Government advertising as public communication: Cases, issues and effects

John Sinclair and Stephanie Younane

Why do governments advertise? Australian federal government guidelines see it as a question of democratic rights and an integral part of government: the public's 'equal right of access to information about programs, policies and activities which affect their benefits, rights and obligations'\(^1\). The Victorian state government is more specific in including the advocacy of 'responsible behaviour' and public policy goals such as 'social cohesion' among its objectives.\(^2\) In other words, advertising is seen as a normal and legitimate instrument of good governance, and is understood not just as the routine dissemination of information, but also as including campaigns to change social attitudes and behaviour. From this perspective, advertising is public communication for the public good.

In an era of privatisation and the rule of market forces, government advertising thus justifies its presence as a benevolent defender of the public interest. Yet government also has its own interests to pursue: for example, the costs of public health can be reduced if enough people can be persuaded to stop smoking or to drive more carefully. So long as such a legitimate, consensual public purpose is being served, this ambivalent motivation is not a problem. However, as discussed below and elsewhere in this book, a problem does arise when the incumbent political party exploits its access to public funds in order to run campaigns in such a way as to favour its re-election. A more theoretical criticism of the view that government advertising is a selfless defender of the public good comes from those who see it instead as one more symptom of 'promotional culture',\(^3\) emblematic of a postmodern world in which image has triumphed over substance. The suspicion then becomes that government campaigns are there to be seen for the sake of being seen, not even necessarily to create the illusion of action, but just to ensure that government has a public presence in the media, and that this masks or substitutes for government's actual activities and purposes.

The high cost of government advertising has become an issue in itself. The federal government is regularly among the ten biggest advertisers in the nation, with state governments not far behind. For example, in 2004, the federal government was fifth, and the NSW government ninth in the top ten, while 'Government', with a total expenditure of $416 million, was estimated to be the fourth largest 'product category', behind retail, automotive and entertainment.\(^4\)

As Young explains in the previous chapter, there is an important distinction to be made between 'non-campaign' and 'campaign' advertising, though figures are not easily available for the respective proportions. Even among campaigns, there is a significant difference between, on the one hand, apparently uncontroversial, bipartisan, ongoing types of government advertising such as defence force recruitment, on which $166.8 million was spent in the thirteen years from 1991 to 2004, and on the other, the 'New Tax System' campaign to introduce the GST, the most expensive government campaign of that period, on which at least $118.7 million was spent in two years from 1998 to 2000.\(^5\)

A selection of celebrated campaigns over recent decades can provide us with some case studies that illustrate key issues posed even by bona fide, 'social marketing' types of government advertising: notably the kinds of public controversies that they inevitably generate in a pluralist, democratic society, and crucially, the effectiveness of such campaigns, both in terms of their aims in changing public attitudes and behaviour, and the cost involved in the attempt.

The first series of case studies includes campaigns which have been particularly memorable, even securing a place within popular culture, and each of them controversial in its own way. They demonstrate something of the range of purposes to which government advertising can be put, and the different levels — federal and state, national and international — at which it circulates. They also represent cases for which some kind of effectiveness data, however contested, is available. The second series of cases is quite different. While they serve to illustrate even further the diverse range of uses to which advertising is now put by government, more specifically, they provide a comparative perspective on how advertising has been called upon to deal with the phenomenon of terrorism in Australia, the USA and the UK.
ADVERTISING EFFECTIVENESS AND THE CASE OF THE GRIM REAPER

The 'Grim Reaper' campaign of April 1987 was coordinated by the National Advisory Council on AIDS (NACAIIDS), at that time the federal government's peak advisory body on the public education and policy aspects of the AIDS threat. It took a symbolic but scary approach in a $3.6 million public education campaign. Television commercials, print ads, posters and other material featured the Grim Reaper, the mythic agent of death, represented with his skeletal form covered by a shroud, and with the traditional scythe in hand. The tag line was, 'Prevention is the only cure we've got'.

