

GOVERNMENT PUBLICITY CONTROL BILL 1998

EXPLANATORY NOTES

General Outline

Objectives of the Legislation

The objectives of this legislation are -

- (a) to ensure, as far as possible, public money is not expended on Government publicity for a partisan political purpose; and
- (b) to establish an all-Party statutory committee to scrutinise and formulate guidelines for Government publicity capable of being used for a partisan political purpose.

Reasons for the objectives and how they will be achieved

Public money should be used for public purposes, not for partisan political purposes.

This Bill provides the necessary basis for the establishment of an all-Party statutory committee to scrutinise and formulate guidelines for Government publicity to ensure, as far as possible, that public money is not expended on Government publicity for a partisan political purpose.

Administrative cost to Government of implementation

There is already a Committee Office in the Parliament to provide Parliamentary Committees with timely, accurate research, and administrative and procedural support to fulfil their statutory and other responsibilities.

Any administrative costs of establishing another parliamentary committee have to be weighed against the public benefit of ensuring that there is public confidence in the objectivity of Government publicity.

Fundamental legislative principles

The Bill is consistent with the fundamental legislative principles contained in Section 4 of the *Legislative Standards Act 1992*.

Consultation

This Bill is a product of the widespread community concern over recent Government publicity, including the use of photographs of Government Ministers.

NOTES ON PROVISIONS

Short Title

Clause 1 sets out the short title of the Bill.

Act amended

The Bill amends the *Parliamentary Committees Act 1995*.

Main object of Act and its achievement

Clause 3 amends the main object of the Act to include the object of ensuring, as far as possible, public money is not expended on Government publicity for a partisan political purpose.

Establishment of Statutory Committee

Clause 4 provides for the establishment of a Government Publicity Review Committee.

Government Publicity Review Committee

Clause 5 inserts a new part 4 division 7 which sets out the areas of responsibility of the committee which include identifying Government publicity that appears to the committee to have a capacity to influence public support for a political party, a candidate or a Member.

These areas of responsibility include the formulation of guidelines, the provision of advice, the monitoring and review of expenditure by public authorities on Government publicity, and examining and reviewing the practices and procedures of public authorities in securing Government publicity.

Dictionary

Clause 6 defines certain terms used in the Bill.