

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

**Question No. 1**

**Senator Barnett asked the following question at the hearing on 23 February 2009:**

How many submissions and/or concerns were expressed to the Commission prior to the release of the discussion paper on the freedom of religion and belief project?

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

It is not possible to provide an accurate breakdown of the number of enquiries/concerns regarding religious freedom that were received before the release of the discussion paper. The *Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act 1986* (Cth) covers discrimination on the basis of religion only in the area of employment and occupation and by the Commonwealth under the Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. There were 19 formal complaints of discrimination related to discrimination in employment on the basis of religion received by the Commission in 2007-2008, and one complaint alleging a breach of the Declaration. The Commission also received 229 enquiries to its telephone information service about religion/religious organisations.