While most cases of AIDS diagnosed to that point were those of homosexual men, rather than target them as a group and so reinforce the incipient perception that AIDS was just a disease of gay men, NACAIIDS decided to take the larger view that the society as a whole was at risk, and that everybody should therefore adopt safe sex and drug use practices. Thus the definitive commercial showed the Grim Reaper indiscriminately knocking down women and children as well as men.6

Given the fearsome image of the Reaper, the campaign was highly controversial, provoking the criticism that it was exaggerating the risk to 'ordinary' Australians and, especially, frightening to children. Further, in spite of the care ostensibly taken not to stigmatise AIDS as a gay men's disease, the campaign was criticised by that group for just that, the Reaper being seen to represent infected gay men threatening everybody else in the society, rather than the spectre of plague and death as such.7 More theoretically inclined critics saw it as the paternalism of the state, using shock tactics to punish its citizens for their apathy.8

The effectiveness of advertising has always been a vexed question. Lord Leverhulme, founder of what is now Unilever, one of the biggest advertisers in the world, is famously supposed to have said, 'Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted. The trouble is, I don't know which half.' Commercial advertisers today are still looking for accountability from their agencies, and in a similar vein, taxpayers are entitled to ask whether government advertising campaigns achieve their objectives. However, rather than any demonstrated results, the main criterion of effectiveness for agencies is peer recognition, using measures such as success in winning advertising industry 'creative' awards. Certainly, both the Grim Reaper campaign and the TAC campaign discussed below are acknowledged in the industry as classic successes for their presumed emotional impact on the public.9

Even where there are measurable results following advertising campaigns, such as increases in sales, or in the case of most government campaigns, sought-after changes in behaviour, it is difficult to be certain that advertising is the 'cause' of such apparent 'effects'. A common trap to avoid here is the logical fallacy post hoc ergo propter hoc, meaning that just because some desired change occurred after the advertising campaign was run, it does not mean that the advertising caused the change to happen. Similarly, in scientific terms, because advertising does not occur in a vacuum, it is not possible to isolate the advertising as an independent variable and observe its effect on a dependent variable, the behavioural change. Indeed, in reality, advertising images and slogans are usually just the most publicly visible part of a more complex and multifaceted marketing campaign.10

With those provisos in mind, there is circumstantial evidence to support the belief that the Grim Reaper campaign, and its successors over 1987 and 1988, 'Russian Roulette', 'Beds' and 'Feet', had some success, but only in so far as they were prominent in the whole range of measures taken to publicise and to combat AIDS. A major survey and a Morgan Gallup poll in 1987 showed that a high public awareness of AIDS had been achieved, but this cannot be seen as any direct result of the NACAIIDS campaigns, let alone the Grim Reaper in particular.11 It has to be remembered that public awareness was also being increased at the time by the considerable media coverage being given to AIDS as an unprecedented threat to public health. Thus, in the evaluation data available, it is not possible to separate out the Grim Reaper from the succeeding NACAIIDS campaigns, or the effect of advertising from that of the media coverage in general.

In terms of combating the spread of the disease, Australia can claim to have responded with notable success. The rate of new HIV/AIDS infections fell from about 2500 a year in the mid-1980s, before the NACAIIDS advertising campaigns, to less than 500 a year a decade afterwards.12 While public awareness and behavioural change must have played an essential part in this, it is important to appreciate that the advertising campaigns were being conducted alongside state, territory and community-based programs of condom distribution, needle exchange schemes and other such direct measures aimed at the groups at risk.13 Clearly, any assessment of the contribution of the advertising campaigns to the reduction in infection rates has to be made with regard to such practical measures taken at grassroots level, not to mention the mobilisation that was taking place within the at-risk communities themselves.
ADVERTISING AND ROAD SAFETY MANAGEMENT: THE TAC FORMULA

Whereas NACAJDS adopted symbolic scare tactics in the face of a mounting health threat, the Victorian government’s Transport Accident Commission series of campaigns that began in 1989 have been remarkable for the much more graphic approach they took in response to escalating rates of road trauma. TAC engaged the Melbourne office of the global agency Grey Worldwide, which devised a series of television commercials, in the first instance targeting drink-driving and speeding. These adopted a docu-drama approach in which the possible consequences of the targeted behaviours were represented in disturbingly graphic dramatic situations of loss, grief, guilt and remorse at crash scenes and in hospital waiting rooms. Critics who at first questioned the gritty excesses of the images were reassured by the apparent results, as measured by a sharp drop in the road toll, even by the end of the first year. It should be noted that these and successive campaigns were coordinated with police enforcement of the targeted behaviours, such as via ‘booze buses’ and speed cameras, the importance of the link between publicity and enforcement being borne out by a 1993 evaluation study commissioned by TAC.

