



14 Oct 2024

Written questions on Notice

Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society

To whom it may concern:

Thank you for the invitation to present to the **Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society** on 30 September 2024.

Media Diversity Australia is a national not-for-profit organisation working towards a media landscape that looks and sounds more like Australia, driving impactful change through evidence-based research, customised programs, and strategic partnerships.

Our responses to the questions on notice are detailed below.

Please feel free to contact us should you require any further information about this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mariam Veiszadeh

Chief Executive Officer

Media Diversity Australia

media diversity

A U S T R A L I A

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Ms Sharon Claydon MP

Chair of Joint Select Committee on Social Media and Australian Society

Are there ways social media platforms can be used to promote media diversity? Do you have any examples of successful uses?

Social media platforms hold significant potential for promoting media diversity by amplifying negatively marginalised and underrepresented voices, supporting independent journalism, and providing alternative narratives.

Below are ways these platforms can be leveraged, along with successful examples:

❖ **Amplifying Underrepresented Voices:**

- **Platforms as Equalizers:** Social media allows individuals and groups from marginalized backgrounds to bypass traditional gatekeepers and directly engage with large audiences. This helps ensure diverse voices are heard, especially from communities underrepresented in mainstream media.
- **Examples:**
 - **Twitter Spaces & X (formerly Twitter):** Many journalists and advocates from diverse backgrounds use Twitter to discuss issues that are often overlooked in traditional media.
 - For instance, First Nations activists in Australia have successfully used these platforms to raise awareness about Indigenous issues and policies like the *#ChangeTheDate* campaign, which gained traction through social media.

❖ **Support for Independent Journalism:**

- Social media platforms provide a low-cost, accessible space for independent media outlets that focus on niche or underserved audiences. Through crowdfunding and subscriber models, they sustain journalism that highlights diverse stories.
- **Examples:**
 - **Crikey & The New York Times on TikTok:** These platforms have experimented with short, engaging videos to bring attention to complex political and social issues, using formats that resonate with younger, diverse audiences.

- TikTok's algorithm promotes diverse and independent voices based on engagement, rather than the gatekeeping of traditional media.

❖ Educational Campaigns and Social Justice Movements:

- Social media's speed and reach are well-suited to real-time social justice campaigns that often revolve around issues of diversity and representation. Educational campaigns led by both non-profits and individuals on Instagram, X, and TikTok have brought crucial issues to the forefront.
- **Examples:**
 - **#BlackLivesMatter:** Originating on social media, this movement harnessed platforms like Instagram and Twitter to organize protests and raise awareness about racial injustices globally.
 - **#MeToo Movement:** The viral spread of #MeToo across Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter showcased how social media can highlight systemic discrimination and harassment, especially focusing on underrepresented voices of women of colour.

❖ Data Analytics for Content Moderation and Inclusion:

- Social media platforms can use AI and data analytics to promote diverse voices through inclusive algorithms, while simultaneously identifying and reducing hate speech or content that undermines diversity efforts.

Senator Ms Sarah Hanson Young

Do you have any views on how 'Journalism' should be defined as recently, Peter Greste has spoken about wanting to create a register for journalists. If the Federal government were to distribute funding to media organisation, they will need to know what a media organisation is and what constitutes public interest journalism.

Unfortunately, we are not able to adequately respond to this at this present time as MDA does not have a formal position on 'on how journalism should be defined'. We would need to consult with our members and board before putting forward a view which could be used to inform the basis for distributing funding to media organisations or any other proposal requiring such a definition.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

As flagged we have the following additional resources (some recently launched and referenced in my appearance at the Hearing).

MDA's Online Safety of Diverse Journalists research

Coinciding with Press Freedom Day on May 2nd 2023, we launched our Australian-first research unpacking the online abuse of diverse journalists which is a key step toward identifying, understanding, and addressing online abuse and harassment of diverse journalists and media workers.

Our research found that many journalists and media workers from diverse and minority backgrounds experience online abuse and harassment yet believe it to be 'part of the job'.

The research project, led by Griffith University and Macquarie University, was commissioned by Media Diversity Australia (MDA) and supported by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Meta (Facebook), Google News Initiative, the e-Safety Commissioner and Twitter.

The research is a key step toward identifying, understanding, and addressing online abuse and harassment of diverse journalists and media workers.

Findings reveal discrimination and abuse increased towards journalists and media workers who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and/or queer or transgender, and/or culturally and linguistically diverse and/or living with a disability.

The research also highlighted the troubling trend of discrimination within the newsroom.

Online abuse has significant implications for the individual, the media sector, and society at large.

Five key implications were identified from the research:

- 1) normalisation of online abuse
- 2) mental health and emotional pressure
- 3) silencing, self-censorship and isolation
- 4) leaving the industry
- 5) offline implications



The report details 15 key recommendations including systems and resources for employers, online platforms, regulators and policymakers to work with diverse journalists and media workers to improve conditions for workers in the industry.

Access the full report here.

[Online Safety of Diverse Journalists - Media Diversity Australia](#)

MDA's Race Reporting Handbook

- The MDA Race Reporting Handbook (or 'Racial Literacy Kit') was commissioned by the Australian Human Rights Commission and written by journalists Jenae Tien and Karina Hogan in partnership with MDA.
- The Race Reporting Handbook offers practical, journalist-to-journalist guidance on reporting race-related issues more accurately and sensitively.
- The comprehensive guide is paired with a concise summary version, catering to the time constraints of busy media professionals.
- The Handbook encourages journalists and media workers to challenge their biases, engage in ongoing self-education, and strive for more equitable reporting on marginalised racial communities.
- With chapters tailored for both journalists and editorial leaders, it covers key topics such as the language of anti-racist journalism, fact-checking protocols, amplifying lived experiences, and fostering stronger community connections.
- The *Race Reporting Handbook* is the third in a series produced by Media Diversity Australia, complementing the existing [MDA Indigenous Reporting Handbook](#) and [MDA Disability Reporting Handbook](#).

Access the full report MDA Race Reporting Handbook and Summary Guide here:

[Race Reporting Handbook - Media Diversity Australia](#)