



Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory

Standing Committee on the Integrity
Commission and Statutory Office Holders

Inquiry into the Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Amendment Bill 2025

Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory
Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders

Approved for publication

Report 6
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About the committee

Establishing resolution

The Assembly established the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders on 3 December 2024.

The Committee is responsible for the following areas:

- ACT Auditor-General
- ACT Ombudsman
- Office of the Legislative Assembly
- ACT Electoral Commission
- ACT Integrity Commission
- Electoral policy

You can read the full establishing resolution [on our website](#).

Committee members

Mr Ed Cocks MLA, Chair

Mr Andrew Braddock MLA, Deputy Chair

Mr Taimus Werner-Gibbings MLA

Secretariat

Ms Kathleen de Kleuver, Committee Secretary

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About this inquiry

The Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Amendment Bill 2025 was presented in the Assembly on 4 December 2025 and referred to the Standing Committee on the Integrity Commission and Statutory Office Holders. Standing order 174 refers all bills presented to the Assembly to the relevant standing committee for inquiry. A Committee has three weeks from the date of presentation, or one week after the tabling of the relevant scrutiny report, whichever is later, to advise the Speaker on whether it will undertake an inquiry.

If the Committee does decide to undertake an inquiry, it must report within three months from the date of presentation of the bill, with the exception of bills presented in the last sitting period of a calendar year, in which case the Committee has four months to inquire and report.

The Committee decided to inquire into the bill on 9 December 2025. The reporting date is 2 April 2026.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

Acronym or Abbreviation	Long form
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AMAN	Australian Multicultural Action Network
The bill	Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Amendment Bill 2025
Reviewer	Campaign Advertising Reviewer
MLA	Member of the Legislative Assembly
Scrutiny Committee	Standing Committee on Legal Affairs (Legislative Scrutiny Role)

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Sponsoring Member amend the bill to provide capacity for advertising guidelines for proposed government programs, including plain English and Easy to Read explanations and information available in community languages.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government introduce amendments, prior to debate of the bill, to address any identified unintended consequences.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the *Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act 2009* following the next election, including to identify any unintended consequences that have occurred.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Assembly pass the bill subject to amendments as recommended in this report.

1. Introduction

Conduct of the inquiry

- 1.1. The Committee called for submissions from the public and from stakeholders from 9 December 2025, with a closing date of 30 January 2026. The Committee received four submissions, which are listed at **Appendix A**.

Bill summary

- 1.2. The Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Amendment Bill 2025 (the bill) is a Private Member's Bill sponsored by Mr Andrew Braddock MLA. The bill seeks to amend the *Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act 2009* to:
- a) clarify what constitutes a *party political purpose* and extend the concept to include the identification of politicians including Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), candidates and prospective candidates as well as party branding;
 - b) impose limits on advertising about proposed government programs, so that such advertising must be predicated on consultation activities taking place; and
 - c) implement further restrictions during federal election periods, with government advertising campaigns during federal election periods requiring approval from all party leaders.¹

Scrutiny report

- 1.3. The Standing Committee on Legal Affairs (Legislative Scrutiny Role) (the Scrutiny Committee) noted in *Scrutiny Report 14* that the bill would both promote and limit the right to take part in public life. The Scrutiny Committee considered that the explanatory statement contained 'a clear discussion as to how the amendments proposed by the bill are the least restrictive means to achieve the purpose of the bill', and referred the discussion in the explanatory statement to the Assembly without requiring a response from the Private Member sponsoring the bill.²

¹ Andrew Braddock MLA, *Explanatory Statement and Human Rights Compatibility Statement, Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Amendment Bill 2025*, p 2.

² Standing Committee on Legal Affairs (Legislative Scrutiny Role), *Scrutiny Report 14*, January 2026, p 17.

2. Issues raised in evidence

Support for the bill

Party political purpose

- 2.1. The Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN) expressed strong support for the bill, describing it as ‘a timely modernisation’.³
- 2.2. AMAN advised that, for many culturally and linguistically diverse communities, government advertising was not merely informational but could be their primary interface with government. Language barriers and differing cultural norms meant that government messaging could be perceived as ‘authoritative endorsement rather than neutral information’, and AMAN considered that the bill directly addressed this.⁴
- 2.3. ACT Greens addressed a similar point, arguing that ‘It is vital that public information and political promotion are kept entirely separate’. ACT Greens considered that equitable access to accurate and unbiased information was essential to a ‘free and fair democracy’ and ensured public trust in democratic institutions, and that the bill would provide reassurance that public funds were being used appropriately and transparently.⁵
- 2.4. The Australia Institute noted that its research on federal government advertising spending had found that Commonwealth regulation in this area was generally not sufficient to meet public expectation, and that government campaigns risked adding to the ‘already significant advantages’ enjoyed by incumbent politicians seeking re-election.⁶

Advertising of proposed government programs

- 2.5. AMAN strongly endorsed the requirement for advertising about proposed government programs to be explicitly linked to public consultation, as it would ensure that such advertising was ‘a gateway to dialogue rather than a vehicle for political positioning’. AMAN proposed that guidelines for such advertising could in future include minimum standards such as plain-language explanations, multilingual dissemination and clear articulation of what was ‘genuinely open to change’.⁷

Commonwealth pre-election period

- 2.6. AMAN considered the bill’s proposed restrictions on government advertising during federal election periods as ‘an exemplary safeguard’, citing communities’ possible difficulty in distinguishing ‘jurisdictional responsibility and political alignment’ and noting that cooperation between the ACT and the Commonwealth was both ‘highly visible and easily politicised’.⁸

³ Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Submission 1*, p 1.

