes on regional communities.

As an issue of substance – as a political issue and as a community issue – the coverage reviewed also lacked analysis from authoritative independent observers, apart from the article from The Conversation on October 12, 2016.

The clearest explanations came at the end of the debate with ABC Rural's solid wrap of the wider issues at play on November 29; AM's December 1 interview with the NFF president Fiona Simson; and The World Today interview with Joanna Howe, also on December 1.

The News Online segment of November 24 is an example of the under-use of online to bring immediacy to a debate and to steer the audience to other ABC content – thereby keeping them engaged. There is more detail on its shortcomings in the Analysis section of this report.

In the online reports reviewed, the related-stories sidebars would have seemed the ideal home throughout the debate for such background and analysis but too often they pointed to old news.

That would have delivered the rich content and the necessarily breadth of perspectives this important national issue deserved and kept the ABC audience engaged across programs and platforms.

In summary

In reference to the key standards governing impartiality and diversity of perspectives.

- There is no evidence that the reports were partisan in any way by any deliberate suppression of one view in favour of another and there is no evidence of any misrepresentation of any perspective. (Standard 4.4).
- There was a great diversity of voices across the 132 program segments but that did not always deliver a diversity of views. (Standard 4.2)
- The backpacker tax and its wider policy implications were comprehensively explored by ABC Rural but, overall, the national audience was not as fully informed as it could have been on an issue of national substance. (Standard 4.2).
- Important sectors in the debate did not receive sufficient coverage across the News network, in particular regional communities and tourism. However, regional and rural Australia was well served by ABC Rural and regional stations. (Standard 4.2).
- The political coverage was fair in terms of striving, over time, to accommodate the diversity of voices within the Senate and between the major parties. (Standard 4.5).

Overall, the debate over the backpacker tax across the reports reviewed was treated largely as a political one. The reporting concentrated on the political manoeuvring in the Canberra hothouse and the political pressure the farm sector was bringing to bear in terms of the effect the tax would have on the industry.

The budgetary and political implications were obviously the focus for the Canberra reporting team but to the exclusion of other long-term policy challenges directly affecting the horticulture sector and regional Australia.

This reduced the opportunity for a diversity of views, the capacity to raise other issues of substance and to challenge policy-makers in government and in the agricultural sector on the labour-force challenges.

It is impossible, because of the lack of audio in the 48 program segments submitted following the draft review, to make a judgment on the Regional network's treatment of the politics or whether the policymakers interviewed were questioned about the broader labour-force challenges.

There was a reliance in several cases on the local members of Federal Parliament across the regional network.

Tony Pasin, the Federal Liberal Member for Barker, appeared on ABC Riverland four times on the backpacker tax issue, between April 1, 2016 and May 17, 2016.

Luke Gosling, the Labor member for Solomon, appeared five times on ABC Radio Darwin. He shared the program on September 1, 2016, with the Federal Minister for Tourism, Steven Ciobo, and on November 30, 2016 with the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull. He also shared the program twice with the Chief Executive Officer of the Tourism and Transport Forum, Margy Osmond, who was a strong critic of the Government.

These were exceptions, however, when judging the Regional network overall where a diversity of political and industry voices was accommodated.

The capacity of the ABC's online resources was also underutilised for background, explanation and analysis, particularly the Related Stories asset, which overwhelmingly referenced previous news stories. That reinforced the perception of relying on familiar voices and therefore a lack of rigour in seeking out a wide range of perspectives.

The most interesting, informative and refreshing reports emerged outside the political debate through ABC Rural.

Program analysis

15/8/2016 ABC Rural

Federal Government's latest backpacker tax review gets under way.

A well-balanced news story that covers the history of the backpacker tax issue, the opposition from farmers, regional communities, backpackers and the tourism industry. It includes the Opposition position and seeks Government comment from the two relevant government ministers. One significant omission of fact is the National Farmers federation position: it supported a 19% tax rate. The report omits to mention that this is a not and black-and-white debate about tax or no tax but about what would be a reasonable rate, given the impact it would have on agriculture and tourism. More on that as the story unfolds over the next five months.

There is also this important background.

Former Liberal Senator Richard Colbeck led an internal government review shortly before the election, while a parliamentary committee investigating Australia's temporary worker programs has already made a series of recommendations aimed at improving agricultural workforce and protecting vulnerable workers. Those elements appear to be covered within the terms of reference for the review conducted by Deloitte for the Government.

And this: Regional communities and backpackers themselves have joined with farmers and tourism operators to slam the government for its handling of this issue.

These two issues, the temporary worker programs and the reaction of regional communities, are important components to the ongoing narrative and the need to provide a diversity of views.

23/8/2016 ABC Rural

Horticulture lobby group claims backpacker tax would create years of labour shortage in agriculture.

This report by Craig Zonca confirms that this is an issue of the rate of tax, not whether there should be a tax. Rachel McKenzie of Growcom, a Queensland horticultural lobby group, says it supports the NFF position of a 19c in the dollar tax.

There is no mention that Government comment was sought nor is there any outlining of the Government position in the related stories linked to this report.

Ms McKenzie is also quoted in a related story produced by ABC Rural.

This report also raises the issue of the long-term labour force challenges facing horticulture.

As part of the review, Deloitte is considering whether other government policies could mitigate any potential decrease in backpacker labour by encouraging more Australians to work in agriculture.

"You can't just turn the backpacker tap off and expect there to be Australian workers ready and willing and waiting to go to pick the season's crop," Ms Mackenzie said.

"Get the backpacker tax off the table until we have actually worked out a decent long term solution to this ... and this may take five years in terms of filling the breach."

Again, this is an important issue, identified by the farm sector, that one would expect to be part of the ongoing narrative, and in the ABC offering new insights to its audience.

24/8/2016 ABC Rural

Survey signals 'backpacker tax' would turn away travellers.

Given that the two previous reports make it clear this is a debate about the rate of tax, the question that needed to be asked was whether a question in the survey addressed this issue.

A basic reporting requirement with surveys should be revealing the wording of the relevant questions and in exercising caution when the sample is small, as it was in this case with 335 respondents in three centres.

There should be equal caution given to surveys when a vested interest, in this case the YHA, "helped to facilitate the research". To call it research, as it does in the introduction, and that this tiny sample then predicts Australia's multi-billion-dollar tourism and agriculture industries will suffer significantly, is a questionable judgment.

It may well be right, but there is no evidence in this report to sustain the argument and no one of authority from Monash University, which conducted the survey, to speak to it. On the rate of tax, at least this report, the result of the reporter's question, raised that fundamental issue with the strawberry grower Di West suggesting a 13-19% tax would be fairer.

The substantial minority view revealed by the survey is a clear pointer to the need for a diversity of views from backpackers.

24/8/2016 ABC Rural

Backpacker Kajsa Holmbom, YHA CEO Julian Ledger and strawberry grower Di West discuss the proposed backpacker tax.

