



THE AUDIT OFFICE
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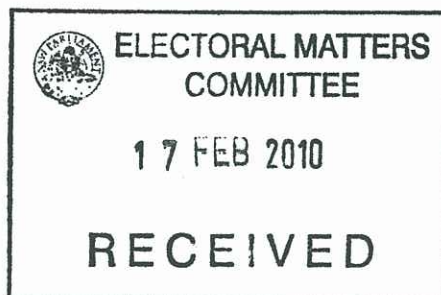
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YOUR REFERENCE

Mr Robert Furolo MP
Chairperson
Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



15 February 2010

Dear Mr Furolo

Inquiry into public funding of election campaigns

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee's Inquiry on Tuesday 2 February 2010.

I have reviewed the draft transcript of my oral evidence as requested and attach some minor revisions for your consideration.

You will recall that I took on notice two questions during my appearance. I am pleased to provide the following responses for the information of the Committee.

Question

CHAIR: Mr Achterstraat, in terms of the peer review panel, for my information, would you explain who is currently on that peer review panel?

Response

I understand that the Department of Services, Technology and Administration maintains a register of experienced marketing practitioners from the NSW Public Service who have self-nominated to serve on peer review panels.

I understand that the Department arranges for a team of 2-3 reviewers, drawn from the register and independent of the NSW Government Department proposing the advertising campaign, to form the Peer Review Panel for that campaign.

I understand that a Peer Review Panel is constituted from among those on the register for individual campaigns as required. My understanding is that the Department selects people from the register to serve on an individual Peer Review Panel based on their availability and the timing of the peer review and Cabinet approval processes.

Question

The Hon. JENNY GARDINER: Just going back to the government advertising, have you yet had the opportunity to get any feedback from the Government about your suggestion about an independent expert? ... It might be helpful, Mr Chairman, if the Auditor-General would be kind enough to let the Committee know if there is a specific answer before we have to report.

Response

I would like to clarify the context of my recommendation, which is:

To better manage the risk of publicly funded advertising being used inappropriately, it is recommended that, from 31 January 2010: the peer review panel include a member independent of government for public awareness campaigns covering whole of Government initiatives. The peer review panel should specifically attest that the campaign would not be seen as party-political and is not excessive (page 18).

As I previously indicated, I understand that there was implicit agreement to this recommendation.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet has indicated to me that it will complete its review of my report, including its consideration of each specific recommendation, by March 2010.

I will endeavour to advise the Committee of the response when I receive it, but this may not be available before the Committee has to report.

Yours sincerely



Peter Achterstraat
Auditor-General

Encl.