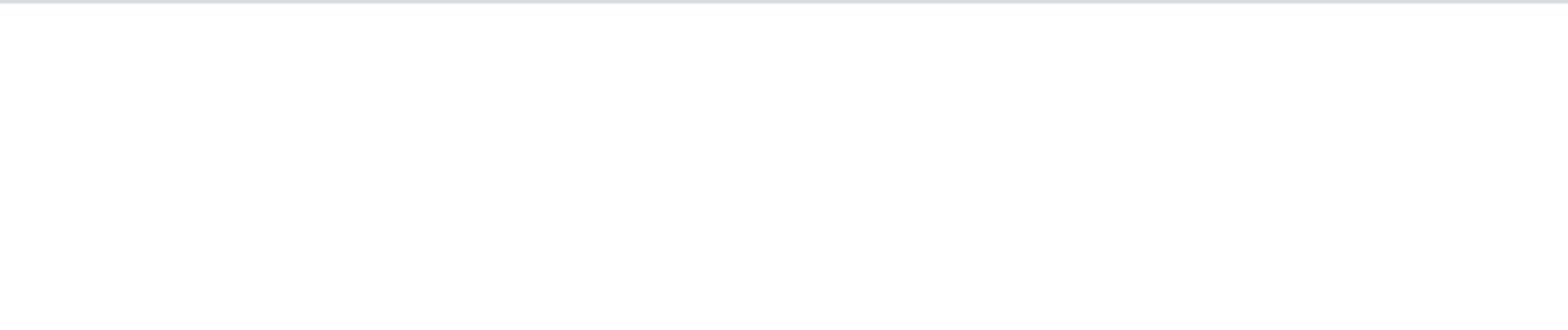




Australian Government
Department of Finance

Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns by non-corporate Commonwealth entities



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Introduction

1. This document in its entirety forms the *Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns by non-corporate Commonwealth entities* (Guidelines).
2. These Guidelines set out the principles applying to information and advertising campaigns undertaken in Australia.
3. Non-corporate Commonwealth entities (entities) under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) must comply with these Guidelines.
4. Entities conducting information and advertising campaigns must comply with all relevant policies and processes issued and amended from time to time by the Special Minister of State, the Minister for Finance or the entity responsible for such policies, currently the Department of Finance (Finance).
5. The Special Minister of State can exempt a campaign from compliance with these Guidelines on the basis of a national emergency, extreme urgency or other compelling reason. Where an exemption is approved, the Independent Communications Committee will be informed of the exemption, and the decision will be formally recorded and reported to the Parliament.
6. The Independent Communications Committee considers campaigns and provides advice to Chief Executives on all advertising campaigns valued at more than \$250,000 or where requested to do so by the Chief Executive.

Underlying Principles

7. In general terms, a campaign is a planned series of communication activities that share common objectives, target the same audience and have specific timelines and a dedicated budget. An advertising campaign includes paid media placement and an information campaign does not.
8. The underlying principles governing the use of public funds for all government information and advertising campaigns are that:
 - a. 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 to explain government policies, programs or services, to inform members of the public of their obligations, rights and entitlements, to encourage informed consideration of issues or to change behaviour; and
 - c. government campaigns must not be conducted for party political purposes.

Definition of Advertising Campaigns

9. For the purposes of these Guidelines, an advertising campaign involves paid media placement and is designed to inform, educate, motivate or change behaviour. Large-scale recruitment advertising not related to specific job vacancies and with a degree of creative content may be considered an advertising campaign. Agencies should seek advice from Finance if they are unsure whether an activity is an advertising campaign.
10. Simple, informative advertising that generally appears only once or twice, contains factual statements and typically has a low creative content is not an advertising campaign. This category of advertising is non-campaign advertising and includes, but is not limited to:
 - recruitment for specific job vacancies;
 - auction and tender notices;
 - invitations to make submissions or apply for grants;
 - notification of date and/or location specific information (for example, notification of a public meeting at a particular time and place); and
 - other public notices.