However, further research has queried the apparent triumph of the TAC formula. As early as 1996, one study had suggested that effectiveness may decline with increased exposure, while a 1999 study claimed that cheaper commercials could be just as effective as Grey’s rather expensive productions. Of most concern was a South Australian study which made detailed criticisms of the 1993 evaluation on methodological grounds, and argued that accident rates were on a long-term downward trend because of an economic downturn, not because of the TAC campaigns. In spite of subsequent economic recovery, the two principal authors of this critique still maintained that the TAC campaigns had not been as effective as widely believed, and that ‘it is likely that many millions of dollars have been wasted on road safety advertising in Victoria since 1989’. TAC’s annual advertising budget at that stage was around $30 million, making it one of the biggest advertisers in Victoria.

By 2005, the rate of accidents was still falling, faster than the government’s target in fact; Grey Worldwide was still the TAC’s lead agency; and its campaigns, based on the three Es: emotion, enforcement and education, were continuing to garner industry ‘effectiveness’ awards and public acclaim, even if the messages were becoming more abstract and less graphic. Undeterred by criticism, TAC was collaborating not only with its counterparts interstate and the private sector, but also with several countries overseas which have shown or adapted TAC material. New Zealand in particular, trialled a campaign on the TAC model with similar success.

BACK TO THE BARBECUE: AUSTRALIA’S GLOBAL TOURISM ADVERTISING

Whereas the NACAJDS and TAC campaigns were directed at the Australian public with regard to health and safety behaviours, quite another kind of government advertising is represented by that of Tourism Australia. Because of Australia’s geographical diversity and its federal structure of government, there are tourism authorities at both state and federal levels, though with the latter having prime responsibility for marketing Australia as a tourist destination internationally. From 1967 until July 2004, this task was undertaken by the Australian Tourist Commission (ATC), and only since then by Tourism Australia.

The ATC’s most celebrated campaign was a series of television commercials in the 1980s featuring actor, comedian and former rigger Paul Hogan (see Chapter 12). Lavishly funded by the Hawke Labor government, the ads were targeted at both American and Australian audiences, and represented the friendly and informal hospitality which the former should expect to find, and the latter should offer, as Hogan famously threw ‘another shrimp on the barbie’ on the sunny shores of Sydney Harbour. Yet, for all the widespread recognition the campaign achieved in the USA, the rate of increase in tourism from the USA over the period 1984–87/88 was much less than half that of Japan, a fact obscured by the spectacular total increase.

Australia continued to make great gains in attracting international tourists, peaking with the Olympic Games in Sydney in 2000, but the September 11 attacks in the USA and the subsequent ‘war on terror’, along with further world crises such as SARS, led to a severe downturn. In 2003, the ATC commissioned a New York-based branding consultancy, Brand Architecture International, to advise on revitalising Australia as a ‘brand’. The result was a new campaign, ‘Brand Australia’, announced in May 2004 as ‘the most expensive tourism marketing effort in the world’, with $360 million committed over four years to a campaign which explicitly sought to move beyond the ‘shrimp on the barbie’ image and other conventional signifiers such as ‘reel, roo and rock’. Instead, the ‘brand values’ of the new campaign were declared to be the social values said to define
Australians—mateship, inclusiveness, irreverence, optimism and originality—positioning Australia as 'an aspirational destination where someone comes for a life experience rather than a holiday'.

