

Department of Finance and Deregulation

Submission No:13.....

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
Role of the Auditor General in scrutinising government advertising
Wednesday, 9 September 2009

Question reference number: PA 4

Type of Question: Question on Notice

Number of Pages: 7

Senator Barnett asked:

Through you Chair, could Mr Lewis please table the letters from the minister or ministers and the secretary or secretaries.

Answer:

On 7 July 2008, the Acting Secretary of Finance wrote to Secretaries of Departments and Agencies subject to the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*, informing them of the Government's decision to implement new *Guidelines on Campaign Advertising by Australian Government Departments and Agencies* (the Guidelines). A template of the letter is at Attachment A for the information of the Committee.

On 17 March 2009, the Secretary of Finance wrote to Portfolio Secretaries advising them of the publication of the guidance document, *Business Planning Processes for Campaign Information and Advertising Activities* (the Guidance). A template of the letter is at Attachment B for the information of the Committee.

On 7 April 2009, the Special Minister of State wrote to Portfolio Ministers advising them of the publication of the Guidance. A template of the letter is at Attachment C for the information of the Committee.



Australian Government
Department of Finance and Deregulation

Jan Mason
Acting Secretary

Reference: RMS08/01674

«Name»
«Title»
«Department»
«Address»

Dear «Salutation»

I am writing to inform you about recent Government decisions to implement new *Guidelines and procedures that will apply to information and advertising campaigns* conducted by departments and agencies (agencies).

The Guidelines at Attachment A apply to all agencies subject to the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* and came into effect from 19 June 2008. They contain five key requirements:

1. Material should be relevant to government responsibilities.
2. Material should be presented in an objective, fair and accessible manner.
3. Material should not be directed at promoting party political interests.
4. Material should be produced and distributed in an efficient, effective and relevant manner, with due regard to accountability.
5. Advertising must comply with legal requirements.

On 26 June 2008 the Government considered and agreed to new governance arrangements in relation to government campaigns, to be underpinned by the Guidelines mentioned above.

A feature of the new approach is that campaigns with expenditure in excess of \$250,000 must be reviewed by the Auditor-General, who will provide a report to the Minister responsible for the agency undertaking the campaign on the proposed campaign's compliance with the Guidelines.

The Guidelines require Chief Executives to sign a certificate that a campaign complies with the Guidelines and relevant government policies. A draft copy of the certificate is at Attachment B for your information. The certificate is likely to be refined as the new operating arrangements are finalised.

A campaign can be approved for launching by a Minister only after the Chief Executive's certification and receipt of the Auditor-General's report.

A number of other administrative arrangements are currently being implemented, including the establishment of a Deputy Secretary level Interdepartmental Committee on Communications (IDCC) and creation of a multi-use list of communications suppliers.

The IDCC will provide a whole-of-government perspective on campaigns, including around timing and messaging, and campaign processes.

Operational guidance is also being developed to assist agencies undertaking campaigns. This Guidance will be considered by the IDCC.

Given that the Guidelines are effective now but administrative arrangements are still being implemented, transitional arrangements have been agreed by the Cabinet Secretary, Senator the Hon John Faulkner. The interim arrangements are set out at Attachment C.

To assist with implementation of the new arrangements, I would be grateful if you could arrange for the following information to be provided to Finance (contact details below) as soon as possible:

- the name and contact details of your agency's primary point of contact in relation to campaigns; and
- information concerning any planned or upcoming campaigns within your portfolio.

We intend to convene a meeting of agency primary contacts to discuss the new arrangements and seek feedback within the next fortnight - details will be provided to your contact officer as soon as practicable.

I would also appreciate it if agencies within your portfolio could be advised of these new arrangements.

If your staff have any questions about the new arrangements, they should contact Mr John Grant, First Assistant Secretary, Procurement Division, on 6215 2855 or email: john.grant@finance.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Jan Mason

July 2008



Australian Government
Department of Finance and Deregulation

Dr Ian Watt AO
Secretary

Our Ref: SEC0001110

«Name»
«Title»
«Department»
«Address»

Dear «Salutation»

As you would be aware the *Guidelines on Campaign Advertising by Australian Government Departments and Agencies* (the Guidelines), which were issued in June 2008, have established a framework for the conduct of publicly funded advertising and information activities. One of the underlying principles of the Guidelines is that Governments may legitimately use public funds for information programs or education campaigns but that these should not be conducted for party political purposes.