The broadcast version of the previous story. The time the above questions about the survey might have been asked.

27/8/2016 Countrywide

Monash finds taxing backpackers will cut numbers by more than half.

Jennifer Nichols's story of three days before repeated, as were the deficiencies.

29/8/2016 ABC Rural

LNP Senator Barry O'Sullivan says the proposed backpacker tax needs to go.

Nine minutes and 13 seconds spent on interviewing an NLP Senator, whose views on the backpacker tax were aired several months before in the Central and North Burnett Times.

https://www.gladstoneobserver.com.au/news/senator-says-no-to-a-backpacker-tax/3053939/

Nothing revelatory, although the first question from the interviewer invited the Senator to repeat himself, as if this was such a new position that it invited such reinforcement. Nine minutes of air time should have been a great opportunity to get some diversity of views — and to present something new.

The senator says the tax would impede the reliable supply of labour – a point that should have been taken up as there is plenty of background from the ABC's previous reports that backpackers are in fact not a reliable supply of labour. Again, the wider issues around foreign seasonal labour are ignored.

2/9/2016 ABC Rural

Growers rethink summer planting program as backpacker tax review draws to a close.

This is ABC Rural's version of Anna Vidot's PM report on the same day, so would have been broadcast first.

National Farmers' Federation workplace relations manager Sarah McKinnon was also aware of some growers changing their planting plans.

She said frustrated farm, tourism and community groups cannot understand why the issue had not yet been resolved.

Details of just when the planting season begins would have been useful. It was an obvious lead to investigating, once that season begins, whether these predictions were realised.

2/9/16 PM

Agriculture and tourism operators makes submissions to review of backpacker tax.

This is PM's version of Anna Vidot's ABC Rural report online. Given that chronology, it raises the question of whether PM should have sought other voices to supplement her report. A diversity of programs offers the opportunity for a diversity of views.

It raises the issue of the timing of the introduction of any tax to start on January 1 and the question of second-year visa renewals. Both these matters warrant being put to Government and being further explained.

In examining the question of diversity, Growcom spokeswoman Rachel McKenzie is again quoted, as she was in the September 23 report from ABC Rural. As she represents Queensland growers, there should be an opportunity to hear from grower groups in other states, particularly to test whether there is unity of purpose or a variety of views on the concept of a backpacker tax and the rate at which it might be struck.

While PM reported that submissions were made by agriculture and tourism operators, only agriculture was featured.

6/9/2016 ABC Rural

Tasmanian Primary Industries Minister Jeremy Rockliff says the Government wants the backpacker tax scrapped.

This is a 2-minute grab, sourced from a news conference or interview, putting the Tasmanian Government's position on the backpacker tax.

The Minister issued his statement on September 5. He speaks without interruption. Not an uncommon practice by ABC Rural to give more information to its audience than a news bulletin would provide. It's a companion piece to the next item. Was an interview sought with the Minister, given that 24 hours had passed and his statement was widely reported in Tasmania and nationally?

Based on this report, the assumption from any reasonable listener would be that the Tasmanian Government opposed any tax. As it transpired, the Government on September 27 in a media statement, welcomed a reduction in the tax to 19%. In this report, as in the next item, the companion piece, there is nothing to indicate if comment was sought from the Federal Government.

6/9/2016. ABC Rural

Glynn Williams the President of Primary Employers Tasmania believes the Federal Government has no choice but to scrap the backpacker tax.

The compelling fact out of this story in terms of ensuring a variety of perspectives and voices was that Williams was one of 22 business representatives at a workshop conducted by Deloitte.

He describes them as captains of industry so it's reasonable to assume they would have something valuable to contribute to the national debate. There is no suggestion in the report that Williams was speaking on their behalf. Therefore, there were 21 voices not engaged with, yet 11 minutes and nine seconds was devoted to the subject of the workshop they attended.

It should be noted that in a later report (ABC Rural September 27) that Williams led a delegation to Canberra to put the Tasmanian horticultural industry's case on the tax.

The interview gives some insight into the consultation process being conducted by Deloitte on behalf of the Federal Government.

Glynn Williams is critical of the process he observed during the consultation and the people conducting it. There is no evidence comment was sought from Deloitte.

The employment figures used by Williams – 10,000 to 20,000 jobs affected and evidence of a 42% decline in backpackers registering for jobs – could also have been tested. Williams also suggests some growers would bring in the bulldozer and pull up the trees – which is a clear lead to another story and for other views from the industry.

15/9/16 PM

Tasmanian farmers intensify call for backpacker tax to be scrapped.

Anna Vidot gets a commitment from the Greens to block the tax and no commitment from Labor. Nice to have on the record, given the Greens' last-minute deal in December that allowed the tax to go through at a much-reduced rate.

After this report, however, there is no testing of the Green position on the tax until the last days of Federal Parliament in December.

The Government also has its say. A fair report. While not included in the items for review, credit to the Tasmanian Country Hour for seeking a diversity of views from other industry representatives in the delegation. However, in both cases the question about the rate of tax doesn't get an airing, even though the NFF position is a 19% tax rate. Yet, as the political pressure builds, this becomes the big question.

22/9/2016 The World Today

Labor MP suggests unemployed people take over farm work after backpacker tax.

The suggestion by Tasmanian Labor MHR for Lyons Brian Mitchell that unemployed people be given work fruit-picking was raised in the long public debate on the backpacker tax.

The comments by employment agency manager John Klug and orchardist Howard Hansen succinctly exposed what they believed were the potential problems in implementing such a strategy.

The issue of fruit-picking work for the unemployed was a key argument by Senator Nick Xenophon as the tax debate reached its climax but is not explored in any detail in the months subject to this review.

27/9/2016 ABC Rural

Lower backpacker tax rate welcomed, superannuation changes slammed.

The Government compromises by lowering the tax rate on backpackers from its planned 32.5 % to 19% -- the rate supported by the National Farmers Federation. However, we don't hear from the NFF and we are not reminded of that fact.

This report also reveals that growers are comfortable with 19% -- which is a message that could have become clear much earlier if the question on the tax rate had been asked of many of the people who were interviewed by ABC staff to this point.

This report also raised the question of superannuation paid to backpackers and required more explanation. This could have been accomplished online where there are not the restrictions of space and time. This was the time for the explanatory piece.

27/9/2016 PM

Federal Government retreats on backpacker tax.

Deftly backgrounded, including the depth of opposition to the tax within the Government's own ranks and there is a diversity of views from industry and politics. Tourism gets an airing

with Margy Osmond, the Chief Executive Officer of the Tourism and Transport Forum, criticising the increase in departure tax. Labor still hedges its bets.

27/9/2016 ABC TV News 7pm

Federal Government makes changes to its planned backpacker tax, following pressure from farmers and Coalition MPs.

Anna Vidot's report is sharp, packed with the essential facts and bold graphics. Doesn't quite explain the tax (19% on the first \$37,000 they earn.) Packs in the \$50 cut to visas, the \$10m campaign to attract more backpackers, the statistic that a quarters of Australian farm workers are backpackers (and that the numbers have been falling), and that the tourism industry is not happy. It also covers the political spectrum.

