

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

Topic: Government Advertising Review

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Question

Senator Bernardi asked:

The recent ANAO report summary into government advertising campaigns stated that “there are several areas where, in the light of experience, the Guidelines could be refined or supplemented by additional guidance.” (ANAO Senate Committee Summaries, Campaign Advertising Review 2008–09, report no.2). A letter was sent to the Special Minister of State regarding this.

- a) Exactly what areas of the Guidelines should be refined or supplemented, as indicated in the Summary?
- b) Also, the report summary stated that “there remains further room for agencies to adjust business processes to better align with the requirements of the Guidelines.” Does this mean that some agencies have not been aligning themselves fully with the Guidelines?
- c) Can you provide any examples of agencies not aligning themselves fully with the Guidelines?

Answer

- a) In correspondence with the Special Minister of State on 30 January 2009, the Auditor-General highlighted areas where, in the light of experience, the guidelines could be refined or supplemented by additional guidance. They included:
 - i) a clearer identification of the activities which are subject to the guidelines, in particular the boundary between normal business activities of agencies and those activities which fall under the ambit of the guidelines;
 - ii) the provision of guidance dealing with circumstances where agencies contract out service delivery, and campaigns are subsequently generated by service providers, to make it clear whether such campaigns are expected to meet the requirements of the guidelines;
 - iii) greater clarity in relation to the preparation of cost-benefit analysis;

- iv) the potential for agencies to promote transparency and the public understanding of the reasons for campaigns by presenting, on their websites, the campaign summary, their CEO's sign-off, a summary of supporting information in relation to the guidelines and our review report, at the time of launching each campaign; and
 - v) further clarification related to the CEO's certification of compliance, in particular that the certification should reflect the CEO's views on campaign design and implementation as informed by appropriate departmental analysis and research.
- b) No. Agency business processes have been sufficiently well developed to allow the requirements of the Guidelines to be met. However, the ANAO has identified opportunities which could assist agencies to more clearly demonstrate compliance with the Guidelines and lead to a more efficient review process for both the ANAO and the agency, e.g. through a structured approach to identifying key tasks that need to be completed (see part c) below).
- c) While agencies work to align their processes with the Guidelines, the ANAO has identified a number of areas where agencies could seek to adopt better practice, such as:
 - i) better documented cost-benefit analysis, undertaken in a more timely manner;
 - ii) more timely responses to ANAO requests for additional information;
 - iii) improved planning, to support presentation of all communication materials for review at a single point in time; and
 - iv) more timely completion of procurement documentation.

The ANAO has also identified better practices which it encourages agencies to consider: sharing information among agencies to aid compliance and assist in the review process; and conducting and documenting an internal self assessment to assist agency executives in certifying compliance and to support an efficient and effective review by the ANAO.