⁴ Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Submission 1*, p 2.

⁵ ACT Greens, *Submission 3*, pp 1–2.

⁶ The Australia Institute, *Submission 2*, p 1.

⁷ Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Submission 1*, p 3.

⁸ Australian Multicultural Action Network, *Submission 1*, p 5.

- 2.7. Noting that a Senate committee had recommended in 2005 that the Australian Auditor-General should review government advertising, the Australia Institute suggested that the ACT Auditor-General, rather than party leaders, could provide independent approval for a government campaign during a Commonwealth pre-election period.⁹

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Sponsoring Member amend the bill to provide capacity for advertising guidelines for proposed government programs, including plain English and Easy to Read explanations and information available in community languages.

Concern with the bill

- 2.8. ACT Greens noted that it had received initial feedback from the Chief Minister's Office raising concern that emergency services communications such as bushfire warnings might be inadvertently captured by the bill as drafted. ACT Greens indicated that, while it did not share this interpretation of the bill, it would be supportive of amendments to clarify this point.¹⁰

Party political purpose

- 2.9. The ACT Government claimed that the ACT already maintained a robust statutory framework to ensure that publicly-funded advertising campaigns were conducted in the public interest and not for party political purposes.¹¹
- 2.10. The ACT Government drew the Committee's attention to the role of the Campaign Advertising Reviewer (the Reviewer), appointed by the Minister with the approval of at least two-thirds of the Members of the Legislative Assembly. The ACT Government advised that government agencies were required to submit any proposed advertising campaign expected to cost over \$40,000 to the Reviewer, and that agencies also sought reviews of lower-cost campaigns where appropriate. The Reviewer assessed compliance of referred campaigns with the Act and reported the outcome to the responsible person.¹²
- 2.11. The ACT Government observed that the Reviewer was required to report to the Assembly twice each year on campaign reviews, and asserted that the ACT Government undertook additional reporting 'above and beyond' the legislation.¹³
- 2.12. The Minister was also required to make Guidelines under the Act, which were captured in a Disallowable Instrument, and thus provided, the ACT Government considered, 'an avenue to amend and update the framework in a streamlined manner'.¹⁴

⁹ The Australia Institute, *Submission 2*, p 1.

¹⁰ ACT Greens, *Submission 3*, p 1.

¹¹ ACT Government, *Submission 4*, p 1.

¹² ACT Government, *Submission 4*, p 2.

¹³ ACT Government, *Submission 4*, p 2.

¹⁴ ACT Government, *Submission 4*, p 2.

Advertising of proposed government programs

- 2.13. The ACT Government expressed particular concern about the provision in the bill requiring that:

Information in a government campaign must not relate to a proposed government program, policy or matter (including proposed legislation) unless the campaign is to conduct public consultation on the proposal.¹⁵

- 2.14. According to the ACT Government, this provision could diminish transparency by preventing the government from informing residents about significant proposed changes and thereby diminishing ‘the opportunity for community and stakeholders to consider the issues, prepare and provide informed feedback or fully understand potential impacts’.¹⁶

Committee comment

- 2.15. The Committee is not persuaded by the Government’s view and notes that this provision provides a specific condition to deal with consultation on proposals, and that it would not apply to established or legislated programs.

Unintended consequences

- 2.16. The ACT Government called on the Committee to consider the potential for the bill to have unintended consequences. These, it said, could include an unnecessary administrative burden on public resources, ‘reduced quality of community engagement through compliance-driven processes’, and possible other unforeseen impacts not specified.¹⁷

Committee comment

- 2.17. The Committee notes that the ACT Government has not, at the time of drafting this report, provided detail on specific unintended consequences. Nor has the Government proposed any amendments to address them.
- 2.18. The Committee notes that unintended consequences are a possibility with any legislation. In the case of the *Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act 2009*, it would be reasonable to review the impact and operation of the legislation after the 2028 election, by which stage implementation issues and barriers would be apparent. The Committee also notes that should any urgent issues arise, the Government would have the opportunity to introduce further Amendments to the legislation through the usual processes.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government introduce amendments, prior to debate of the bill, to address any identified unintended consequences.

¹⁵ Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Amendment Bill 2025, s 5.

¹⁶ ACT Government, *Submission 4*, p 3.

¹⁷ ACT Government, *Submission 4*, p 3.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government review the *Government Agencies (Campaign Advertising) Act 2009* following the next election, including to identify any unintended consequences that have occurred.

3. Conclusion

3.1. The Committee makes four recommendations, including the below:

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the Assembly pass the bill subject to amendments as recommended in this report.

3.2. The Committee would like to thank all those who submitted to this inquiry.

Mr Ed Cocks MLA
Chair
10 March 2026

Appendix A: Submissions

No.	Submission by	Received	Published
1	Australian Multicultural Action Network	14/12/25	27/01/26
2	The Australia Institute	23/01/26	27/01/26
3	ACT Greens	30/01/26	17/02/26
4	ACT Government	30/01/26	17/02/26