27/9/2016 7.30

Government bows to pressure on backpacker tax.

Fair and balanced report and it opens a new line of inquiry on high regional youth unemployment and the difficulties in getting Australians to take over the work of backpackers, as the transcript shows. A policy area ripe for the picking, says Sabra Lane. And a subject for journalistic inquiry.

SABRA LANE: Many MPs, including the Treasurer, are annoyed. Regions where producers are struggling to hire workers are also areas with high youth unemployment.

Expect the Government to double down on its efforts to get the controversial fourweek wait for the New Start jobless allowance through the Senate.

Pauline Hansen and her senators are on side. Bob Day and David Leyonhjelm sound supportive.

The Government has had talks with the Xenophon team. It will decide soon.

If the party supports it, the measure should pass the Parliament.

SCOTT MORRISON: The Government is frustrated that in many parts of Australia, whether it is in northern Tasmania or northern Queensland, Darwin, south-western Western Australia where there are real difficulties in getting Australians who may be in these places to actually work in these locations.

SABRA LANE: Another policy area that could be ripe for the picking.

28/9/2016 AM

NFF confident backpacker tax not to damage Australia's competitiveness, some disagree.

This is the first of eight separate reports on the backpacker tax across four programs on September 28, following up the Government September 27 announcement of a retreat on the tax from 32.5c in the dollar to 19c in the dollar.

It's the same familiar themes from three of the four backpackers interviewed, but this time Max from Germany putting that he didn't examine the tax rate before coming here. He's here because Australia is a good place to visit. Australia is such an awesome country, it's worth it, he says. This reinforces the question of whether previous reports strived hard enough to get that diversity of views by reframing the question.

Lindy Kerin backgrounds the political position in the Senate and Labor's attitude.

28/9/2016 AM

Morrison: Backpacker tax package 'fair and sustainable'.

This is the second package on AM on the backpacker tax. Michael Brissenden's interview with Treasurer Scott Morrison reveals that the Government knows it may have to further compromise on the backpacker tax. A fair and impartial interview where the Treasurer gets to explain in detail the changes, the budgetary impact and the associated reforms to visa requirements. He also repeats the NFF view that while the Australian tax of 19% will be higher than the NZ rate, backpackers earn more. So, what are the NZ tax rates and the earnings relative to Australia?

28/9/2016 PM

Showdown brewing in Coalition ranks over school funding.

The backpacker tax viewed as part of the Government's ongoing struggle with its backbench. This report also reveals the NZ backpacker tax rate of 12% for the first time in the reports being reviewed. A short grab from Labor leader Bill Shorten

28/9/2016 PM

Farmers and Government frustrated by locals' lack of interest in fruit picking work.

This report develops Senator Nick Xenophon's proposal that people on unemployment benefits be allowed to earn \$5000 before losing their payments, as a way of encouraging them to take up seasonal work now being done by backpackers. Queensland strawberry grower Di West features again. This is the first substantial report that focuses on the issue of recruiting local workers in horticulture and mentions The Sweetest Job survey in Queensland.

28/9/2016 The World Today

Federal Government looks to Labor to get backpacker tax through Senate.

Takes the story further by examining the Government's next test: getting the tax legislation through the Senate. Labor, Greens and independent views canvassed.

28/9/2016 The World Today

Farmers fear damage already done by proposed backpacker tax hike.

A cross-section of views from the agriculture sector and politics.

28/9/2016 ABC Rural

Queensland farmers welcome the backpacker tax reprieve, but wonder why it took the Government so long to fix the problem.

More of the same from farmers. Surely someone is thinking differently on employing locals, the impact of automation etc.

28/9/2016 ABC Rural

Queensland farmers back on track as Government changes backpacker tax.

Many farmers. Well, two of them at least. The online version of the previous broadcast. An explainer on how the tax will operate would have been a useful addition.

30/9/2016 Countrywide

Federal Government radically revamps proposed backpacker tax; Law academic describes the backpacker tax policy as a shemozzle from day one; Concerns the backpacker tax policy only takes into account wages, not piecemeal work.

Adelaide University academic Joanna Howe gave some fresh insights into the wider long-term ramifications of farmers relying on backpackers as labour force. It's worth quoting: "They are relying on a fairly insecure labour force, one that changes year to year, one that fluctuates

The hostel operator also gave a fresh perspective, given that the industry was fearing a marked downturn in the number of backpackers. He said that occupancy rates and inquiries were up. Given Joanna Howe's statement as well, it would have been ideal if fruit grower spokesman Phil Pyke had been asked about these issues. Instead the program repeated his remarks broadcast by PM on September 27.

There were the by-now familiar interviews with backpackers. On this occasion, two knew nothing about the backpacker tax debate and the third gained her knowledge second-hand from her partner. Given the Monash survey reported on Countrywide on August 27, which showed that 38% of the 335 respondents interviewed did not have a concern about the tax, a diversity of views from this cohort would have been useful.

12/10/2016 ABC Rural

Backpacker tax uncertainty lingers as Federal Government introduces legislation.

Nothing new in this report. A basic progress report.

18/10/2016 ABC Rural

Government gags debate as the House of Representatives passes backpacker tax plans.

Both balanced news story. It also puts the farm sector position succinctly, particularly that some farmers have expressed concern that a 19 per cent tax will also turn backpackers off agricultural work in Australia, and will put a vital source of labour at risk.

As this is an online story without a restriction of space and time (apart from the reporter's time in compiling and writing it, of course), the attitude of the Greens and independents in the Senate) should have been included.

22/10/2016 Countrywide

A new backpacker tax now on its way despite fears the rate will discourage migrant workers come harvest time.

The broadcast version of Anna Vidot's online report of September 18.

26/10/16 PM

Farms to lose up to 90 per cent of backpacker labour, inquiry hears.

Standard-issue report of Senate inquiry hearing. Tourism gets an overdue airing but is confined to the impact of the passenger movement charge rather than the wider implications of the backpacker tax on tourism.

27/10/16 ABC Rural

Treasury officials admit no modelling was done to assess backpacker tax impact.

The online version of Anna Vidot's PM report.

27/10/16 PM

Treasury neglected to investigate flow-on effects of backpacker tax.

Anne Vidot's broadcast report of the Senate hearing the previous day.

4/11/2016 Countrywide

The backpacker tax is called a shambles by Tasmanian farmers who urge the Government to abandon even the lower rate of 19 per cent.

Report on the senate inquiry sitting in Launceston on November 1. Tim Reid's comments broadcast by the Country Hour in Tasmania on November 1. Rose Grant's interview mentions statistics gathered by union but little detail on those was teased out. Unionist Matt Toner's comments is the first time the issue of exploitation of seasonal workers is mentioned in the stories to be reviewed. The ABC has reported strongly on this issue in the past.