These abstract qualities were expressed in a series of television commercials featuring prominent Australians such as Delta Goodrem and Richie Benaud, with the common theme, 'Australia—a different light'. The agency responsible was Whybin TBWA. Whybin TBWA is 60 per cent owned by the TBWA Network, part of the US-based Omnicom global consortium. As well as in Australia, the commercials were shown first in Britain, Singapore and Italy, then later in the USA and New Zealand, supported by other advertising and marketing activities. However, after Tourism Australia superseded the ATC in July 2004, it discovered that it had to 're-cut' the advertising for some markets so as to include more familiar 'iconic' images of Australia. For example, in a reprise of the 1980s, high-profile 'crocodile man' Steve Irwin was brought into the American campaign in 2005.

In other words, it seems that 'market forces' in some countries would not permit Australia to reinvent itself in terms of abstract values, and demanded instead the characteristic images with which it had been positioned in the past, requiring the campaign to be 'glocalised'.

Apart from the discovery of this constraint, the Brand Australia/Different Light campaign is notable for the controversy it caused within the advertising industry when the Whybin TBWA contract expired during 2005 and, after a badly handled process, was awarded to M & C Saatchi agency. This is the Australian arm of M & C Saatchi Worldwide, the global group run by Maurice and Charles Saatchi, who were major figures behind the globalisation of advertising in Britain in the 1980s.

From the point of view of this chapter, it is significant that a major Australian government contract, a contract which involves the creation of images of Australia that are to be shown to international audiences, was not awarded to an Australian-owned agency. It might be thought both that the government would want to 'Buy Australian', and furthermore, that an Australian agency would do the best job.

This would have been the thinking in the past, particularly in the 1970s when the Whitlam Labor government adopted a policy of favouring Australian-owned agencies, but not in the era of economic rationalism and global free trade. Rather, Tourism Australia, and the ATC before it, chose agencies that were able to run a consistent campaign in the several national markets from which it was seeking to attract tourists, and this meant global agencies. But that is not why the awarding of the contract to M & C Saatchi was controversial. Rather, because certain well-credentialled agencies were excluded at an early stage of the bidding, many in the industry concluded that Saatchi was favoured because of ties between Tourism Australia executives with Saatchi on one hand, and the Liberal Party on the other.

In terms of effectiveness, by mid-2005, Tourism Australia was claiming success in several national markets, but especially the USA, where the campaign was deemed 'the most successful ever conducted' there, as measured by number of enquiries from prospective 'consumers'. As with the NACAlDS and TAC campaigns, this success was not attributable to the advertising alone but to 'the power of fully integrated marketing and promotions'. The campaign also won awards, not so much from the advertising industry as from international tourism, notably the Pacific Asia Travel Association.

However, a much more telling assessment was delivered in March 2006 when the 'Different Light' campaign was dumped in favour of a new campaign from M & C Saatchi. Their initial 60-second television commercial reverted with a vengeance to the conventional signifiers and ocker vernacular of the 1980s: familiar images of pub, outback, beach, and kangaroos (on the golf course), along with the mandatory Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge, were anchored with the tagline, 'So where the bloody hell are you?' One tourism official explained that the desperate aggression of this appeal was because tourism 'had been in the doldrums for the last two years'.

The diversity of purposes for which government now calls upon advertising is striking, from tourism to terrorism. The case of tourism advertising reminds us that a nation-state exists in a world of other nation-states, and derives its national identity from its relation to them. Yet while tourism advertising is for a peaceable leisure activity, directed towards prospective visitors from other countries, the nation-state also mobilises advertising and directs it towards its own citizens when the nation's security is seen to be under threat. Historically, such threats have come from other nation-states, as in the world wars, which produced such classic advertising lines as 'What did you do in the war, Daddy?', and 'Loose lips sink ships'. Today, the threat to nation-states, particularly to those involved in the allied interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, comes from unidentified civilian enemies within their own borders, not from the armed might of other nation-states. It is instructive to see how advertising has been used in these circumstances, not only in Australia, but also in the USA and UK.
NATIONAL SECURITY ADVERTISING IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

The 'Let's Look Out for Australia' anti-terrorism campaign ran from December 2002 until February 2003, coordinated by the Attorney-General’s Department. A response from the federal government to the attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001, and the bombings in Bali on 12 October 2002, it consisted of advertising on television, radio and in print, accompanied by ‘information kits’ sent to 8 million households across Australia.

