

ESTIMATES BRIEF – Hot Issue

Additional Estimates – February 2026

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Government Advertising

Subject/Issue

Campaign advertising activity and media expenditure.

Key facts and figures

- *Campaign advertising:*
 - informs the community about government policy, programs and services, and helps to change behaviours.
 - totalled \$204.1 million in 2024–25. Further detail is available in Finance’s *2024–25 Campaign Advertising by Australian Government Departments and Agencies Report* which was published on the Finance website in December 2025.
 - expenditure for 2025–26 up to the end of November 2025 was \$38.9 million.
- *Campaign advertising governance:*
 - Guidelines on Advertising and Information Campaigns are in place. If the campaign is above \$250,000, accountable authorities (e.g. Departmental Secretaries) are required to certify that the proposed campaign complies with the Guidelines.
 - The Independent Communications Committee (ICC) provides advice to accountable authorities on whether campaigns are capable of complying with Principles 1-4 of the Guidelines. There are three members of the ICC, all appointed in July 2023.

Key points

- For 2024–25, campaign advertising expenditure by non-corporate Commonwealth entities by media channel was:

Media Channel	Expenditure (\$ million)								Expenditure (\$ million)	
	TV	Press	Radio	Magazine	Digital	Out of Home	Cinema	TOTAL	Ethnic	Indig.
Total	59.3	2.3	16.7	0.3	97.4	21.9	6.2	204.1	11.9	7.2

Note: Ethnic and Indigenous is a sub-component of the \$204.1m.

Figures are rounded to one decimal place. Discrepancies in tables between totals and sums of components are due to rounding. All figures are gross media spend (exclusive of GST).

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- The Government invested in several important campaigns in 2024–25 to change social behaviour, including on issues of Consent, Youth Vaping, and Domestic and Family Violence.
- In addition to this, several campaigns focussed on raising awareness of government supports available to ease the cost-of-living pressures, including the Cheaper Medicines campaign.
- There were also recurring campaigns on topics such as Defence Force Recruiting and childhood immunisation.
- Advertising expenditure is reconciled after the campaign is placed in the media e.g. following appearance on television or on digital platforms.
- Specific questions on campaign budgets are best directed to the relevant entities undertaking the campaign.

Expenditure with individual media outlets

- This commercially sensitive information is not released.
 - The disclosure of the Australian Government's expenditure with individual media outlets could have an adverse effect on the Government's ability to secure competitive media rates.

Use of Tik Tok for Government advertising

- In 2022, the Australian Government's master media agency, Universal McCann, provided advice to Finance that TikTok had made improvements to its brand safety for advertisers. Universal McCann recommended that TikTok could be trialled for campaigns targeting younger audiences, where deemed suitable.
- A range of campaigns have used TikTok as a communication channel, including Youth Vaping, and National Tobacco and E-Cigarettes (Health and Aged Care), Smartraveller (Foreign Affairs and Trade), and Stop it at the Start (Social Services).
- Universal McCann place all advertising on behalf of the Commonwealth. Commonwealth entities do not engage with TikTok directly.

Social media brand safety

- Advice on the suitability of social media platforms for Government advertising is provided by Universal McCann, on a campaign-by-campaign basis.
- Universal McCann has processes and technology in place to mitigate brand safety risks.

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- Universal McCann also has an ongoing role in monitoring adherence by media outlets to brand safety requirements across their digital platforms.
- Questions about specific campaigns should be directed to the relevant department.

Age restrictions on the use of social media platforms

- Given high levels of consumption of social media platforms, they are often employed to extend the reach of campaign activity across multiple audiences.
- The Government has not banned social media. The change relates to age restrictions for using the platforms.
- Demographics of social media users can vary depending on the platform.

Regional advertising

- Campaign advertising expenditure in rural, regional and remote media was \$5.1 million (or 28 per cent of total expenditure) in 2025–26 to the end of November 2025, across television, radio, out-of-home, newspapers and cinema (excludes all digital media).
- The Government has committed to directing \$3.0 million of annual advertising expenditure to the regional newspaper sector from 2025–26 to 2026–27.