7/11/2016 ABC Rural

Uncertain economic climate for farmers dealing with backpacker tax.

Online news update on progress of the Senate inquiry with two other reports tacked on. Orchardist Howard Hansen's statement on paying 13% tax on backpacker earnings required further explanation – how is the backpacker compensated when they leave the country?

Mr Hansen said it was a myth that backpackers working in Australian orchards were not paying tax.

"We estimate that of the \$6.5 to \$7 million payrolls that we paid last year over 35 per cent of that is going to people on a working holiday visa.

"We are using the tax table for the horticultural industry and the shearing industry, so every single one of them we're taxing them at 13 per cent.

"Well I can confirm in our business every single one of them is paying 13 per cent."

That tax can be refunded to backpackers that earn less than the tax-free threshold through a tax return."

8/11/2016 ABC Rural

Senate gears up for backpacker tax showdown as Labor proposes a 10.5 per cent tax rate.

A political preview story with the background explained, including Labor's position. However, given National MP Andrew Broad's comments on the Labor position, a Labor response should have been sought. The first hint that the Greens might do a deal but it's down the story. And it doesn't mention what their current position is.

8/11/2016 The World Today

Stalemate likely over backpacker tax.

Balanced report. Picks up the Greens opening the door to change.

8/11/2016 PM

Farmers worried by backpacker tax stalemate.

Another standard-issue report that repeats the farming sector's now well-recognised position.

8/11/2016 ABC News 7pm.

The Federal Opposition has said it will block upcoming Federal Government legislation on backpacker tax and visa bans for refugees.

The backpacker tax just one of several political subjects reported on by Greg Jennett. Explains the politics in the context of the Budget challenge and the other issues the Government needs to get through the Senate.

9/11/16 AM

Backpacker tax: 'We have compromised. What Labor is doing is playing politics' - Treasurer Scott Morrison.

An 8 minutes 24 seconds interview. No Labor response or any suggestion that the program tried or that Labor Treasury spokesman Chris Bowen would be heard on a later ABC program. However, the World Today secures him the next day.

The matter of the long-term labour force question for farmers is touched on by then Treasurer in this quote:" I've also stressed that with backpacker numbers, they've been falling since 2012. I mean before the budget was even introduced in 15/16, the numbers had already fallen by 35,000 and that was after the tax-free threshold was raised to \$18,200 "

9/11/2016 The World Today

Labor accuses Government of xenophobia over backpacker tax.

This was the opportunity to balance the Government and Labor views over time. Labor's Chris Bowen gets his chance here across backpacker tax and superannuation, the two issues

the Treasurer attacked Labor at length on AM (and is requoted, as is Barnaby Joyce) in this report.

However, the response is, in total, 1min 30sec (That compares to 8min:24 for Morrison on AM on November 8, minus the intro and the opening question and answer on the US election). Morrison also gets a second grab in this report.

This raises the question of whether one program should balance another so that, over time, one view is not disproportionately represented (Editorial Guidance Notes 4.2 and 4.5).

10/11/16 The World Today

Backpackers confused, farmers stressed as tax issues continues unresolved.

NFF raises the issue of growers investigating using mechanical harvesting for the first time. Tasmanian orchardist Howard Hansen features again. Another backpacker interview critical of the tax.

14/11/2016 ABC Rural

Federal Government says backpacker tax will pass Senate in three weeks.

Finance Minister Mathias Cormann confident bill will pass. Nothing from Labor, Greens or Lambie, who are all critical to the Bill's passing.

18/11/2016 ABC Rural

Backpacker tax debate "went to a crazy place": Costa Group Chief Executive Officer.

The briefest mention of the backpacker tax but the fact Costo grows half its blueberries outside the traditional August-December window was a thread worth developing. Questions also on automation, reliance on backpacker labour, particularly in light of other subjects he raised a year ago:

"We're also looking at more automation, as you would in a high-cost country, and that requires capital."

21/11/2016 PM

Labor won't compromise on backpacker tax: Fitzgibbon.

Labor's Joel Fitzgibbon says there are farmers and growers at odds with the NFF on the 19% rate that organisation supports. He even suggests members of the delegation had a different view to the NFF. Therefore, the NFF should have been sought for comment. There have indications of a range of views from farmers but these have been polarised between a tax and no tax.

21/11/2016 PM

Political indecision on backpacker tax causing chaos for farmers.

Good questioning of Hartsuyker, Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister, on the revenue calculations. He couldn't answer it. NFF had made the calculations: \$320m from 19% and \$174m from 10,5%. The NFF position clarified by Mahar, saying they don't care

whether the rate is 19 % or 10.5%, as long as there is a decision. Otherwise, he says, the default rate will be 32.5%.

22/11/2016 AM

Murray-Darling Basin decision common sense: Barnaby Joyce (end of interview).

BARNABY JOYCE: Ah, this is... What the Labor Party has done, for your listeners, is played an absolute act of political bastardry. They have no real intentions of a 32.5 per cent backpacker tax, just so your listeners know. That's Mr Shorten saying that overseas workers should get taxed vastly less than Australian workers.

That means that overseas workers are more likely to get the jobs than Australian workers. And this apparently is the same fella, Mr Bill Shorten, who was a former leader of the AWU (Australian Workers Union), who's running around saying he's supporting Australian jobs.

Joyce is wrong by saying overseas workers get taxed vastly less than Australian workers. It's a level playing field with both qualifying for the \$18,000 tax-free threshold. Then there are the workers employed under other visa programs who are taxed from the first dollar they earn. And there's the fact that farmers are frustrated that locals won't take on the work.

24/11/2016 AM

Shadow Treasurer calls on National Party members to cross the floor over backpacker tax.

The first of seven reports on November 24 on the backpacker tax with the focus on the politics in Canberra.

This AM interview (8 minutes 43 seconds) with Labor Shadow treasurer Chris Bowen squares the ledger after the long Morrison interview on November 9 and the short Bowen interview on The World Today later the same day. The same territory was covered, including the backpacker tax.

24/11/2016 AM

Senate expected to knock back 19% backpacker tax today.

Victorian national Andrew Broad fails to understand the backpacker tax by saying that at 10% tax backpackers would be better off that Australian workers. Wrong: They will be taxed from the first dollar they earn; Australian residents are taxed after earning \$18,000 (the tax-free threshold). However, he is right when he says backpackers would be better off than workers under the Pacific islander program, a sector of workers not touched on in any of the reports under review. The World Bank reported in 2016 that tourists on work visas were limiting the work available in Australia to Pacific Islanders.

24/11/2016 News Online

Government rejects Jacqui Lambie's backpacker tax amendments - as it happened.

"We're going to leave the live blog here now the House of Representatives has been adjourned for the day. It's been a busy one, dominated by the ongoing backpacker tax debate."

As it happened, it says. But not what happened. Unless you scroll down to Anna Vidot's tweets. A live blog should give more information than this, particularly as it frames the backpacker tax debate as dominating the House of representatives. No sense of immediacy at all, and nothing about the Senate vote. That should be bread and butter for a parliamentary blog.

