



Appendix A – Guidelines on Campaign Advertising by Australian Government Departments and Agencies



Australian Government
Department of Finance and Deregulation



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**Guidelines on Campaign Advertising
by Australian Government
Departments and Agencies**

Asset Management Group

Guidelines on Campaign Advertising

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Guidelines on Campaign Advertising

Introduction

1. These Guidelines set out the principles applying to Australian Government departments and agencies undertaking information and advertising campaigns.
2. Government information and advertising campaigns with expenditure in excess of \$250,000 must be reviewed by the Auditor-General, who will report on the proposed campaign's compliance with these Guidelines. A Minister responsible for a campaign with expenditure of \$250,000 or less may ask the Auditor-General to review that campaign's compliance with these guidelines where the campaign is of a sensitive nature or the Minister considers that such review is appropriate.

Underlying Principles

3. The underlying principles governing the use of public funds for government information and advertising campaigns ('campaigns') are that:
 - a. 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;
 - b. governments may legitimately use public funds for information programs or education campaigns to explain government policies, programs or services and to inform members of the public of their obligations, rights and entitlements; and
 - c. government campaigns shall not be conducted for party political purposes.
4. Agencies subject to the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* ('agencies') must comply with the Guidelines.
5. Agencies must also comply with all policies and processes in relation to government campaigns which are issued and amended from time to time by the Cabinet Secretary or the agency responsible for such policies, currently the Department of Finance and Deregulation ('Finance').
6. Government campaigns can be approved for launching by a Minister only when:
 - a. the Chief Executive of the agency undertaking the campaign certifies that the campaign complies with the Guidelines and relevant government policies; and
 - b. for those campaigns with expenditure in excess of \$250,000, the Auditor-General provides a report to the Minister responsible for the agency undertaking the campaign on the proposed campaign's compliance with the Guidelines.
7. The Cabinet Secretary can exempt a campaign from compliance with these Guidelines on the basis of a national emergency, extreme urgency or other extraordinary reasons the Cabinet Secretary considers appropriate. Where an exemption is approved, the Auditor-General will be informed of the exemption and the reasons for the decision will be formally recorded and reported to the Parliament.
8. The Government will make publicly available the expenditure for all campaigns commissioned by any agency.

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Definition of Campaign Advertising

9. For the purposes of these Guidelines, government campaigns do not include advertisements for specific jobs, tender advertising, or other similar routine advertising carried out by government agencies in relation to their operational activities.
10. Campaign costs include those activities involved in the development, production and dissemination of information to the public about Government programs, policies and matters which affect their benefits, rights and obligations. Examples of these activities include:
 - a. the use of market research agencies, public relations consultants, advertising agencies and/or other specialist consultants in the development of such material; and
 - b. the production of press, radio, on-line, other electronic media, cinema and television advertisements, audio-visual material and printed material (pamphlets explanatory booklets, etc).

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11. Consideration should be given to information requirements during policy development and program planning. Campaigns should be instigated only where a need is demonstrated, target recipients are clearly identified and the campaign is based on appropriate research.

Guideline 1: Material should be relevant to government responsibilities

12. The subject matter of material to be communicated to the public should be directly related to the Government's responsibilities. As such, only policies or programs underpinned by legislative authority, appropriation of the Parliament, or a Cabinet Decision which is intended to be implemented during the current Parliament, should be the subject of an advertising campaign.
13. Examples of suitable uses for government campaign advertising include to:
 - a. inform the public of new, existing or proposed government policies, or policy revisions;
 - b. provide information on government programs or services or revisions to programs or services to which the public are entitled;
 - c. disseminate scientific, medical or health and safety information; or
 - d. provide information on the performance of government to facilitate accountability to the public.

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Guideline 2: Material should be presented in an objective, fair and accessible manner

14. The material communicated must be presented in an explanatory, fair, objective and accessible manner. Specifically, information in campaigns should be directed at the provision of objective, factual and explanatory information and enable the recipients of the information to reasonably and easily distinguish between facts, on the one hand, and comment, opinion and analysis on the other.
15. Where information is presented as a fact, it should be based on accurate, verifiable facts, and expressed in conformity with those facts. No factual claim should be made which cannot be substantiated. When making a factual comparison, the material should not attempt to mislead the recipient about the situation with which the comparison is made and it should state explicitly the basis for the comparison.
16. Pre-existing policies, products, services and activities should not be presented as new.
17. Special attention should be paid to communicating with any disadvantaged individuals or groups which are identified as being within the designated target audience. Particular attention should be given to the communication needs of young people, the rural community and those for whom English is not a convenient language in which to receive information.
18. There should be recognition of the full participation of women, ethnic and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island communities in Australian society by realistically portraying their interests, lifestyles and contributions to Australian society. Care should be taken that this is not done in a stereotypic way.

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Guideline 3: Material should not be directed at promoting party political interests

19. Material should be presented in a manner free from partisan promotion of government policy and political argument, and in objective language. The dissemination of information using public funds should not be directed at fostering a positive impression of a particular political party or promoting party political interests. Dissemination of information may be perceived as being party political because of any one of a number of factors, including:
 - a. the content of the material - what is communicated;
 - b. the source of the campaign - who communicates it;
 - c. the reason for the campaign - why it is communicated;
 - d. the purpose of the campaign - what it is meant to do;
 - e. the choice of media - how, when and where it is communicated;
 - f. the timing, geographic and demographic targeting of the campaign;
 - g. the environment in which it is communicated; or
 - h. the effect it is designed to have.
20. The information and material presented in a campaign should not:
 - a. mention the party in government by name;
 - b. directly attack or scorn the views, policies or actions of others such as the policies and opinions of opposition parties or groups;
 - c. include party-political slogans or images;
 - d. be designed to influence public support for a political party, a candidate for election, a Minister or a Member of Parliament; or
 - e. refer or link to the websites of politicians or political parties.

Guideline 4: Material should be produced and distributed in an efficient, effective and relevant manner, with due regard to accountability

21. Campaigns should be justified by a cost/benefit analysis which would be best done after preparation of the communications strategy and consultant briefs. The nature of the campaign, including the method, medium and volume of the publicity activities, should be justified in terms of society's needs, efficiency and effectiveness, and there should be a clear audit trail regarding decision making.
22. Existing procurement policies and procedures for the tendering and commissioning of services and the employment of consultants should be followed.

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Guideline 5: Advertising must comply with legal requirements

23. Campaigns and related material, the manner of presentation and the delivery of the campaign must comply with all relevant laws including:
- laws with respect to broadcasting and media;
 - privacy laws;
 - intellectual property laws;
 - electoral laws;
 - trade practices and consumer protection laws; and
 - workplace relations laws.
24. Distribution of unsolicited material should be carefully controlled. The information conveyed should clearly and directly affect the interests of recipients.

Contacts for Further Information

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