Developed by Sydney-based, Australian-owned agency Brown Melhuish Fishlock, the ads aimed to educate the public about security issues by encouraging them to be aware of potential threats and the need to be vigilant, while also reassuring them that they should go on with their daily lives as normal. In the information booklet, the focus was on providing practical information about preparing for an emergency in a simple, reassuring manner. The high-profile campaign – with the central slogan ‘be alert, but not alarmed’ – cost taxpayers $18.5 million dollars: $6.8 million in advertising costs and $11 million for design and market research.36

A second campaign, ‘Help Protect Australia from Terrorism’, was launched in September 2004, and renewed in July 2005 after bombings on the London Underground. Here, the focus shifted to showing the public how they could contribute to keeping Australia safe, with the slogan ‘every piece of information helps’ (Figure 13.1). The ads ran on television and in print, as well as on public transport and at train, tram and bus stops. The timing of the $6.1 million campaign, before a federal election, sparked criticism that its intention was to scare people into voting for the incumbent Coalition government.37 In response to such criticism, the ads were tagged as ‘authorised by the Australian Federal Police’, and retagged in the $2.2 million renewed campaign of 2005 as ‘authorised by the Australian Government’ (see Chapter 2 regarding the practice of tagging).

When examining the way that the Australian campaign, and the threat of‘terrorism’, was portrayed in the Australian campaigns, it is illuminating to look at how other Western governments approached anti-terrorism advertising. Governments in the USA and UK also ran anti-terrorism campaigns after September 11 and all three used powerful, persuasive techniques to address audience members as individuals, family members, community members and national citizens. Keeping the Australian advertisements in focus, comparative analysis of these international campaigns draws out some of the major differences in approach and content, as the campaigns...
Alfred September 2004, and 'Ready Kids' was launched in February 2006, campaign from June to August 2004. Like the 'Let's Look Out for Australia' campaign, it involved print, radio and television advertising. The Australian campaign was
primarily responsible for two other main campaigns: If You Suspect It, Report It. It was a transport-focused campaign run in March 2005, consisting of print, radio and television advertising. The campaign focused on providing practical, common sense advice on how to prepare for emergencies, and was directed at home owners. It was run in the London-based 'Lifelines' campaign in March 2003. This campaign was

The United Kingdom's Home Office ran the 'Preparing for Emergencies' campaign as part of its larger 'Ready, Kids!' campaign. The campaign was rolled out in September 2004 and is targeted at children aged 5-11 years old. The campaign provides guidance on how to prepare for emergencies and includes a website with activities and games to help children develop basic emergency preparedness skills. The campaign's anti-terror campaign 'Ready Kids!' launched in February 2005. This campaign asked children to prepare an emergency plan, make a family emergency plan, and be informed about appropriate responses to emergencies. The campaign was developed in partnership with the Ad Council, an independent media and communications agency. The campaign was supported by corporate donations in line with the US tradition of producing public service announcements (PSAs) at no cost to taxpayers. The campaign was also promoted by the media. A new phase, 'Ready Business', begun in September 2004 and 'Ready Kids' was launched in February 2005.

