


CityNews

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The Secretary
Select Committee on Campaign Advertising
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	A.C.T. LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE OFFICE
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Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to contribute to the deliberations of the Select Committee on Campaign Advertising with the following submission:

1. "CityNews" is owned by Macquarie Publishing Pty Limited.
2. My name is Ian Fraser Meikle. I live in the ACT and have been chairman of Macquarie since December 2005, and controller of the company since May 2007.
3. I am also editor of "CityNews".
4. I have held high-level executive positions in publishing and broadcasting organisations for more than 20 years and am a trained and experienced journalist. I am a Member of the Order of Australia for services to the media and the community.
5. In more recent times, I was managing director of Federal Capital Press Pty Limited (publishers of "The Canberra Times" and "The Chronicle") from 1989 to 1999. I was group managing director of Pacific Publishing Pty Limited, the second-biggest magazine publisher in Australia and, at the time, the seventh biggest publisher in the UK, from 2000 to 2003.
6. I believe I am experienced in understanding the objectives of publishing and the function of advertising.
7. "CityNews" is a free, weekly magazine that distributes more than 41,000 audited copies throughout Canberra.
8. It covers local political stories without fear or favour.
9. "CityNews" is a beneficiary of Government agency advertising and publishes material from time to time advertising Government activities and

information.

10. Whilst we receive regular advertising, we not an all-purpose advertising solution for Government information.
11. "CityNews" is **not** the major beneficiary of print media advertising in Canberra by Government agencies.
12. However, we value the business relationship we have with Government and its agencies, as we would all our advertisers.
13. At no time have I experienced any political pressure in relation to Government and its agencies' advertising. In fact, the Government has been exemplary in never drawing a link between its political imperatives and the advertising spending of its agencies.
14. At all times, Government agencies have tried to maximise their advertising spend by pressing for the best-possible positioning. Their approach has been no less conventional than that of private-sector advertisers.
15. I don't believe it appropriate to use taxpayer funds for direct political advantage. However, I don't believe and of the Territory Governments or their agencies has ever used the "CityNews" for the purpose of pushing political objectives such as re-election.
16. I do believe it is the Government's duty to keep the electorate informed about its actions and its programs. Advertising is an efficient and effective way to achieve this.
17. It is important that the committee not confuse legitimate advertising messages that the Government has the prerogative to decide and prosecute with that of political propaganda.
18. If the committee takes too blunt an approach to this appropriate function of Government and its agencies, and constrains Government and its agencies to the extent that it deprives the public from being properly and rightfully informed, it will severely affect small organisations like ours from not earning revenue through this legitimate process.
19. In the political elbowing that precedes an election, opposing parties can confuse or politically and deliberately misconstrue what they see and hear.
20. I have faith in the electorate to be able to see more calmly what may be regarded as pre-election Government public relations for what it is and any incumbent government will be judged accordingly through the ballot box if the voters see them as being wasteful or opportunistic with taxpayers' funds.
21. In other words, I don't believe a government would risk exposing itself to this criticism.
22. I believe this is sufficient restraint and leaving the electorate to decide is better than layering restrictive rules and regulations capable of actually curtailing the freedom of speech of the incumbent Government and filtering the public's right to be efficiently informed about Government activity.
23. On this basis, I don't believe the committee need apply direct restrictions on the incumbent Government.
24. However, may I suggest that the committee could assuage any lingering

concerns by moving to secure sufficient funding to specifically alert and educate the public, say three months before an election, to be sensitive to any unacceptable use of taxpayers' funds. This could be through, perhaps, the efficiency of advertising and managed independently by Elections ACT.

I would be pleased to answer any questions arising from this modest submission.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Meikle AM

May 27, 2009.