



Pat Conroy MP

Federal Member for Charlton

Mr Grant Hehir
Auditor General
Australian National Audit Office
GPO Box 707
CANBERRA ACT 2600

16 February 2016

Dear Mr Hehir,

I write in reference to the Government advertising campaign *Welcome to the Ideas Boom*.

This campaign, designed to promote the Government's National Innovation and Science Agenda, has an approved overall cost to the Commonwealth of \$28 million. It is centred on the use of the slogan "There's Never Been a More Exciting Time to Be Australian".

I am concerned that this slogan is in breach of the 'Whole of Government Advertising Arrangement' (Guidelines) as proscribed by the Department of Finance, and I ask that as Auditor General you perform an audit of the use of this slogan to ensure that it is in line with the Guidelines.

Principle 3 of the Guidelines states that campaigns should "be objective" and specifically "not include party political slogans or images".

I ask that you consider whether the use of the slogan "There's Never Been a More Exciting Time to Be Australian" constitutes a breach of this clause, given the term is attributable to the Prime Minister. The slogan has been repeatedly used by Mr Turnbull, including in comments made on his assumption of leadership of the Federal Liberal Party in September 2015, where he said:

"There has never been a more exciting time to be alive than today and there has never been a more exciting time to be an Australian."

Whilst it is reasonable to expect a Member of Government to replicate language associated with a policy or campaign, on this occasion it appears the campaign is actually *based* on the Prime Minister's comments. Of course, these comments are neither 'objective' nor free of 'party political' themes. Indeed, Mr Turnbull has made this slogan the centre of his party's political approach.

Furthermore, Principle 2 of the Guidelines states that "where information is presented as fact, it should be accurate and verifiable".

Given the slogan is based on the personal opinion of the Prime Minister, I therefore ask that you also consider whether the claim that "There's Never Been a More Exciting Time to Be Australian" is fact, if it is "accurate and verifiable" as per this clause, and if so, what information was relied on for this assertion.

I acknowledge that Government advertising plays a role in communicating policies, programs and services to the Australian public. However, the rules that govern advertising of this kind are important to ensure that taxpayer monies are used in an appropriate and meaningful way.

It is for these reasons that I seek an audit of the Government's *Welcome to the Ideas Boom* campaign, and look forward to your response.

Yours Sincerely,



Pat Conroy MP