The framework makes a clear delineation between a Minister's involvement in a campaign and the involvement of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and their *Financial Management Act 1997* (FMA) agencies. Specifically, Ministers are responsible for authorising their portfolio's advertising campaigns and the launch of those campaigns. However, departments are responsible for campaign development processes, while CEOs must certify the campaigns are compliant with the Guidelines and related Government policies.

This places important responsibilities on Chief Executives as the compliance certificate and the planned campaign are to be informed by the purpose of the campaign, departmental analysis and research and are to be independent of any ministerial view relating to campaign design and implementation. Overall, the CEO's views should be determined by the application of the Guidelines.

To assist CEOs and FMA agencies in the execution of their responsibilities under the campaign advertising framework, the Department of Finance and Deregulation has recently issued the publication, *Business Planning Processes for Campaign Information and Advertising Activities* (the Guidance). The Guidance articulates the operational roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders including the respective responsibilities of Ministers and CEOs. Additionally, the Guidance provides practical assistance to agencies in the application of the Guidelines, thereby assisting CEOs to gain a level of assurance on their agencies' compliance with the Guidelines.

A copy of the Guidance is enclosed for your information. Copies are being distributed to portfolio Ministers to draw their attention to the processes supporting the Guidelines and to reiterate their responsibilities with regard to the campaign advertising framework. Copies have also been distributed to key communications and campaign contacts in your agency.

The Guidance is also available on the internet at www.finance.gov.au.

If you have any questions about this publication please contact Ms Laurie Van Veen, Branch Manager, Communications Advice Branch, either by telephone on 6215 3178 or by email laurie.vanveen@finance.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

I J Watt
March 2009



Senator the Hon John Faulkner

Special Minister of State

Cabinet Secretary

«Name»

«Title»

«Address»

Dear Minister

Guidance on Campaign Information and Advertising Activities

The Guidelines on Campaign Advertising by Australian Government Departments and Agencies (the Guidelines), which were issued in June 2008, have established a framework for the conduct of publicly funded advertising and information activities. One of the underlying principles of the Guidelines is that Governments may legitimately use public funds for information programs or education campaigns but that these should not be conducted for party political purposes.

The campaign advertising framework makes a clear delineation between a Minister's involvement in a campaign and the involvement of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and their *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* (FMA) agencies. Specifically, Ministers are responsible for authorising their portfolio's advertising campaigns and the launch of those campaigns. However, departments are responsible for campaign development processes, while CEOs must certify the campaigns are compliant with the Guidelines and related Government policies.

As you are aware the Guidelines place clear limits on a Minister's influence over the development of campaign advertisements. The CEO's certificate and the planned campaign are to be informed by the purpose of the campaign, departmental analysis and research, and should be independent of any ministerial or Cabinet view relating to the campaign design and implementation. Overall, the CEO's views should be determined by the application of the Guidelines.

To assist CEOs and FMA agencies in the execution of their responsibilities under the campaign advertising framework, the Department of Finance and Deregulation (Finance) has recently issued the publication, *Business Planning Processes for Campaign Information and Advertising Activities* (the Guidance).

The Guidance articulates the operational roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders including the respective responsibilities of Ministers and CEOs. A copy of the Guidance is enclosed for your information. Copies are also being distributed to Portfolio Secretaries and Management Advisory Committee (MAC) members to draw their attention to the processes supporting the Guidelines and to reiterate their responsibilities with regard to the campaign advertising framework.

Also enclosed is a copy of the first biannual report on *Campaign Advertising by Australian Government Departments and Agencies*. The next report will be released within three months of the end of the 2008-09 financial year.

The Guidance and biannual report are also available on the internet at www.finance.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

JOHN FAULKNER

April 2009

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Department of Finance and Deregulation

**Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit
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Wednesday, 9 September 2009**

Question reference number: Page PA22

Type of Question: Question on Notice

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Mrs Bishop asked:

Do you mean by the Guidelines that all advertising must be meant to inform?

Answer:

Yes. All advertising must inform.

One of the underlying principles contained in the Guidelines governing the use of public funds for government information and advertising campaigns is that all members of the public have equal rights to access comprehensive information about government policies, programs and services which affect their entitlements, rights and obligations. That means all advertising campaigns conducted by the Australian Government provide some level of information.

However, the amount of information that can be carried in an advertisement is usually limited by the space available, whether in relation to size or length of placement, and/or the complexity of the message(s). Consequently, Australian Government campaign advertising usually refers the target audience to a government website, telephone hotline or other material that will provide more detail or enable appropriate action to be taken on the subject matter.