

Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security

Answers to Questions on Notice

Australian Communications and Media Authority

Question No: TBA

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Hansard Ref: Page 50

Topic: ACMA – Broadcast Complaints

Senator Kristina Keneally asked:

Senator Keneally: Do you have an analysis of the types of complaints that you've received to say that they fall into certain categories? Does that kind of data exist? People might be complaining about graphic sexual content, racist content or some other type of content.

Ms Rainsford: We do do some sort of categorisation of the complaints that we get. So, certainly, if you were interested in particular types, I would be happy to take that on notice and see what information we could provide.

Senator Keneally: That would be great. I would be interested in that, particularly to see if there are any trends or shifts you've seen in the past decade, particularly in terms of whether there has been an increase in relation to the terms of this inquiry in terms of extremism, whether it be inspired by religiously motivated or ideologically motivated extremism.

Ms Rainsford: I think generally for us that would probably come under the provisions that go to inciting hatred or violence, but I'm happy to take it on notice and see what information we can extract from our systems on that data.

Answer:

The ACMA's complaint database does not classify complaints using categories directly relating to the terms of reference for this inquiry. However, we have reviewed complaints back to 1 January 2015 and identified complaints broadly relevant to the terms of the inquiry going to incitement of hatred/severe ridicule on the basis of race or religion.

Within this category, we have identified a subset of complaints alleging that broadcast content promoted violent extremism and ideologies. The complaints do not demonstrate any clear trends.

Within that subset, the ACMA has received 26 complaints about 4 matters:

- In 2017 the ACMA received a complaint that alleged that a documentary broadcast by a subscription broadcaster normalised and proselytised for the Islamic State. This complainant was referred to the broadcaster in the first instance for response in accordance with the co-regulatory complaints' framework set out in the *Broadcasting Services Act* 1992. Following this referral, the complainant did not return to the ACMA to raise the complaint.
- In 2018 the ACMA investigated a complaint that alleged an interview broadcast on a subscription broadcasting service was offensive and dangerous and advocated racist and Islamophobic violence. The ACMA found that the licensee did not breach the Subscription Broadcast Television Codes of Practice and the report was published in November 2018 (The report is available at <https://www.acma.gov.au/publications/2019-09/report/bi-430-adam-giles>)

- In 2019, the ACMA received an anonymous complaint that alleged that content broadcast by a narrowcast radio station was broadcasting music and chants that incited Jihad and used violent terror-like language. There was insufficient information to enable an ACMA investigation. However, the ACMA referred the matter to the National Security Hotline (Department of Home Affairs).
- In 2019 the ACMA received 23 complaints concerning the television coverage of the Christchurch terror attacks. The ACMA investigated this matter and the report was published in September 2019 (The report is available at <https://www.acma.gov.au/publications/2019-09/report/acma-investigation-coverage-christchurch-terrorist-attack>.)