

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
ATTORNEY-GENERAL'S PORTFOLIO

**Group: 1**

**Program: Other Agency**

**Question No. SBE14/022**

**Senator Ludwig asked the following written question from the 20 November and 11 December 2014 hearings.**

Prof. Triggs: We do not yet have statistics that relate exclusively to the period in which Commissioner Ryan has been managing both roles. I can say that we have had an increase over the year in disability complaints. They are a very significant part of the commission's work. In fact, more than a third of our complaints concerned disability matters. That trend appears to be continuing under the new commissioner. She has held a stakeholders forum to gather together all of the stakeholders to advise them about her new role in combining both positions. That has been successful, I believe, in the major stakeholders understanding how she is going to work and her priorities in developing that work over the next two months. I think I can say that things are on track, but I do not yet know of any statistical information that would suggest that there has been any decline or any particular difference in the disability work. I will finish by saying that, as you will understand, the complaints function is quite separate from the function of the commissioners. As president, I am responsible for those complaints. We almost have Chinese walls, if you like, within the commission so that Commissioner Ryan is not on a daily basis dealing with any of these complaints.

Senator SIEWERT: I want to go to some of the other functions that Commissioner Ryan is carrying out, but I would like to specifically ask about something first. You said that the number of complaints was continuing along the earlier trend. How many have been received to date this year?

Prof. Triggs: For the 2013-14 reporting period, we have had 830. So 38 per cent of our complaints have come from that sector. I believe we have had a slight increase in disability discrimination complaints. But, as I said, the majority of our complaints—38 per cent—are under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Senator SIEWERT: Do you have any figures for the number of complaints received so far this financial year?

Prof. Triggs: I do not.

Senator SIEWERT: Are you able to take that on notice?

Prof. Triggs: I will certainly take that on notice and provide you with that information.

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

Complaints received by Act in the period 1 July 2014 – 20 November 2014

	Received	Percentage
Racial Discrimination Act	184	18%
Sex Discrimination Act	204	21%
Disability Discrimination Act	286	29%
Age Discrimination Act	56	6%
Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act	257	26%
Total	987	100%