There's a link to Anna Vidot's report, posted at 1.05pm, but it's old news. Her analysis, also linked to, is useful background but it is a day old. Both appear under the sub-head "Here's what's making news today."

There is nothing that points the audience forward to content on the backpacker tax debate coming up on PM—where there are two reports – and the 7pm news bulletin.

There is also no link to ABC Rural or The World Today, both of which have backpacker tax reports on the same day.

There is this pointer to other content on Facebook:

If you like your politics on social media, we're live streaming Question Time in the House of Representatives on the ABC News Facebook page. Head over and have a look.

It appears once at the start of Question Time.

In summary: a great deal of unrealised potential in engaging the audience and keeping them across programs and platforms.

24/11/2016 ABC Rural

Frustrated farmers seek end to debate over backpacker tax.

More of the same from farmers. Illegal workers and unfair work practices get a brief airing.

24/11/2016 PM

Farmers despair while politicians bicker over backpacker tax.

Orchardist Fred Gattuso, who featured in a November 21 report. Doesn't care if the tax is 10.5% or 1%. Essentially the same arguments we have heard from farmers for the during of the public debate on the backpacker tax.

24/11/2016 PM

Politicians squabble over backpacker tax rate.

A top-rate summation with the full spectrum of political voices, succinct explanation of the tax and its impact and some terrific colour capturing the confrontation between senator Jackie Lambie and the new NFF president Fiona Simson. However, the introduction to the report says:

"Regional towns are worried that without a decision, backpackers will go to countries with lower tax rates, like New Zealand."

Yet there is nothing in this report that justifies that observation. The audience could assume it is true but there has not been, throughout the reports reviewed so far, any reporting on

what regional Australia thinks. At this stage, apart from farmers, regional Australia's voice has not been heard.

24/11/2016 The World Today

Political insults fly over proposed backpacker tax.

Comprehensive review of the politics but what is the Greens position?

24/11/2016 ABC TV News 7pm

The brief quotation from Glynn Williams of Primary Employers Tasmania raises a question: was this on the day or from his evidence to the short Senate inquiry into the backpacker tax in September or to the inquiry conducted by Deloitte. If it was not a same-day response to the latest political manoeuvring, then it should have been identified as such.

Captures the Lambie-Simson confrontation, which was good television and importantly it gave Simson an opportunity to explain her position – an opportunity not available to her in the courtyard of Parliament.

25/11/2016 AM

Hopes backpacker tax will be resolved next week.

More of the same in a preview story.

25/11/2016 ABC Rural

"We're going to have fruit rotting on trees and vegetables not being picked": Farmers furious over backpacker tax stalemate.

A restatement of the positions of farmers and politicians. However, there is this admission from Gavin Scurr, of Pinata Farms: "If backpackers have to pay 32.5 per cent tax we will have to pay even more to get them to come at all." So, there is another force at work as well as a labour shortage. Will the tax force up costs for farmers? This has not been raised in the reports reviewed – nor has the question been asked of farmers and their representatives.

26/11/2016 AM

NZ farmers to benefit if backpacker tax indecision continues.

The NZ perspective – at last. Across the programs reviewed there has been no detail in why backpackers might chose Canada – a northern hemisphere harvesting season -- instead of Australia.

28/11/2016 ABC Rural

One Nation will support Government's compromise 15pc backpacker tax.

One-dimensional report one day after the announced of a compromise 15% tax. This was Rural's chance to get reaction and explain what it means in terms of revenue, impact on farmers etc.

28/11/2016 The World Today Mixed reaction from farmers to backpacker compromise.

Same voices, same views.

28/11/2016 ABC TV news 7pm. Federal Government gains Senate approval for a revised backpacker tax.

Tasmanian orchardist Howard Hansen again.

29/11/2016 ABC Rural

As harvest begins along the summer fruit trail, growers come to terms with fallout from the backpacker tax debate.

This is the first report that shows that the labour-force issue facing horticulture is more complex than the tax.

Raises the issues of mistreatment of overseas workers and the impact on Australia's image and outlines visa categories, and backpacker earnings – and the fact (never properly explained) that backpackers are taxed at 13%. Tasmanian orchardist Howard Hansen explains in another report that that tax is then refunded is the person's total earnings in Australia fall below the tax-free threshold.

This is the relevant piece from ABC Rural – information that has always been available from the start of the review period.

Workers lose access to the tax-free threshold and the tax rate will rise from the current rate of 13 per cent.

According to lobby group the National Farmers Federation (NFF), worker numbers have already declined by 7,000 this year from 40,000 three years ago.

Working holiday makers on 417 and 462 visas must do 88 days' work in regional areas to get a second year, and the NFF said the backpackers reported the tax hike felt unfair to them.

On average, they earn \$13,300 a year, and are paid 9 per cent superannuation, which equates to \$1,190.

The backpacker tax debate came as South Koreans were staying away due to a number of abuse stories, and diminishing support from the Korean Government, the NFF said.

Meanwhile, Irish travellers were seeing better economic conditions at home, and their interest in a working holiday harvesting Australian fruit had fallen away.

Also, evidence in this report from The Sweetest Job campaign of the unreliability of local workforce.

With the backpacker tax threatening to derail the strawberry harvest in south east Queensland, growers sought between 6,000 and 8,000 locals to work between May and September this year. "The sweetest job" campaign, in conjunction with the Moreton Bay Shire Council, the Sunshine Coast Shire Council and Growcom will continue again next year, despite some issues retaining local workers.

- 10 growers saw over 2,000 jobseekers registered in the first round
- Half, or 1000 jobseekers, filled in a screening survey to determine if they were suitable or available
- 126 were interviewed, and 52 were placed on strawberry farms
- Only 25 are still working on those farms three months later
- Workers lose access to the tax-free threshold and the tax rate will rise from the current rate of 13 per cent.
- According to lobby group the National Farmers Federation (NFF), worker numbers have already declined by 7,000 this year from 40,000 three years ago.
- Working holiday makers on 417 and 462 visas must do 88 days' work in regional areas to get a second year, and the NFF said the backpackers reported the tax hike felt unfair to them.
- On average, they earn \$13,300 a year, and are paid 9 per cent superannuation, which equates to \$1,190.
- The backpacker tax debate came as South Koreans were staying away due to a number of abuse stories, and diminishing support from the Korean Government, the NFF said.
- Meanwhile, Irish travellers were seeing better economic conditions at home, and their interest in a working holiday harvesting Australian fruit had fallen away.

29/11/2016 AM

Backpackers welcome compromise tax deal.

Yet more backpacker voices. Again, it's more of the same. Another tantalising short take from Scott Cameron of Harvest Labour Services, saying backpackers will still come here.

30/11/2016 PM

Backpacker tax standoff continues.

