Electoral Advertising

Do Schools need to comply?

Yes, under the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth).

Conditions of compliance:

The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth) ensures that the general public is informed about the source of political advertising, and that electors are not being purposefully misled or deceived about the way in which votes must be cast. Electoral advertisements must be authorised at all times, not just during an election period (the AEC states that an election period begins with the announcement of the election or the issue of the writs [whichever is earlier], to the close of polling on Election Day).

Information or commentary in school publications must comply with these laws.

If you have to comply, what do you have to do?

Schools should be aware of their obligations under the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 including the requirement for Electoral advertisements to be published and distributed only if they are in accordance with the AEC’s authorising guidelines. Advertisements of this type should, at the end, clearly state:

- the name and full street address of the person authorising the advertisement, and
- the name and place of business of the advertisement’s printer.

Statements such as ‘published by people concerned about...’ are not adequate substitutes for a person’s or corporation’s name. Post office box addresses are also inappropriate and must not be used as an alternative to a street address.

Where material has already been produced without the appropriate authorising information, and the cost involved in re-printing the material is too great, the AEC recommends that additional material containing the correct authorising information, such as stickers, be printed and attached to the advertisement to render it legal.

It is an offence to print, publish and distribute, or authorise to be printed, published or distributed, any information or statements that:

- are likely to mislead or deceive an elector in relation to the casting of votes, and
- are false or defamatory in relation to the personal character or conduct of a candidate.

What are the consequences if you don’t comply?

You may be in breach of the Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 (Cth) and subject to penalties.

Useful links:

Click here to go to the AEC website for further information on the requirements related to Electoral Advertising.