Table 13.1 Government departments, advertising agencies and costs for anti-terror campaigns, December 2002–February 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Campaign Name</th>
<th>Launch Date</th>
<th>Department Responsible</th>
<th>Advertising Agency or Organisation</th>
<th>Approximate Cost $AU*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Let's Look Out for Australia</td>
<td>29 December 2002</td>
<td>Attorney-General's Department</td>
<td>Brown Melhuish Fishlock</td>
<td>$18.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>Help Protect Australia from Terrorism</td>
<td>25 September 2004</td>
<td>Attorney-General's Department</td>
<td>Brown Melhuish Fishlock</td>
<td>$8.3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Ready: Phase One</td>
<td>19 February 2003</td>
<td>Department of Homeland Security</td>
<td>The Martin Agency Ad Council</td>
<td>Created pro bono; $295 million donated media space in 2003 Alfed P. Sloan Foundation; $8.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Ready Business</td>
<td>September 2004</td>
<td>Department of Homeland Security</td>
<td>Neiman Group Ad Council</td>
<td>Created pro bono; media space donated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>Ready: Phase Two</td>
<td>22 November 2004</td>
<td>Department of Homeland Security</td>
<td>BBDO Worldwide Ad Council</td>
<td>Created pro bono; media space donated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Lifesavers</td>
<td>17 March 2003</td>
<td>Metropolitan Police, City of London</td>
<td>Metropolitan Police, City of London</td>
<td>Metropolitan Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>Preparing for Emergencies</td>
<td>26 July 2004</td>
<td>Civil Contingencies Secretariat, Cabinet Office</td>
<td>Metropolitan Police, City of London</td>
<td>Jointly covered by the Metropolitan Police, City of London, British Transport Police, Transport for London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>If You Suspect It, Report It</td>
<td>28 February 2005</td>
<td>Metropolitan Police</td>
<td>Metropolitan Police</td>
<td>$530,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PUBLIC DEBATE AND NATIONAL BELONGING

In Australia, the ‘national security public information campaigns’ immediately became a source of fierce media debate, criticised for their significant cost to the taxpayer and their failure to deliver practical information. Public views ranged from supporting the initiative to seeing the ads as divisive propaganda, or ridiculing the now-infamous fridge magnets which came in the household kits.

Despite the assertions of those involved in their production that the ads were designed to reassure the public, they were also criticised for delivering an ‘alarming message with a neutral corporate gloss’. Furthermore, although never pointing to a specific ethnic, religious or political group as potential terrorists, the ads encouraged Australians to report ‘suspicious’ activity: a term that was used in 92 per cent of the Australian advertisements. In every ad, ‘terrorism’ was used to refer to an ill-defined threat to ‘our way of life’. The UK ‘Lifesavers’ and ‘If You Suspect It, Report It’ ads followed the Australian approach, relying on the word ‘suspicious’ to invoke a vague threat, while the US campaigns focused on preparing citizens for emergencies.

The ‘Let’s Look Out for Australia’ and ‘Help Protect Australia from Terrorism’ campaigns attracted attention from critics who believed that, in encouraging citizens to “spy” on each other, the ads damaged the same ‘Australian values’ they claimed to be preserving. In this way, the ads fostered suspicion towards the ‘Other’ in Australian society, fuelling ‘prejudice and discrimination’ by never quite articulating who or what to be alert for (Figure 13.2).

While not explicit, the idea that the Australian way of life was under threat implicitly positioned that threat as being from people who were ‘unAustralian’, whose primary loyalties were to foreign interests or values. In this way, the ads created a division between those who were automatically included in the national ‘we’, and those whose allegiances remained untested. Like other types of nationalistic media content studied by authors such as Andrew Jakubowicz and co-authors, Teun A. van Dijk, and Ghassan Hage, the anti-terror ads marked the boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ by presenting the audience with the image of ‘us’ as ‘clean, uniformed white, humane, order ed, placed’, an image stark contrast with ‘them’, who, it was implied, are Asian or Aboriginal, Arab or Muslim, migrants, refugees or terrorists.

For loyalty to the nation to function as a marker of ‘Australianness’ in the ads, the character of the Australian nation needed to be clearly

SOME THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

Terrorists rely on surprise, so there’s no definitive list; however local and overseas experience has given us some possible warning signs to look out for. Examples include:

- Unusual surveillance, videotaping or photography of official buildings, energy installations and important sites
- Vehicles parked near significant buildings or in busy public places for long periods of time
- Packages or bags abandoned in public places such as malls, buildings or train stations
- Suspicious purchases or possession of large quantities of fertilizer, chemicals or explosives
- Unusual uses of accommodation such as garages being used at odd times of the day or night

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For loyalty to the nation to function as a marker of ‘Australianness’ in the ads, the character of the Australian nation needed to be clearly defined. The most common, and seemingly simplest, technique for representing Australia in the anti-terrorism campaigns was through the national name: the word ‘Australia’. Michael Billig argues that politicians ‘drape the national name across their sentences, paragraphs and stage-managed backdrops’ where it hangs ‘as sign, context and potentiality’. Throughout these campaigns, the national name was used to draw upon a cultural myth it was assumed that members of the target audience shared, helping them to ‘imagine’ both the nation and their place in the national community.

