
The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Report 377

Guidelines for Government Advertising

Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit

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Canberra

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Chairman's Foreword

This report contains guidelines for Commonwealth Government advertising developed by the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit following its review of *Audit Report No. 12, 1998–99, Taxation Reform, Community Education and Information Programme*.

The audit report, tabled on 29 October 1998, had reviewed the processes surrounding the Community Education and Information Programme (CEIP), an advertising campaign conducted in the months prior to the announcement of the 1998 election. Both the CEIP and the Auditor-General's subsequent report had caused much debate.

The Committee decided to review the audit report on 10 December 1998.

Early in its deliberations the Committee decided to focus on the issues in which it could be instrumental in delivering a positive outcome—the development of new guidelines for Commonwealth Government advertising. This followed the Auditor-General's suggestion that more specific guidance on the use of government advertising would be helpful.

The Committee took as a starting point the guidelines suggested by the Auditor-General in an appendix to his report. These were compared to the existing guidelines first released in 1995 and with other guidelines in both Australian and overseas jurisdictions. These included guidelines proposed by the Australasian Council of Auditor-Generals, the audit offices of Queensland, Victoria, and the guidelines of the United Kingdom and New Zealand Governments.

The Committee has a proud record of bringing down consensual reports. This issue of Government advertising guidelines is highly controversial (party political).

However the Committee determined that it wished to produce draft guidelines for Government to consider which, while not perfect nor totally agreed by all Committee members, do represent the majority and largely consensual views of the Committee.

The Committee commends this report and the guidelines to the Government for consideration.

Bob Charles MP
Chairman



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Membership of the Committee

Chairman	Mr R Charles MP	
Deputy Chairman	Mr D Cox MP	
Members	Senator H Coonan	Mr K Andrews MP
	Senator the Hon J Faulkner	Mr M Brough MP (until 7/3/00)
	Senator the Hon B Gibson AM	Mr P Georgiou MP
	Senator J Hogg	Ms J Gillard MP
	Senator A Murray	Mr A Griffin MP (until 9/8/99)
	Senator J Watson	Mr P Lindsay MP (from 7/3/00)
		Hon A Somlyay MP
		Mr L Tanner MP (from 9/8/99)
		Mr K Thomson MP (from 10/4/00)
		Mr S St Clair MP
		Ms T Plibersek MP (until 10/4/00)



Membership of the Sectional Committee

Chairman	Mr B Charles MP	
Deputy Chairman	Mr D Cox MP	
Members	Senator H Coonan	Mr K Andrews MP
	Senator the Hon J Faulkner	Mr P Georgiou MP
	Senator J Hogg	Mr A Griffin MP (until 9/8/99)
		Hon A Somlyay MP

Committee Secretariat

Secretary	Dr M Kerley
Inquiry Secretary	Dr J Carter
Research Officer	Ms R Perkin
Administrative Officer	Ms L Gillies
	Ms M Pappas



Duties of the Committee

The Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit is a statutory committee of the Australian Parliament, established by the *Public Accounts and Audit Committee Act 1951*.

Section 8(1) of the Act describes the Committee's duties as being to:

- (a) examine the accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the Commonwealth, including the financial statements given to the Auditor-General under subsections 49(1) and 55(2) of the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997*;
- (b) examine the financial affairs of authorities of the Commonwealth to which this Act applies and of intergovernmental bodies to which this Act applies;
- (c) examine all reports of the Auditor-General (including reports of the results of performance audits) that are tabled in each House of the Parliament;
- (d) report to both Houses of the Parliament, with any comment it thinks fit, on any items or matters in those accounts, statements and reports, or any circumstances connected with them, that the Committee thinks should be drawn to the attention of the Parliament;
- (e) report to both Houses of the Parliament any alteration that the Committee thinks desirable in:
 - (i) the form of the public accounts or in the method of keeping them; or
 - (ii) the mode of receipt, control, issue or payment of public moneys;

- (f) inquire into any question connected with the public accounts which is referred to the Committee by either House of the Parliament, and to report to that House on that question;
- (g) consider:
 - (i) the operations of the Audit Office;
 - (ii) the resources of the Audit Office, including funding, staff and information technology;
 - (iii) reports of the Independent Auditor on operations of the Audit Office;
- (h) report to both Houses of the Parliament on any matter arising out of the Committee's consideration of the matters listed in paragraph (g), or on any other matter relating to the Auditor-General's functions and powers, that the Committee considers should be drawn to the attention of the Parliament;
- (i) report to both Houses of the Parliament on the performance of the Audit Office at any time;
- (j) consider draft estimates for the Audit Office submitted under section 53 of the *Auditor-General Act 1997*;
- (k) consider the level of fees determined by the Auditor-General under subsection 14(1) of the *Auditor-General Act 1997*;
- (l) make recommendations to both Houses of Parliament, and to the Minister who administers the *Auditor-General Act 1997*, on draft estimates referred to in paragraph (j);
- (m) determine the audit priorities of the Parliament and to advise the Auditor-General of those priorities;
- (n) determine the audit priorities of the Parliament for audits of the Audit Office and to advise the Independent Auditor of those priorities; and
- (o) undertake any other duties given to the Committee by this Act, by any other law or by Joint Standing Orders approved by both Houses of the Parliament.



Terms of Reference

Following concerns raised by the Auditor-General in his *Audit Report No. 12, 1998-99, Taxation Reform—Community Education and Information Programme*, the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit will undertake an inquiry to:

- review government information and advertising arrangements to assist in determining appropriate guidelines for taxpayer funded programs;
- examine whether the legislative provisions of the appropriation Bills governing the use of the Advance to the Minister for Finance and Administration ensure appropriate scrutiny where Parliamentary and general public interest indicate a matter is likely to be contentious;
- review the guidelines for the assessment of requests for copyright of Commonwealth developed material, particularly when such material may be used for party-political purposes during an election period; and
- review related matters raised in the Auditor-General's *Audit Report No. 12, 1998-99, Taxation Reform—Community Education and Information Programme*.

Recommendation

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Government adopt the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit's draft guidelines for government advertising.