

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**

**Answers to Senate Estimates Questions on Notice**

**Additional Estimates February 2017**

**Communications Portfolio**

**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

**Question No: 130**

**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**

**Hansard Ref: Written, 14/03/2017**

**Topic: Editorial policies**

**Senators Burston, Brian and Roberts, Malcolm asked:**

From the editorial policies of the ABC, I quote: "The ABC has a statutory duty to ensure that the gathering and presentation of news and information is impartial according to the recognised standards of objective journalism."

Now I understand that these standards are not always going to be adhered to. Everyone makes mistakes. But I've noticed an odd pattern to the mistakes, and I wonder if you could help me understand it.

1. February 2017, a complaint was upheld that a story on death of Fidel Castro was essentially a hagiography, describing him as a "romantic revolutionary". Have any complaints ever been upheld that the ABC has been excessively critical of communist dictators?
2. December 2016, a complaint was upheld that Immigration Minister Peter Dutton was inaccurately described as making inflammatory statements about Lebanese Muslims that he did not in fact make. Have any complaints that the ABC has made similar false claims about the statements of a Labor Minister ever been upheld?
3. November 2016, a complaint was upheld that the ABC repeatedly aired the views of a pro-euthanasia advocate without an opposing view also being put. Has there ever been a complaint upheld that an anti-euthanasia advocate was given an unopposed platform on the ABC?
4. October 2016, a complaint was upheld that a report on the Safe Schools program was not impartial and did not give airtime to controversies surrounding the program. Has there ever been a complaint upheld that the ABC failed to outline controversies surrounding programs in support of traditional social values?
5. August 2016, a complaint was upheld that a story was unduly favourable to Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young. Has a complaint ever been upheld that an ABC story was unduly favourable to One Nation Senator Pauline Hanson?
6. The list goes on and on. I am confused. Why is it that whenever the ABC fails to be impartial, it is always partial to the "left" or control side of the debate? What possible explanation could there be for this pattern of behaviour?

**Answer:**

1. The ABC keeps records of upheld complaints but does not record them in a way that would make them identifiable by the category you request.

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5. The ABC keeps records of upheld complaints but does not record them in a way that would make them identifiable by the category you request.
6. The ABC disagrees with this assertion.