Who voted for what. Lacks that detail of the Senate numbers. Vital that anyone following the debate, and having a vested interest in its outcome, should know the position of Senators, particularly the cross-bench. Tourism, the largely ignored sector in the reporting being reviewed, gets a brief mention.

30/11/2016 The World Today

Senate again amendments backpacker tax to 10.5 per cent.

This story is redone essentially the same for PM above.

The first of 12 reports on December 1, the day of the backpacker tax breakthrough.

1/12/2016 AM

Backpacker tax 'needs to be fair and internationally competitive'

First substantial interview in this series of articles with the NFF to explain its position and how it developed over the past 18 months its policy of 15%-19% based on fairness and international competitiveness. Raises the issue of the tax rates applied to workers under other visa schemes and the need for fairness. NFF president Fiona Simson makes the telling point: "How do you manage a workforce that's paying three different tax rates."

1/12/2016 ABC Rural (Vic Country Hour)

Pubs fear loss of business from backpacker tax uncertainty.

Short online piece with no development of the impact on tourism and regional Australia. Telling the readers and listeners that it's not just agriculture being affected by the debate on the backpacker tax – as if this is a revelation after months of debate.

1/12/2016 The World Today

Unsustainable reliance on backpacker labour, research finds.

Welcome appearance in this report on the long-term labour-force challenges facing horticulture. Joanna Howe's research was reported on by the ABC in 2015, she was quoted briefly on Countrywide on September 30 but no development of that issue of tax equity between backpackers and other visa holders doing seasonal work, such as Pacific Islanders. Very much a neglected part of the debate by all parties.

1/12/2016 The World Today

Farmers warn of voter backlash over backpacker tax kerfuffle.

Nothing new in anything these farmers say. Adds nothing to the debate. Joanne Johnson of Help Temp Agency in Young makes the observation that in her area they are yet to see a decline in backpacker numbers as it is too late for people to change their plans. Raises the question of a diversity of views being sought, including asking why backpackers already in Australia will not take up work if they are operating under the old tax regime until December 31.

1/12/2016 The World Today

Pressure mounts on government to resolve backpacker tax decision.

Scene setter for the drama to come. But no Labor and no Green comment.

1/12/2016 News Radio

End of backpacker tax stalemate.

The interview of 6 minutes and 25 seconds with farmer Gary Godwill concentrates on the politics and what has transpired and farmer views are now well-known. Touches on the impact of losing crops but doesn't develop that in terms of questions about shortages, price

hikes, impact on growers' revenue and impact on the regions in which they operate. One question on the labour-force problems.

Godwill was interviewed on November 24 by ABC News (in a segment not subject to this review), saying essentially the same thing: that he was angry and farmers had been betrayed. He also repeated the same lines on ABC Rural on December 2 (also in a segment not subject to this review).

The News radio intro says:

NewsRadio's Glen Bartholomew got some reaction from those who had most to lose with the ongoing uncertainty over this tax.

However, there was only one voice. Another example of not only failing to resist "the temptation to rely on the usual, predictable sources" but failing to seek a diversity of views.

Godwill also didn't have the most to lose as he reveals he only needs 10 backpackers to help pick his crop.

In summary, the interviews over the course of a week did not contribute anything new or informative for the ABC's audience and Godwill was never invited to address the wider issues.

The following three PM reports cover the final day of parliament and the backpacker deal comprehensively: the politics, the players and the colour. Overall the focus is on the politics, including farmer criticism.

1/12/2016 PM

Greens seal a deal with Government on backpacker tax.

Excellent report with all the players, capturing the drama of the day and the political triumph by the Greens to come out of the shadows and get a deal done. Succinctly explains the tax and revenue consequences and neatly sums up the months of anger and frustration of the agricultural sector.

1/12/2016 PM

Farmers accuse major parties of political point-scoring over backpacker tax.

Farmers voices again with nothing new to add. Needs analysis of the political fallout in rural Australia.

1/12/16 PM

Backpacker tax and protests dominate final day of Parliament.

All the colour of the last day of Federal Parliament for 2016, dominated by the deal on the backpacker tax.

1/12/2016 7.30

Backpacker tax passed on last day of Parliament.

7.30 wrap, not just of the backpacker tax. So, it moved the story on.

1/12/2106 ABC TV News 7pm. Hobart and Darwin.

A political fix to the backpacker tax has been struck at the death knell in Canberra, but it still doesn't fix the litany of problems still faced by farmers.

Tasmanian orchardist Howard Hansen again, with mother. Little new information on the effect on farmers. Hansen, a person with authority in horticulture in Tasmania, makes four appearances in the programs reviewed, which suggests "the temptation to rely on the usual, predictable sources." Hansen appeared on November 28 on ABC TV News in his orchard and this appears to be from the same interview, although the only evidence this reviewer has is that he is wearing the same checked shirt. If this is a take from three days before—before the passing of the legislation — then this report is misleading as the audience would expect he was commenting in the light of the passing of the legislation. If it was in fact an interview from December 1 then, despite the intro, it doesn't mention the litany of problems still faced by farmers — problems such as the long-term labour force challenges that seemed to have eluded the programs reviewed here.

1/12/1016 ABC TV news 7pm.

Chris Ulhmann reporting.

This gave a comprehensive and balanced account of the day the backpacker tax issue was resolved, the changing political landscape leading up to the Government deal with the Greens, and its broader implications for the Federal Budget and the likely political fallout.

The molehill question: As the chief political correspondent, Chris Ulhmann should be challenging in his inquisitions, and his question, leavened with comment, has all the hallmarks of early preparation — as it should. The problem was the PM looked puzzled at what it actually meant. It did seem to give the PM the breather to charge ahead, with Ulhmann, not the PM, appearing wrong-footed. The molehill was a mere bump in the road with the PM unchallenged thereafter. Opposition Leader Bill Shorten absent from this report. Was an end-of-year interview sought with him?

In the following six reports on December 2, all concentrated on the politics, reflecting largely on what happened the previous day. The audience found out how the deal with the Greens was done but there was nothing fresh or new on where to from here for the farmers and regional communities.

2/12/2016 The World Today.

Government celebrates backpacker tax compromise.

Nothing new in this report. Concentrates on the politics but doesn't move the story on. Great lines on Hinch by Joyce, De Natale repeats his lines and there's a grab from the AM interview with Treasurer Scott Morrison. So, it is a repotting of the news and well short of the brief The World Today sets itself on background and analysis.

2/12/2016 AM

Greens secure funding for Landcare in deal on backpacker tax.

Standard political wrap. Fair but dull.

2/12/2016 ABC News

Greens Leader Richard Di Natale says the deal over the backpacker tax is a "common sense victory for farmers".

A good interview that gets the big question answered: did the Greens approach the Government or did the Government approach the Greens. De Natale: Through this whole period, we didn't receive a phone call from any Minister . . . De Natale avoided Rowland's toughest question: Why didn't the Greens show leadership at the start of the week. De Natale also made the observation that regional communities, where the money is spent, were suffering. Though the months of coverage reviewed on an issue of national substance those communities get scant attention.