Campaigns currently running in the media above \$250,000

Agency	Campaign
<i>Australian Trade and Investment Commission (Austrade)</i>	<u><i>Southeast Asian Trade and Investment Opportunities</i></u> <i>Aims to raise awareness of the opportunities for Australian businesses to diversify and strengthen supply chains by sourcing goods and services from Southeast Asia and promote the benefits of outbound investment.</i>
	<u><i>Go Global Toolkit.</i></u> <i>Aims to create awareness and drive use of the tools, information and support available at the Go Global Toolkit.</i>
<i>Department of Defence</i>	<u><i>Defence Force Recruiting</i></u> <i>Aims to generate sufficient enquiries for positions available in the Defence Force and to educate audiences in the diversity of roles in Defence.</i>

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<p><i>Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade</i></p>	<p><u><i>Smartraveller</i></u></p> <p><i>Aims to motivate Australians to better prepare themselves for overseas travel and be more self-reliant in managing their own safety and security when abroad.</i></p>
<p><i>Department of Health, Disability, and Ageing</i></p>	<p><u><i>Bulk Billing for all Australians</i></u></p> <p><i>Aims to encourage GPs and general practices to register for the Bulk Billing Practice Incentive Program, and increase awareness and uptake of bulk billing services among Medicare-eligible Australians.</i></p>
	<p><u><i>National Tobacco and e-cigarettes</i></u></p> <p><i>Aims to contribute to a reduction in smoking and vaping prevalence, particularly among priority and at-risk populations.</i></p>
	<p><u><i>PBS Awareness</i></u></p> <p><i>Aims to increase awareness of the reduction in the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) patient co-payment from 1 January 2026, and the ongoing freeze of concessional co-payments (at \$7.70 until 2030), and encourage people not to delay filling their prescriptions due to cost concerns.</i></p>
	<p><u><i>Sexually Transmitted Infections</i></u></p> <p><i>Aims to increase awareness of preventive strategies, including safe sex behaviours.</i></p>
	<p><u><i>Youth Vaping</i></u></p> <p><i>Aims to increase and reinforce awareness of the harms of vaping, and the availability of cessation support services for young people.</i></p>
<p><i>Department of Home Affairs</i></p>	<p><u><i>Act Now Stay Secure</i></u></p> <p><i>Aims to improve the cyber security practices of Australians, particularly those identified as vulnerable.</i></p>
<p><i>Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sports and the Arts</i></p>	<p><u><i>Social Media Minimum Age</i></u></p> <p><i>Aims to raise awareness of the new social media minimum age change and the benefits of delaying access to social media accounts for those under 16 years.</i></p>
<p><i>Social Services</i></p>	<p><u><i>Consent</i></u></p> <p><i>Aims to keep young people safe from sexual violence.</i></p>
<p><i>The Treasury</i></p>	<p><u><i>Housing</i></u></p> <p><i>Aims to raise awareness of the Government's housing plan and programs to support Australians into secure and stable homes, and make it easier for people to find, understand and apply for the programs available to them.</i></p>

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New Government Communications Campaign Arrangement

If asked about the procurement process for the new Village Model

- Finance undertook multiple rounds of industry consultation on the re-tender. Feedback from those consultation processes was considered and where relevant, helped shape the approach to the procurement and the new arrangement.
- Tender evaluation is currently underway.

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Background

Campaign framework

Non-corporate Commonwealth entities undertaking advertising campaigns in Australia are subject to the *Guidelines on Advertising and Information Campaigns* (Guidelines).

The Guidelines contain five overarching principles which set out the context in which Commonwealth Government campaigns are to be conducted.

- Principle 1: Campaigns must be relevant to government responsibilities.
- Principle 2: Campaigns must be presented in an objective, fair and accessible manner and be designed to meet the objectives of the campaign.
- Principle 3: Campaigns must be objective and not directed at promoting party political interests.
- Principle 4: Campaigns should be justified and undertaken in an efficient, effective and relevant manner.
- Principle 5: Campaigns must comply with legal requirements and procurement policies and procedures.

