



# Twelve-month Report

July 2024-June 2025

Published 25 September 2025

## 1. Background

The ambition of the Ombudsman's Office is to help build a trusted ABC that reflects, adapts and improves. In pursuit of this goal our office aims to ensure reasonable concerns and complaints are heard across the organisation. We aim to provide a link between audiences and content makers and to uphold the high editorial standards the ABC sets for itself, including independence, integrity, impartiality and accuracy. For an organisation that holds others to account, it is critical that the ABC has mechanisms to hold itself to account. The Ombudsman reports directly to the ABC Board and leads a small team which is independent from the news and content making areas of the ABC. Visibility and accountability are core to the establishment of the Ombudsman's Office and to this end, all significant investigations and regular activity reports are published on the ABC Ombudsman's website at <https://www.abc.net.au/about/ombudsman>.

ABC online complaints are received by the Audience Support team who triage the approximate 22,500 yearly complaints. Around 80% of all complaints are defined as '**general**' (broad concerns such as personal taste, program scheduling and operational matters including technical glitches and the use of personal social media by ABC staff). General complaints are either sent to ABC divisions or addressed by the Audience Support team. General complaints are not subject to internal (ABC Ombudsman) or external (ACMA) review.

Complaints about specific ABC content (post publication) about the ABC's editorial standards (due impartiality, accuracy, offence and fair dealing – the top four) are categorised as '**content**' complaints and are assessed by the Ombudsman's Office (OO). These number approximately 4,000 with nearly half sent on to the relevant ABC division. The remaining complaints are retained by the OO for investigation.

A dissatisfied complainant can come to the OO (or ACMA) to request a review. OO reviews often provide an opportunity to improve the ABC response to a complainant. This has assisted in reducing the number of external reviews conducted. Whenever a matter is considered significant, the OO will publish an [investigation report](#). Complaints that are resolved or found to be in breach of editorial standards are generally published [here](#) and [here](#).

**Content complaints** are the business of the Ombudsman's Office and are the subject of this report. Further information relating to the Complaint Handling Process can be found [here](#).

## 2. Summary of 2024-25 data

The ABC received 18,163 written complaints in the 2024-25 financial year, down 26% from 24,700 last year and below the 5-year average of 22,302. The vast majority were general complaints with 4,192 relating to specific ABC content and categorised as content complaints. Content complaints are down from the 5-year high of 7,041 recorded last year but largely consistent with the 5-year average of 4,232. The peak last year is attributable to concerns expressed about coverage of the Middle East conflicts.

**Table 1**  
**Complaint Numbers 2023-24 and 2024-25**

Complaints	2023-24	%	2024-25	%
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>24,700</b>		<b>18,163</b>	
General	17,659	71%	13,971	77%
Content	7,041	29%	4,192	23%
<b>Content complaint issues<sup>2</sup></b>				
Investigated	8,394		4,907	
No breach	5,014	60%	2,919	59%
Resolved	4,532	90%	2,451	84%
Breach	405	8%	412	14%
	77	2%	56	2%

<sup>1</sup> The number of single complaints (may contain more than one issue).

<sup>2</sup> The number of issues identified in content complaints.

War and Conflict in the Middle East continued to be the most complained about subject matter. Relative to 2023-24, however, these complaint numbers are down: from 49% (4,154) of content issues to 26% (1,288). Most complaints (65%) relating to the Middle East were claims of bias or lack of balance (843), with 50% (422) broadly categorised as pro-Palestine and 45% (378) broadly categorised as pro-Israel. The balance, 5% (43), claimed other forms of bias (e.g. pro-US, anti-Greens).

While tempting to suggest concern is being expressed in rough equivalence between support for Palestine or Israel, the statistics are more a reflection of a growing and organised expression of audience bias. Predominantly concerns arise from interviews with controversial guests, from unfolding news coverage that is perceived to lack broader context and from analysis which departs from the firmly held views of some in the audience. Complainants often express grave dissatisfaction with a news item, without considering relevant, broader coverage. The ABC's critical examination of a diversity of perspectives across multiple platforms is sometimes lost to an audience member convinced of an ABC agenda one way or the other.

The ABC has not always got it right, but mistakes have been few when considering the comprehensive coverage provided across multiple channels.

