

Standing Committee on Finance and Public Administration

ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Finance and Deregulation Portfolio

Department of Finance and Deregulation

Supplementary Estimates Hearing – October 2010

Outcome 2 Program 2.1

Topic: NBN Advertising

Question reference number: F15

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Senator Cormann asked:

Senator CORMANN—That is not what it says. It says:

The Australian government is investing up to \$43 billion ... Your lengthy explanation very clearly says that it is not investing up to \$43 billion. It may cost up to \$43 billion, but the government investment peaks at \$26 billion. Isn't that a breach of the government's guidelines on information and advertising complaints by the Australian government which I think you are responsible for, aren't you?

Mr Tune—Yes. I do not know if it is a breach or not. I would have to take that on notice and have a look at it. I do not have the ads in front of me.

Senator CORMANN—If you could review the advertisement—

Mr Tune—Will do.

Senator CORMANN—I am sure you would be aware of the guidelines, including the reference: Where information is presented as a fact, it should be accurate and verifiable—and various other relevant parts of the guidelines.

Mr Tune—I will have a look at the consideration that the ICC—the Independent Communications Committee—gave to that particular campaign and take it on notice.

Answer:

The Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy provided advice to the Independent Communications Committee on the level of investment in the National Broadband Network. This is further supported by the certification of the Secretary to the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy with respect to Principle 5 of the Guidelines.

The ICC's final report advised the Chief Executive of Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy that he should ensure that the presentation, wording and imagery of campaign materials are factually correct and verifiable. It is ultimately a matter for the Chief Executive, having considered the advice of the ICC, to determine whether a particular campaign complies with the Guidelines.

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The Independent Communications Committee (ICC) generally reviews campaigns at three key stages of development, including when the communications strategy is drafted, when advertising materials are developed but not yet produced, and when the campaign is in its final form.

In relation to a campaign on the National Broadband Network, the ICC provided its advice on compliance with the *Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns* (Guidelines) to the responsible Chief Executive on 10 June (television and radio elements of the campaign) and 25 June 2010 (online advertising and advertising tailored for people from non-English speaking backgrounds). This advice is available on the Finance website, www.finance.gov.au/advertising.

The ICC requires the responsible agency or department to provide supporting evidence of compliance with Principles 1 to 4 of the Guidelines. Following final consideration of a proposed campaign, the ICC writes to the responsible Chief Executive to provide a report on compliance with Principles 1 to 4 of the Guidelines. Principle 5, which relates to matters such as legal compliance and procurement, is a matter for the responsible Chief Executive.