The Finance Minister can exempt a campaign from compliance with the Guidelines on the basis of a national emergency, extreme urgency or other compelling reason. Where an exemption is approved, the decision is formally recorded and reported to the Parliament as soon as is practicable. No exemptions have been provided under the current Government. Campaign advertising relates to major public communications and advertising activities. It does not include job specific recruitment, tender or public notice advertising (non-campaign advertising).

Government Communications Committee

The Government Communications Committee (GCC) of Cabinet provides oversight and coordination of Government advertising campaigns valued above \$500,000.

- Chair: Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher.
- Deputy Chair: the Hon Jason Clare MP.
- Members: Senator the Hon Don Farrell, Senator the Hon Murray Watt, the Hon Patrick Gorman MP.

Independent Communications Committee

The Independent Communications Committee reviews advertising campaigns above the value of \$250,000 to advise relevant Accountable Authorities whether the proposed campaign is capable of complying with Principles 1 to 4 of the Guidelines.

The Committee reviews the proposed campaign's communication strategy, research and media strategy and plan. Prior to a campaign launch, the accountable authority considers the compliance advice from the Committee that certifies whether the campaign is capable of complying with the Guidelines – together with advice from their own entity with regard to Principle 5 (legal and procurement matters). This approach is consistent with the framework under the previous Government. The Committee does not review creative material.

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Current members of the Committee were appointed on 1 July 2023 after an open application process. The members are as follows:

- Chair: Meredith Fairweather.
- Members: Adam Davey, Allyson Warrington.

The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) undertakes regular audits of the advertising framework. In an ANAO report released in February 2022, it stated that the ICC review process provides effective assistance to decision-makers.

Supporting information

Questions on Notice

- Estimates February 2024 (Hume QoNs):
 - F155 – Advertising and information campaigns
 - F166 – Market Research
 - F184 – Social Media influencers
- Estimates November 2024 (Hume QoNs):
 - F102 – Advertising and information campaigns
- QoN 3754 – (Senator Shoebridge), online advertising.
- Estimates October 2025 (Hume QoNs):
 - F117 – Advertising and information campaigns

Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests

- FOI 24-25/071 data on expenditure on advertising on X/Twitter from November 1 2022 until 14 November 2024, broken down by month. Response provided to applicant on 16 December 2024 and follow up review was responded to on 14 January 2025.
- FOI 24-25/039 all documents the department holds concerning allegations that a government advertising contractor and subcontractor, McNair Yellowsquares, fabricated data while working on projects for the Australian Electoral Commission and Department of Defence. These allegations were made by a whistleblower and McNair employee in an article published by the Guardian on 20 August 2024. Response provided to applicant 29 November 2024.
- FOI 23-24/140 Government advertising on TikTok. Materials requested included correspondence from 22 April 2023 onwards between: The Minister for Finance and/or the Minister's office and/or departmental official and any representative or employee of ByteDance, TikTok, TikTok's registered lobbyists Anacta Strategies Pty Ltd, or Font Public Relations Pty Ltd. Request received 22 April 2024. Response provided to applicant on 10 May 2024.

Recent Ministerial Comments

- Nil

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Relevant Media Reporting

[Federal government's village model could 'lock out' independents](#), Adam McCleery, AdNews 6 August 2025

[A \\$100m Big Tech blitz on taxpayer](#), Jack Quail, The Australian, 26 December 2025

[Agencies federal government ad spend of 2025](#), Jade Psihogios, AdNews, 5 January 2026

[Defence & Future Made In Australia Campaigns Power Government Ad Blitz; VML, Droga5 Win Biggest Contracts](#), Arvind Hickman, B&T, 6 January 2026

[Canberra agencies locked out of lucrative federal ad contracts](#), Ray Athwal, The Canberra Times, 15 January 2026

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