Other subject matters that have raised significant numbers of complaints across the ABC include sex, gender and gender identity, international war and politics, and the federal election.

Bias, followed by inaccuracy, offensive content and unfair treatment are the most complained about categories. The most complained about ABC platform was News Online followed by the programs, Religion & Ethics, *Four Corners* and *7.30*. While most complaints (84%) resulted in findings of no breach of editorial standards, 412 complaint issues were resolved (involving the ABC taking some form of remedial action) and 56 resulted in a breach finding.

### 3. Complaint numbers over 5 years

Single content complaints may concern more than one issue, and the OO assesses every issue before determining if an investigation is appropriate. Other actions available to the OO include referring the matter to the relevant ABC division or noting the response if it is considered insubstantial or not in good faith. Total complaint numbers were lower than the five-year average, while content complaints have remained largely consistent.

**Table 2**  
**Complaint numbers over five years**

Complaints	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 <sup>3</sup>	2024-25 <sup>3</sup>	5-year average
<b>Total<sup>1</sup></b>	23,257	25,772	19,616	24,700	18,163	22,302
General	19,415	22,296	17,004	17,659	13,971	18,069
Content	3,842	3,476	2,612	7,041	4,192	4,232
<b>Content complaint issues<sup>2</sup></b>						
Investigated	4,179	3,963	2,711	8,394	4,907	4,831
No breach	1,548	1,360	807	4,532	2,451	2,140
Resolved	265	262	189	405	412	307
Breach	80	99	74	77	56	77

<sup>1</sup> The number of single complaints (may contain more than one issue).

<sup>2</sup> The number of issues identified in content complaints.

<sup>3</sup> Full-year operation of Ombudsman's Office.

The 2023-24 year represents the first full year of the operation of the OO with policies and procedures only taking effect from May 2023. Notably, complaints reached an all-time high in this period with the number of investigations also reaching record numbers. While these numbers have now come back to more regular levels, the percentage of complaints investigated (60%) remain higher than pre-Ombudsman levels (at around 40%).

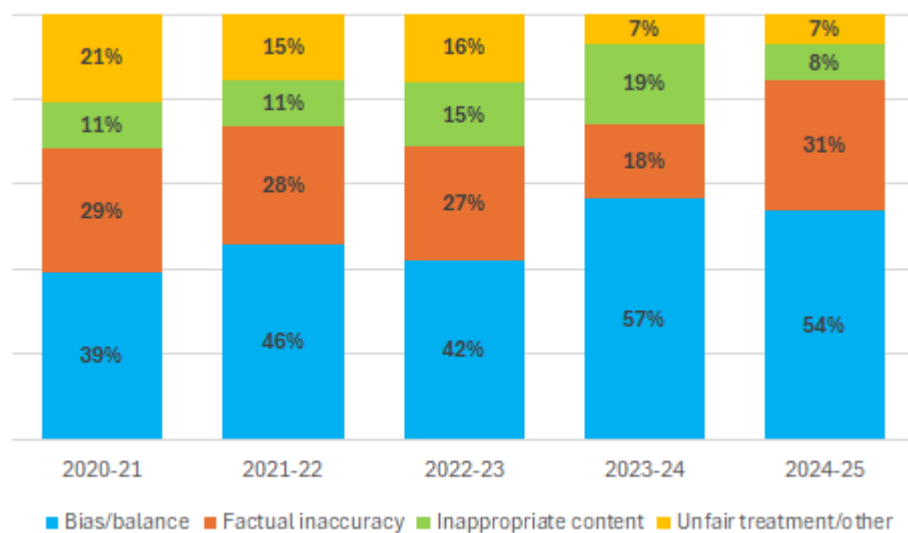
In 2024-25, the OO resolved 412 complaints which is the highest number recorded in the five-year period. In part, this reflects the priority the OO places on resolving matters in a timely fashion. Breach findings in turn are at a 5-year low, potentially reflecting the focus on resolving matters upfront rather than investigating after the fact. Breach and resolved totals include multiple complaints received for a single piece of content.

## 4. Categories of complaints

Concerns of balance and bias are consistently the most complained about category and have increased as an overall proportion of content issues in the most recent two years. Complaints alleging factual inaccuracy increased to a five year high in the 2024-25 year, driven by: complaints about the Middle East conflict, a Religion & Ethics opinion piece, two *Four Corners* programs (referenced below) and complaints across a range of content about coverage of events in Amsterdam after the Europa League match between Maccabi Tel Aviv and Ajax on 7 November 2024 (part resolved, see [here](#)).