2/12/2016 ABC Rural.

Farmers relieved backpacker tax debate is over, but furious it took so long to resolve.

A long repeat of the position of farmers, and how the shortage of backpackers is affecting them.

Only the President of the Australian Blueberry Growers Association Greg McCulloch looks forward by calling for a wider review of the taxation regime for foreign workers, including those entering Australia on skilled worker visas.

"I feel this thing should be revisited and a proper review around the whole tax [policy] on foreign workers. Maybe not just backpacker 417 visas, maybe 457 visas as well.

"There needs to be a proper considered review."

Here was an opportunity to seek some substantial information on how the horticulture industry might address its labour-force issues.

NSW Cherry Growers president Fiona Hall said her focus was now on rebuilding the industry's backpacker workforce, which had been depleted by the tax uncertainty. But how? Was the question asked?

The questions that could have been asked are sitting in the Related Stories section with this report. There is a link to an article in The Conversation, posted on November 2, explaining the long-term issues horticulture must confront and how the debate over the backpacker tax has exposed the labour-force deficiencies.

2/12/2016 AM

Backpacker tax 'an achievement of 70 per cent' for budget measure, Treasurer.

Interview with Treasurer Scott Morrison.

2/12/2016 The World Today

Landcare waiting for details on \$100 million funding boost.

A little light shed on where the Landcare cash might go. Nick Tana, from the Sumich group, the largest growers of carrots and onions in the nation, says he won't adjust his plantings, so that's one farmer who doesn't believe the effects of a backpacker tax will be quite as bad as others believe. Some context would have been useful for the audience here: Tana heads a business where most of its harvesting is by machine, which makes him an interesting choice for an interview – if the future of horticulture harvesting was raised.

The following 48 program segments were submitted for review following the draft report which examined the 84 program above. Unless otherwise stated, there is no audio available for the following content appraisal.

16/8/16 Western Plains NSW Breakfast, Alice Springs 783 Breakfast.

This is a package from Canberra by Anna Vidot of ABC Rural and was broadcast a day after an ABC Rural segment on the backpacker tax. As in that package, it features National Farmers Federation workplace relations manager Sarah McKinnon. What can't be ascertained because of the limits of this review, is whether the August 15 was broadcast to the Western Plains and Alice Springs audience the previous day. However, it certainly was available on-line.

16/8/16 Northern Tasmania Breakfast.

Given the description provided for this review, this features the Anna Vidot ABC Rural package from the previous day with an additional interview with Glynn Williams, president of Primary Employers Tasmania. The interview with Williams was used on The Country Hour in Tasmania later the same day so it is assumed the Breakfast interview was used a promotion for that program.

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-08-16/tas-country-hour-16-august-2016/7748086

16/8/16 Mid-west and Wheatbelt, WA Mornings.

This segment localizes the backpacker tax issue with an interview with Perenjori Hotel operator and shire councillor Kirk Pohl. The intro provided for this review raises the question about the impact of fewer backpackers on the hotel and tourism industries.

23/8/16 Far North Queensland Mornings.

It's a reasonable assumption that this interview with Labor tourism spokesman Anthony Albanese raised the impact of the backpacker tax on tourism.

26/8/16 ABC Murray Goulburn Breakfast.

Murray Goulburn report, to its credit, goes to the source of a survey by the National Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University -- the director of the graduate tourism program at the centre, Dr Jeff Jarvis. This interview was broadcast two days after ABC Rural's two

reports on the Monash survey, and a day before Countrywide's report on the same issue. Dr Jarvis was interviewed on RN Breakfast on May 5 on the survey, so there was background available on his views and therefore an opportunity to explore new terrain. These include such issues as the other influences on the decline in backpacker numbers and the competition from other industry and business sectors for backpacker workers.

1/9/16 ABC Radio Darwin Drive.

A balance of political voices – the Labor member for Solomon in the NT, Luke Gosling, and Steve Ciobo, the federal Minister for Tourism. It therefore met Standard 4.5. One would expect a restatement of the positions of the Government and the Opposition. The program also sought the views of backpackers in Darwin.

1/9/16 Far North Queensland Breakfast.

This was a news update. No other material available.

1/9/16 NSW Statewide Drive.

An interview with the general manager of legal affairs and workplace relations with the National Farmers Federation, Sarah McKinnon, and Margie Osmond, Chief Executive Officer of the Tourism and Transport Forum. This is a case of Drive getting in first. McKinnon was interviewed on PM the next day on the backpacker tax, so the NSW state wide audience heard essentially the same material from the same person in successive days.

5/9/16 Hobart 936 Drive.

This reports on backpacker tax meeting in Tasmania, where various farming tourism and community leaders put their views to the tax review. In this case Luke Martin of the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania is interviewed on what happened at that meeting.

The TICT views were well-known, as a May 13 interview with Martin shows.

Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania chief Luke Martin said imposing taxes on working tourists would drive them to New Zealand.

"I think there'll be a lot of people in the youth tourism market who are really scratching their head over that one," he said.

"If you're backpacking and wanting a working holiday and you're looking at Australia or New Zealand, right now you look at Australia [and] you're going to get taxed 35 cents in the dollar, and in New Zealand you're going to get taxed zero."

ABC Rural conducted interviews the next day on the subject of the same meeting. These were broadcast by both the Country Hour and, as the list of programs subject to review show, by Hobart 936 Breakfast.

5/9/16 ABC Rural

An excellent example of exploring the wider issues around the backpacker tax, in this case the problem of attracting local workers.

6/9/16 Hobart ABC Breakfast

An interview with the president of Primary Employers Tasmania, Glynn Williams, on the meeting in Tasmania on the backpacker tax (the same meeting covered from a tourism perspective the previous day by Hobart 936 Drive). The same interview features on the Tasmanian Country Hour so the Breakfast item would appear to be a promotional vehicle for the Country Hour.

20/9/16 ABC Radio Darwin Breakfast

On the brief notes describing the content of this program the ground covered with the president of NT Farmers, Simon Smith, would be a familiar one to the audience – the effect of the backpacker tax on the farming sector.

21/9/16 ABC North and West South Australia Breakfast

The YHA and WOOF perspectives explored. The notes on this segment have the question by journalist Tim Jeanes that the main review suggests was not asked across the spectrum of ABC coverage: Is it just the proposed tax that is decreasing the number of backpackers (seeking work in Australia)?

22/9/16 ABC Western Victoria Breakfast

This covers the politics of the backpacker tax, using the appearance of Luke Hartsuyker, Minister Assisting the Deputy Prime Minister, at a Mildura event.

23/9/16 Hobart 936 Mornings

Impact of the backpacker tax on tourism explored with Luke Martin from the Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania. He was also interviewed on the issue on September 9. There was no content available judge whether fresh insights were uncovered.

27/9/16 ABC Radio Darwin Drive

A diversity of voices on the scrapping of the backpacker tax.

