



Australian Government

Department of Finance

# Short-term Interim Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns

**June 2014**

Archived

(Updated only to reflect changes in titles and names)

## Introduction

1. These interim Guidelines set out the principles applying to information and advertising campaigns undertaken in Australia.
2. Non-corporate Commonwealth entities (entities) under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act) must comply with these Guidelines.
3. 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 or the Minister for Finance or the entity responsible for such policies, currently the Department of Finance.

## Definitions

4. 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.
5. For the purposes of these Guidelines, an advertising campaign 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. Entities should seek advice from Finance if they are unsure whether an activity is an advertising campaign.
6. 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

7. 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 suppliers, public relations suppliers, advertising agencies 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.
8. The value of a campaign does not include entity officials and associated costs.
9. For advertising campaigns of \$250,000 or more:
  - 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 will seek endorsement from the Special Minister of State before approving its launch.
- The Chief Executive's certification will be published on the relevant department's web site when the campaign is launched.

### **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 campaign materials should be presented, and the legal and procurement responsibilities that need to be considered.

#### **Principle 1: Campaigns should be relevant to government responsibilities**

10. 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 Parliament
 should be the subject of a campaign.
11. 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: Campaign materials should be presented in an objective, fair and accessible manner and be designed to meet the objectives of the campaign**

12. Campaign materials should enable the recipients of the information to distinguish between facts, comment, opinion and analysis.
13. Where information is presented as a fact, it should be accurate and verifiable. 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.
14. Pre-existing policies, products, services and activities should not be presented as new.
15. Special attention should be paid to communicating with any disadvantaged individuals or groups identified as being within the target audience. Particular attention should be paid 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.
16. Imagery used in campaign materials 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.

17. Campaign materials should be tested with target audiences to indicate they are engaging and perform well against the objectives of the campaign.

**Principle 3: Campaign materials should be objective and not directed at promoting party political interests**

18. Campaign materials must be presented in objective language and be free of political argument.
19. Campaign materials must not try to foster a positive impression of a particular political party or promote party political interests.
20. Campaign materials 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**

21. 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.
22. Campaign information should clearly and directly affect the interests of recipients.
23. The medium and volume of the advertising activities should be cost effective and justifiable within the budget allocated to the campaign.
24. Distribution of unsolicited material should be carefully controlled.
25. Campaigns should be evaluated to determine effectiveness.

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

26. 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.

27. Procurement policies and procedures for the tendering and commissioning of services and suppliers should be followed and there should be a clear audit trail regarding decision making.

### **Contacts for Further Information**

28. Department of Finance  
Phone: 02 6215 2677  
Website: [www.finance.gov.au](http://www.finance.gov.au)

Archived