**Graph 1**

**Categories of content Issues 2020-21 to 2024-25**



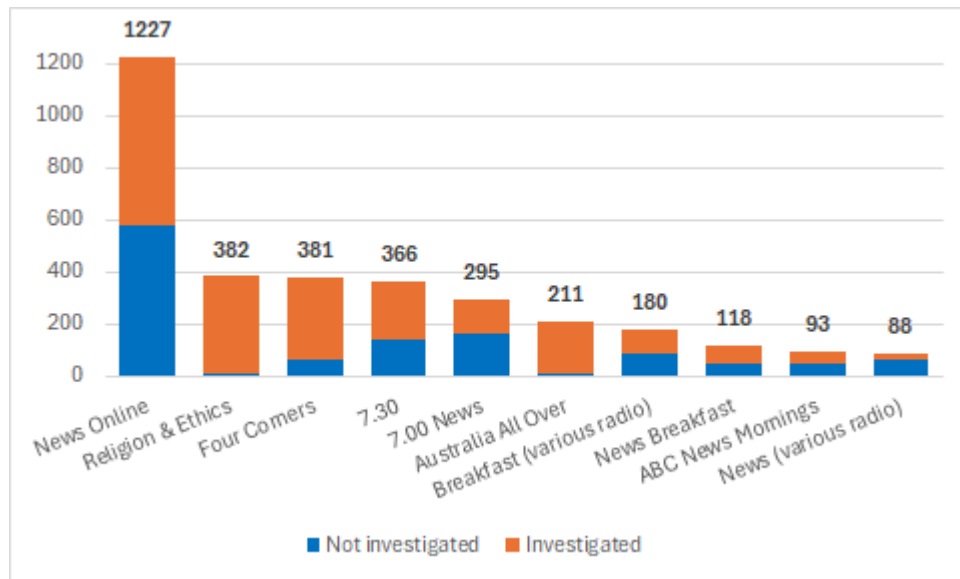
## 5. Programs most complained about

While complaint numbers are a useful reflection of audience engagement, often content that is uncomfortable attracts more criticism. The ABC needs to be mindful of this tension to avoid being fearful of delivering on charter obligations to provide innovative and comprehensive programming while being resilient enough to correct, clarify and apologise where necessary.

In this context the table below identifies the most complained about programs or platforms.

**Graph 2**

**Programs most complained about 2024-25**



Complaints about ABC News Online cover a wide range of stories and themes reflecting its broad remit and reach.

Of note in 2024-25:

- 50% of News Online complaints were allegations of bias and 41% were claims of inaccuracy. More than a third (36%) were in relation to the Middle East conflicts.
- ABC Religion & Ethics was a new entrant to the top 10 in 2024-25. 98% of the content issues raised related to an [opinion piece](#) seen as ‘anti-trans’ regarding care for children experiencing gender dysphoria - report [here](#).
- A range of concerns were raised in the complaints about *Four Corners*, although two items generated larger numbers of issues: the episode ‘Infiltrating Australia – India’s Secret War’ (150 issues), see [Investigation report](#); and ‘Pain Factory’ (124 issues), see report [here](#).
- Nearly a quarter (24%) of *7.30* complaints related to Middle East coverage and 18% were about Federal Election content (with 50 complaints about a debate between the Housing Minister and Shadow Minister. These were referred by the Ombudsman’s Office to the relevant team to respond. This prompted 5 requests for review, which were accepted: no breach report [here](#)).
- Middle East conflicts accounted for 45% of complaints about the 7pm TV News.
- Another new entrant to the list is *Australia All Over* and concerns raised about an interview with Dick Smith on renewable energy. No breach of standards was found, as outlined in the Investigation report [here](#).
- The various *Breakfast* programs aired across radio networks include the ABC NEWS program *Radio National Breakfast*, which accounted for 58% (104) of the 180 *Breakfast* radio issues. 69% (72) of *Radio National Breakfast* complaints related to

the Middle East conflict, including 33 issues (raised in 17 complaints) about an interview with Israel's Special Envoy for Combating Antisemitism (no breach/resolved finding [here](#)).