On September 27 and 28, 2016, the backpacker tax backdown and its impact was covered extensively by regional radio.

27/9/16 ABC Radio Darwin Drive.

A coverage of the impact of the backpacker tax on farming, tourism and business. Luke Gosling, the Labor Member for Solomon, gave the political perspective and the introduction outlined the Government's position.

27/9/16 ABC Adelaide Evenings.

Views from a member of the South Australian Regional Advisory Committee of Citrus Australia and the Chairman of the Australian Regional Tourism Network. Further evidence that regional radio covered tourism more intensively than national programs reviewed in the draft report and went to local, rather than national, representatives.

27/9/16 ABC Radio Perth Drive

Local representatives interviewed on tourism.

28/9/16 ABC Radio Canberra Mornings.

The tourism perspective again.

28/9/16 ABC Radio Darwin Afternoons.

The views of tourism and the NT Government canvassed. Based on the short note describing the program, backpackers were asked whether the tax rate is factored in to any travel decisions they make.

28/9/16 Newcastle NSW Mornings

The note for this program lists questions to be asked. They are frequently asked across the spectrum of ABC programs on the backpacker issue and have elicited the same responses.

28/9/16 ABC Western Victoria Breakfast

Interview with National Party MP for Mallee, Andrew Broad. Gets the national picture, which is covered extensively by national programs AM, PM, the World Today and ABC Rural on the same day. Does introduce a local view with an interview with Jenny Garonne, executive officer of the Mildura Development Corporation.

28/9/16 Mid North Coast NSW Breakfast.

Interview with Luke Hartsuyker, National Party member for Cowper and Minister Assisting the Deputy Prime Minister. He is the local member but the interview is putting the Government's perspective. Again, the national politics is covered the same day by national programs so there is no local perspective.

28/9/16 New England North-West NSW Breakfast.

Local comment essentially the same message audiences have been hearing from farmers for the duration of the backpacker tax debate. There is nothing in the notes on this program that suggests any deviation from the usual questions asked by the great majority of programs examining the backpacker tax. The link before might have been useful in formulating questions that give a new perspective, and therefore a diversity of views, on the workforce challenges facing rural Australia. For example, the harvest time from March to May would suggest the cotton industry has more time to adjust and to recruit.

http://cottonaustralia.com.au/work-in-cotton/casual-jobs

28/9/16 1062 ABC Riverland Breakfast

Two local federal MPs interviewed but the subject is national, not local.

29/9/16 ABC Rural Victorian Country Hour.

Raises a new issue: piecework. The interview with the three backpackers asks the usual questions and elicits the usual response.

29/9/16 ABC Rural

This program raises one of the key issues around the backpacker tax: the labour force challenges facing horticulture in Australia.

5/10/16 ABC Rural Tasmanian Country Hour

Touches on the problem recruiting local workers in horticulture but the weight of the report focuses on the backpacker tax and its effect on recruitment.

12/10/16 ABC Radio Darwin Mornings

Luke Gosling, the Labor member for Solomon again. Tourism is tackled with Margy Osmond, chief executive officer of the Tourism and Transport Forum. The views of both have been reported on by ABC Darwin.

12/10/16 ABC Rural.

A substantial explanatory piece, which first appears on The Conversation website.

21/10/16 ABC Rural Queensland Country Hour

A substantial piece on the use of robotics in agriculture but it appears as a stand-alone without any reference to the backpacker tax. It does not make it clear if this will have an effect on the labour-force issues in horticulture. The link to a related story from November 25, 2015, does, however, does address the issue.

27/10/16 ABC Rural NT Country Hour

Raises the issue of the seasonal worker program, including the cost challenges, and in the context of the backpacker tax debate, unlike the robotics report above.

31/10/16 1062 ABC Riverland Breakfast

Examines the federal Government's campaign to attract more backpackers.

8/11/16 ABC Radio Darwin Mornings.

Focuses on the increased departure tax as part of the backpacker tax compromise. Program regulars Luke Gosling and Margy Osmond again.

9/11/16 ABC Rural Tasmanian Country Hour

More on the seasonal workers program with Vanuatu offering to provide workers for Tasmanian farms. No reaction from the Tasmanian farm sector.

10/11/16 Central West NSW Breakfast

The only audio available for the 48 additional regional program segments submitted for review. The best example of floating the same questions that had been asked for months so it looked back, not forward. There were the familiar responses from a farmer and the local federal member.

16/11/16 ABC Eyre Peninsula and West Coast Breakfast

A welcome focus on the impact on regional tourism of the delay in reaching the backpacker tax decision.

21/11/16 ABC Rural

A detailed examination of the exploitation of backpackers and other overseas workers by labour-hire companies.

23/11/16 ABC Radio Canberra Breakfast

Interview with David Marshall, chairman of the Canberra Business Council's tourism industry advisory council. Based on the notes, Marshall was essentially asked the same questions as he was on September 28 on Canberra Mornings.

25/11/16 Great Southern WA Mornings

The tourism industry gets an airing. The program localises the backpacker tax issue with the manager of backpacker accommodation, and questions Australian Hotels Association Chief Executive Officer Bradley Woods.

The following reports deal with the Federal Government's decision to compromise on the backpacker tax rate.

28/11/16 ABC Radio Canberra Drive

Sarah McKinnon on the NFF reaction to a further compromise by the Federal Government on the backpacker tax. Sarah was also interviewed on The World Today.

29/11/16 92.3 Coffs Harbour NSW Breakfast

Luke Hartsuyker, MP for Cowper and Minister Assisting the Deputy Prime Minister. Based on the notes provided, this was an interview on the politics surrounding the tax. No detail given on the questions asked of blueberry producer Ridley Bell. However, he was interviewed on ABC TV News on November 24. The questions were essentially the same asked of almost every farmer in the long debate on this tax. He says it's a more complex issue than just the tax rate, so there was fertile ground to explore.

https://www.msn.com/en-au/video/watch/ridley-bell-is-a-blueberry-producer-in-northern-new-south-wales/vp-AAkIYUR

30/11/16 ABC Goulburn Murray Breakfast

Dr Jeff Jarvis of Monash University.

30/11/16 Mid North Coast NSW Breakfast

Explores the impact on the tourism industry with Chief Executive Officer of Youth Hostels Australia, Julian Ledger.

30/11/16 NSW Statewide Drive

Based on the notes, this explores the politics following the defeat in the Senate of the Government's compromise 15% tax.

30/11/16 Alice Springs 783 Drive

Based on the notes provided, this explores the politics with the Labor Member for Solomon, Luke Gosling, and the President of NT Farmers, Simon Smith, both critics of the Government's backpacker tax.

30/11/16 South West WA Drive

Evan Hall, Chief Executive Officer of the Tourism Council of WA, is asked about the impact of the backpacker tax on tourism. Based on the short notes, the questions don't explore any new territory.

1/12/16 ABC Goulburn Murray Breakfast

The politics explored.