

**Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee**  
**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**  
**BUDGET ESTIMATES HEARINGS– MAY 2017**

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

**Department/Agency:** Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman

**Outcome/Program:**

Outcome 1. Fair and accountable administrative action by Australian Government entities and prescribed private sector organisations, by investigating complaints, reviewing administrative action and statutory compliance inspections and reporting.

**Topic:** Defence Force Ombudsman - Alleged misuse of social media by ADF members

**Senator:** Senator Kakoschke-Moore

**Question reference number:** 234

**Type of question:** FPA Committee – 22 May 2016

**Date set by the Committee for the return of answer:** 7 July 2017

**Number of pages:** 2

**Questions:**

**Senator KAKOSCHKE-MOORE:**

1. What communication have you had with the Australian Defence Force in regards to this issue?
2. Have you briefed them on the complaints that have been made to the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman?
3. Do you have regular meetings with the Australian Defence Force and the Department of Veterans Affairs?
4. How often do these occur?
5. Did your office investigate this issue of social media?
6. If an issue emerges as a theme does the office note it as an area of interest?
7. If a theme is found to be regularly occurring, would the office start an investigation into that issue?
8. What would this process entail?

**Answers:**

The issue of alleged misuse of social media by ADF members was raised in a regular liaison meeting with Defence on 6 April 2017. No complaints concerning the misuse of social media relating to the DVA have been received. We meet regularly with Defence (every 1-2 months) and DVA (every 3-4 months).

The Office does not always formally brief on all issues. Generally, issues (such as the alleged misuse of social media) will be uncovered and raised through the normal practice of investigating individual complaints.

In this case, none of the complaints raised were investigated as one matter was already being considered by the police and the others lacked evidence.

Generally, the Office notes emerging themes as an area of interest whether investigated or not. The Office may initiate an own-motion inquiry into matters of administration arising out of investigations into individual complaints. Own-motion inquiries may lead to a published report containing recommendations on how administrative procedures could be improved.