



Reclaiming public space – inquiry into outdoor advertising

The regulation of outdoor advertising content is the subject of a new inquiry by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs.

Billboards and different forms of outdoor advertising are increasingly dominating public spaces. However, questions have been raised regarding the effectiveness of current systems to monitor and regulate appropriate content for outdoor advertising.

Billboards are predominantly self-regulated by an industry code, although some may also be subject to the National Classification Scheme that determines the classification of certain publications, films and games.

Committee Chair Graham Perrett MP said the Committee was concerned that the current self-regulation regime was not 100 percent effective in upholding community standards and protecting children. “In 2009, objections to the Advertising Standards Bureau regarding the content of outdoor advertising rose from 16 to 24 percent of all complaints,” he said.

“There is obviously some community concern about the types of advertising that are in public areas, and we need to consider the adequacy of current regulatory arrangements.

“There are instances where the content of outdoor advertising is directed to an adult audience, or where it may contain degrading or suggestive images.

“Consequently, it is timely to consider the appropriateness of this content being displayed in public spaces where it may be viewed by any member of the community, including children.”

The Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, has requested that the Committee inquire into and report on a range of issues including:

- the adequacy of the existing self-regulatory scheme in regards to billboard advertising
- whether the current industry codes and regulatory arrangements meet community concerns about billboard advertising
- the extent of consumer protection provisions across jurisdictions that prohibit false, misleading and deceptive advertising
- technical developments and new technologies in billboard advertising
- the rate and nature of complaints about billboard advertising
- the regulatory burden on business, and
- possible improvements to the current system.

The full terms of reference are available at www.aph.gov.au/spla or by contacting the Committee Secretariat. Submissions close on 18 February 2011. A series of public hearings and roundtable events will be held in early 2011, and the Committee anticipates reporting its findings mid-year.

For media comment, please contact the Committee Chair, Mr Graham Perrett MP, on (07) 3344 2622 or 0408 883 312.

For background information, please contact the **Secretariat of the Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs**:

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