Campaign Review and Certification

11. The requirements for review and certification of campaigns are determined by the value of the campaign and whether advertising will be undertaken. The value of a campaign is the budget for all campaign elements across all financial years and includes:
 - market or social research, public relations, advertising and/or other specialist suppliers commissioned in the development of advertising material;
 - production and placement of advertising in print, radio, digital, cinema, television or out-of-home media; and
 - production and dissemination of other campaign materials.
12. The value of a campaign does not include entity officials and associated costs.
13. For campaigns below \$250,000, the Chief Executive has the discretion to seek consideration of campaigns by the Independent Communications Committee.

14. For advertising campaigns of \$250,000 or more:
 - The Independent Communications Committee will consider the proposed campaign and provide a report to the Chief Executive on compliance with Principles 1,2,3 and 4 of the Guidelines. Entities will be responsible for providing a report to their Chief Executive on campaign compliance with Principle 5 of the Guidelines.
 - Following consideration of the reports on campaign advertising compliance, the Chief Executive will certify that the campaign complies with the Guidelines and relevant Government policies.
 - The Chief Executive will give the certification to the relevant Minister who may launch the campaign or approve its launch.
 - The Chief Executive's certification will be published on the relevant entity's website when the campaign is launched.
 - The conclusions of the Independent Communications Committee will be published on Finance's website after the campaign is launched.
15. Information campaigns of \$250,000 or more are not subject to review by the Independent Communications Committee or certification by the Chief Executive but must comply with these Guidelines and other relevant policies and processes as outlined in clause 4.
16. The Government will provide reports to the Parliament that detail expenditure on all advertising campaigns with expenditure in excess of \$250,000 commissioned by PGPA Act agencies.
17. Chief Executives will ensure that:
 - research reports for advertising campaigns with expenditure of \$250,000 or more are published on their entity web site following the launch of a campaign where it is appropriate to do so; and
 - details of advertising campaigns undertaken will be published in entity annual reports.

Information and Advertising Campaign Principles

The following five principles set out the context in which Commonwealth Government campaigns should be conducted. They relate to when campaigns can be conducted, how they should be presented, and the legal and procurement requirements.

Principle 1: Campaigns should be relevant to government responsibilities

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

Principle 2: Campaigns should be presented in an objective, fair and accessible manner and be designed to meet the objectives of the campaign

20. Campaigns should enable the recipients of the information to distinguish between facts, comment, opinion and analysis.
21. Where information is presented as a fact, it should be accurate and verifiable. When making a factual comparison, the campaign 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.
22. Pre-existing policies, products, services and activities should not be presented as new.

23. Special attention should be paid to communicating with any information disadvantaged individuals or groups identified as being within the target audience. Particular attention should be paid to meeting the information needs of Indigenous Australians, the rural community and those for whom English is not a convenient language in which to receive information.
24. Imagery used in campaigns should reflect the diverse range of Australians. There should be recognition of the full participation of women, Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities by realistically portraying their interests, lifestyles and contributions to Australian society.
25. Campaigns should be tested with target audiences to indicate they are engaging and perform well against the objectives of the campaign.

Principle 3: Campaigns should be objective and not directed at promoting party political interests

26. Campaigns must be presented in objective language and be free of political argument.
27. Campaigns must not try to foster a positive impression of a particular political party or promote party political interests.
28. Campaigns must 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 web sites of politicians or political parties.

Principle 4: Campaigns should be justified and undertaken in an efficient, effective and relevant manner

29. Campaigns should only be instigated where a need is demonstrated, target recipients are clearly identified and the campaign is informed by appropriate research or evidence.
30. Campaign information should clearly and directly affect the interests of recipients.
31. The medium and volume of the advertising activities should be cost effective and justifiable within the budget allocated to the campaign.
32. Distribution of unsolicited material should be carefully controlled.
33. Campaigns should be evaluated to determine effectiveness.

Principle 5: Campaigns must comply with legal requirements and procurement policies and procedures

34. The manner of presentation and the delivery of campaigns must comply with all relevant laws including:
 - a. laws with respect to broadcasting and media;
 - b. privacy laws;
 - c. intellectual property laws;
 - d. electoral laws;
 - e. trade practices and consumer protection laws; and
 - f. workplace relations laws.

35. Procurement policies and procedures for the tendering and commissioning of services and the employment of suppliers are to be followed, and there must be a clear audit trail regarding decision making.