

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing – October 2009
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Topic: Government Advertising Review

Question reference number: PM27

Type of Question: Written

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 4 December 2009

Number of Pages: 1

Question

Senator Ronaldson asked:

How much power does the ANAO have to vet the Public Relations component of an advertising campaign?

Answer

The ANAO does not review proposed public relations activities. These activities are not included in the scope of the advertising materials certified by Chief Executives for compliance with the Guidelines and are not referred to the ANAO for review by Chief Executives. While broad public relations strategies may be formulated concurrently with an overarching advertising campaign strategy, the detail of individual public relations activities is typically managed more closely than advertising activities, and within shorter time-frames to allow emerging issues to be addressed. The ANAO understands that the Department of Finance and Deregulation has not advised agencies to submit proposed public relations to the ANAO for review for compliance with the Guidelines.

The Auditor-General has written to the Special Minister of State and to the Joint Committee of Public Accounts and Audit highlighting areas where the Guidelines could be refined or supplemented by additional guidance. This has included more clearly identifying those activities which are subject to the Guidelines, including the boundary between normal business activities of agencies and those activities under the ambit of the Guidelines. The ANAO understands that the Department of Finance and Deregulation is working on options for providing greater clarity to agencies in this regard. This may prove helpful in relation to public relations activities.

Nonetheless, the ANAO has advised agencies that campaign advertising materials which have been reviewed for compliance by the ANAO should not, if used as part of a public relations activity, be altered from its original form without agencies first consulting with the ANAO.