- The ABC NEWS Channel program *ABC News Mornings* also features in the 2024-25 top program stats, primarily due to 27 complaints about coverage of the Labor Ministry swearing-in, raising concerns that the Liberal Party leadership vote held at the same time was given prominence (no breach, report [here](#)).

Programs most complained about over the last five years:

1	News Online	5,064
2	Q+A	2,506
3	7.30	2,107
4	7.00 News	1,230
5	Four Corners	1,053
6	News Breakfast	833
7	Breakfast (various radio)	686
8	ABC News (NEWS Channel)	577
9	News (various radio)	556
10	Afternoon Briefing	423

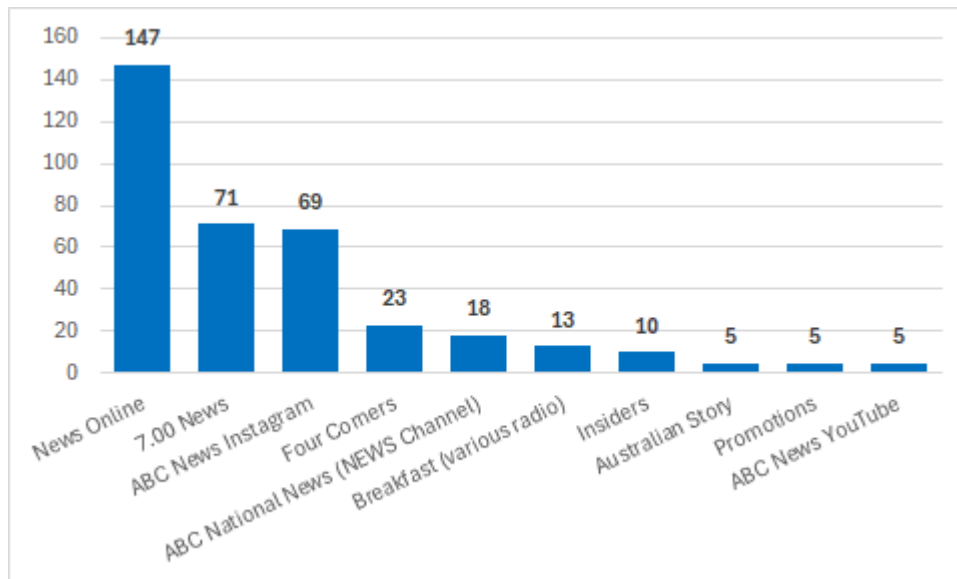
The above list has not markedly changed from last year with *Breakfast (various radio)* and *Afternoon Briefing* dislodging *Insiders* (401 complaints) and *The Drum* (wrapping in 2023).

## 6. Resolved complaints

While the vast majority of investigations (84%) found no breach of editorial standards, 412 (14%) complaint issues were resolved. Resolved complaints are considered those where appropriate action has been taken to adequately remedy the concern raised and where any further action (such as allocating resources to an ongoing investigation) would not be warranted. Most resolved complaints occur in the News Online space where relatively minor accuracy issues can be quickly and transparently updated.

**Graph 3**

**Top ten programs with issues resolved 2024-25**



Of note:

- 30% (45) of issues relating to ABC News Online were for stories about the Middle East conflicts. This includes 16 complaints about the story ‘Lebanese Australian community heartbroken over Israeli attack on Lebanon’. Investigation report [here](#).
- 64 of the 7.00pm news issues were about coverage of protests in Australia following the death of Hassan Nasrallah, Leader of Hezbollah (an additional 16 were received in relation to coverage on the ABC NEWS Channel). Investigation report [here](#).
- 69 complaints were in relation to an ABC News Instagram post which inadequately attributed a reference to the IDF as the “IOF” (Israel Occupation Forces). Investigation report [here](#).
- 22 issues resolved for *Four Corners* related to a minor inaccuracy in relation to the online story accompanying the *Four Corners* episode ‘Pain Factory’. See investigation report [here](#).
- Seven issues resolved for a repeat broadcast of a challenging *Radio National Breakfast* interview. Investigation report [here](#).
- Ten issues about an inaccurate reference to Nationals MPs and flood-affected communities on *Insiders*. Investigation report [here](#).

