



30 September 2014

Senator Nick Xenophon
Independent Senator for South Australia
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear Senator Xenophon

Update on Australian Government advertising relating to boat arrivals

1. I am writing in response to questions you raised at the 26 May 2014 (budget estimates) hearings of the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee on the status of Australian Government advertising campaigns relating to boat arrivals. I subsequently advised that the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) would seek an update from the responsible government entities and that I would write to you separately, and provide a copy of the correspondence to the Committee Secretariat.

2. The ANAO has sought and obtained information from the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (Immigration) and the Australian Customs and Border Protection Service (Customs) on the status of relevant advertising campaigns. Two of the campaigns—*By Boat, no visa* and *No way. You will not make Australia home (No way)*—have had both an onshore (Australian domestic) component administered by Immigration, and an offshore component administered by Customs. A number of additional offshore campaigns, discussed below, are administered by Customs.

Immigration campaigns

3. Immigration has administered the onshore *By Boat, no visa* and *No way* campaigns.

4. I wrote to you about the *By Boat, no visa* campaign on 1 August 2013 and 14 August 2013, in response to your correspondence of 22 July 2013 and 12 August 2013. You have requested an update on campaign activity since August 2013. Immigration has advised the ANAO that the onshore component of the campaign started on 20 July 2013 and ended on 5 September 2013. Expenditure was \$6 810 555.

5. Immigration has indicated that *No way* is an anti-people smuggling campaign, with a start date of 8 June 2014 and a planned finish date of 31 December 2014. Expenditure until 30 August 2014 was \$461 836.

6. The *No way* onshore campaign aims to inform relevant diaspora communities of the changes to Australia's asylum seeker policy and to reinforce Customs' offshore communication activities (discussed below). Diaspora communities are encouraged to tell their family and friends overseas about the policy changes. The target audiences are diaspora communities representing the highest proportions of illegal maritime arrivals: Afghans, Pakistanis, Iranians, Iraqis, Tamils, Bangladeshis, Sudanese, Somalis, Nepalese, Rohingya and Vietnamese.

7. Onshore campaign activities include: print advertising (in ethnic newspapers); radio advertising (ethnic programming); online advertising; targeted YouTube display advertisements; a campaign webpage (www.australia.gov.au/novisa); community consultations (including community meetings hosted in various cities in Australia during the campaign period); and community engagement (Immigration advises that a CALD specialist agency will develop and implement a community engagement strategy).

8. Immigration further advised the ANAO that overall expenditure for onshore campaign activities was \$7.65 million in 2013-14 and \$125 994 from 1 July to 31 August 2014.

Customs campaigns

9. Customs has advised the ANAO that the following offshore anti-people smuggling communication campaigns have been undertaken since July 2013:

- *By Boat, no visa* (July 2013 to January 2014);
- *New Rules* (September to December 2013);
- *Don't throw your money into water* (February 2014 to present); and
- *No way. You will not make Australia home* (February 2014 to present).

10. Customs has indicated that the campaigns aim to inform and educate people about the Australian Government's policy on people smuggling, highlighting the realities of hazardous sea journeys, the financial risks of engaging people smugglers, the deceptive strategies adopted by people smugglers, and the consequences of illegal migration by sea to Australia.

11. The target audiences are potential illegal immigrants in source and transit countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Burma, India, Vietnam, Albania, Sudan and Somalia.

12. Offshore campaign activities include: print, radio and online advertising; a campaign webpage (www.australia.gov.au/novisa); television and cinema; street theatre; leaflets and posters; billboards and banners; road shows; and community outreach.

13. Customs advised the ANAO that the campaigns have overlapped. Overall expenditure from 1 July 2013 to 30 August 2014 has been \$14.92 million, as follows:

- from 1 July 2013 to 30 December 2013 – \$6.6 million;
- from 1 January 2014 to 30 June 2014 – \$6.08 million; and
- from 1 July 2014 to 31 August 2014 – \$ 2.24 million.

Campaign certification

14. Immigration has placed on its website a Certification Statement, signed by the department's Secretary, for the onshore *No way* campaign. The statement is dated 3 June 2014 and states that the campaign is compliant with the Australian Government's "Short-term Interim Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns by Australian Government Departments and Agencies" (interim guidelines) introduced in November 2013.

15. The Department of Finance placed the interim guidelines on its website in November 2013, and they were updated in June 2014 to reflect the operation of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* from 1 July 2014. The interim guidelines replaced the previous advertising guidelines introduced by the Australian Government in March 2010, and mark a further change in the government advertising framework.

16. While a certification of compliance with the guidelines and relevant government policies is required under the interim advertising guidelines, there is no longer a requirement that entities seek advice from a third party on all campaigns undertaken in Australia with a value of more than \$250 000, prior to preparing the certification. Under the March 2010 guidelines, this function was undertaken by the Independent Communications Committee. As noted in my correspondence to you of 1 August 2013, the ANAO's recent performance audits on the advertising framework observed the benefits of third party scrutiny of communications activity. The relevant audits were: ANAO Audit Report No.24 2011-12 *Administration of Government Advertising Arrangements: March 2010 to August 2011*; and ANAO Audit Report No.54 2012-13 *Administration of Government Advertising Arrangements: August 2011 to March 2013*.

17. The ANAO will examine the further evolution of the advertising framework in its next performance audit of government advertising arrangements.

Conclusion

18. While the ANAO has not undertaken an audit to respond to your request for an update on developments since August 2013, we have sought information from Immigration and Customs, the responsible entities. I trust this information is of assistance.

19. As previously foreshadowed, I have provided a copy of this correspondence to the Secretariat of the Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee.

Yours sincerely

Ian McPhee
Auditor-General