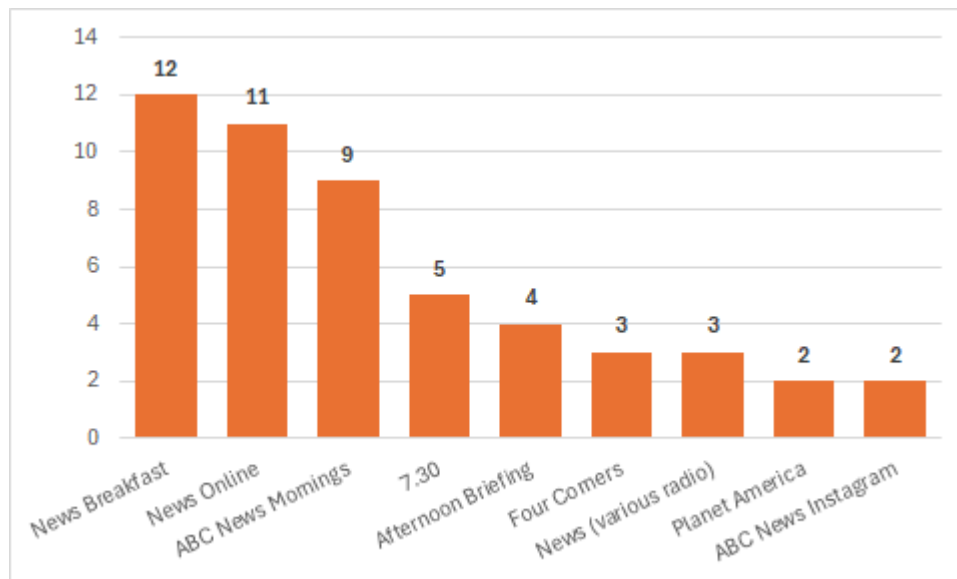


## 7. Breach complaints

In 2024-25, 56 issues (2% of investigated issues) were found in breach, where it was determined that ABC editorial standards had not been met.

### Graph 4

#### Programs with two or more breach issues 2024-25



Of note:

- 22 issues in relation to coverage across various ABC content of a claim that 14,000 babies were at risk of dying in a 48-hour period in Gaza. (See [here](#) and [here](#)).
- 8 breaches recorded in relation to the Alan Sunderland review of the ABC's 'Line of Fire' reporting.
- Four complaints that a *News Breakfast* segment unduly displayed a Sportsbet branded hat and t-shirt. See investigation report [here](#). (The other eight *News Breakfast* breaches related to the claim about 14,000 babies noted above).
- Eight of the *ABC News Mornings* issues also related to the claim about 14,000 babies.
- All of the *7.30* breach issues related to the Sunderland review.
- All of the *Afternoon Briefing* issues were about the 14,000 babies claim.
- Three complaints about *Four Corners* 'Water Grab' and the omission of certain information. Investigation report [here](#).
- Three breaches recorded in relation to news reports about strata managers which incorrectly reported that the ACT Civil and Administrative Tribunal (ACAT) had awarded the owners of a unit complex the maximum compensation of \$1,000. See investigation report [here](#).

## 7. Internal review

The Complaint Handling Process includes a mechanism where complainants who are dissatisfied with a response from the ABC may seek an Ombudsman Review. In 2024-25, the Ombudsman's Office finalised 100 such reviews. 68 of these requests were declined as the Ombudsman concurred with the response already provided. 32 requests were further considered with 5 of these resolved and one resulting in a breach finding.

Reviews are published [here](#).

The Review process has provided the Ombudsman with an opportunity to clarify and in some circumstances discuss with content areas how programs have or may present contentious subjects.

## 8. Conclusion

Complaints about coverage of the middle east and international conflicts, trans gender, and the federal election, were dominant themes in 2024-25, and these have played out in similar international jurisdictions including the UK and Canada. Complaint campaigns continue to gain traction with the assistance of artificial intelligence and various organisations offering support for activist email campaigns. In this environment, it will be important to continue to identify reasonable and considered complaints to ensure the ABC reflects, adapts and improves the services it provides in support of a vibrant and healthy democracy.

After two full years of operation the Ombudsman's Office will continue to refine and improve its functions, to communicate internally and externally with more regularity and to independently hold the ABC to the very high standards it sets for itself.