The ads consistently addressed their audience as ‘we’, ‘you’ and ‘us’, inviting citizens to include themselves as members of this national community. This technique is what John Fiske, following Louis Althusser, terms...
'interpellation'; and in responding, he argues, we implicitly accept the discourse's definition of us. Audience members viewing the anti-terrorism advertisements were invited to recognise themselves in constructions of the model national subject, an exclusive representation of Australianness that draws upon myths of the Anzac, mateship and multicultural tolerance as uniquely 'Australian'.

Comparable nationalistic appeals were also prominent in the US and UK campaigns, which also assumed the existence of an unproblematic national citizenry which could be called upon to 'look out' for the nation. Yet to include themselves in the construction of national belonging presented in the ads, the audience needed to accept a blurring of the differences in society, because when politicians speak of the 'American nation' or the 'Australian people', they can only do so by 'sweeping important differences of class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, geography or religion between millions of people under the national rug'. Such an approach alienates those who cannot see themselves reflected in the sunny advertising images that represent 'our way of life' in the 'Let's Look Out for Australia' campaign.

Media criticism questioned the lack of any images of 'terrorist atrocities' in this first Australian campaign, an omission that was the result of a decision by the federal government and advertising agency Brown Melhuish Fishlock. After a series of focus group tests, images of 'balaclava-clad SAS troops storming houses and police look-outs on the Harbour Bridge' were replaced with the now-familiar 'smiling Muslim girls, indigenous children and summer scenes of park cricket and barbecues'. Perhaps in response to these criticisms, the later 'Help Protect Australia from Terrorism' campaign featured only a map of Australia composed of 'pieces of information' about terrorist activities (Figure 13.3). The government gave no reason for the darker tone of the second campaign, but media speculation pointed to the bombings at the Australian embassy in Jakarta on 9 September 2004 as a possible influence.

While the Australian and UK advertisements relied on warnings about suspicious behaviour and appeals to citizens to report anything unusual, the US campaigns combined this with appeals to the idea of 'family', referred to in 75 per cent of all 'Ready' ads. Karen Johnson-Cartee and Gary Copeland argue that effective advertisements are those that 'strike responsive chords within voters' by activating deeply held cultural values and myths. Harnessing the emotive power of the genre, the 'Ready' ads asked the audience to identify with an idealised image of the American family: suburban, middle-class and nuclear (Figure 13.4).
At a deeper level, the 'family' represented not only the ideal American family, but also the nation-as-family. This is a common association in public and media discourse of this kind, yet such domestic language was noticeably absent in the Australian and UK campaigns, which focused instead on the broader prevention of terrorist threats and upgrades to national security. The 'If You Suspect It, Report It' advertisements showed this difference clearly, setting up a dichotomy between 'us' and the 'terrorists' to heighten a national sense of unease (Figure 13.5).

The symbol of the flag was another significant difference in the way 'nation' was signalled in the US campaigns, situating the 'Ready' ads in a narrative of national identity and belonging. The US flag was a prominent symbol that acted as a 'focus for sentiment about society' in the ads, drawing myths and narratives of the American nation together in a potent discursive indicator of national identity (Figure 13.6).

However, this did not correspond to the other campaigns: the Australian flag only appeared once, in the 'Let's Look Out for Australia' booklet, and the Union Jack was not used in the UK advertisements. While the US ads appealed to national identity through the flag, the Australian campaigns
GOVERNMENT AS GUARDIAN
OF THE NATION

The federal government was represented throughout the Australian campaigns as the organisation responsible for keeping the nation safe, prompting concern that the ads functioned as party-political propaganda. This central criticism of the Australian anti-terrorism campaigns questioned whether the ads encouraged fear of the terrorist 'Other' to create a sense of national unity, to justify the Australian involvement in the Iraq War and to encourage people to vote for the Coalition. Elspeth Tilley's study of the 'Let's Look Out for Australia' campaign, the only published academic study of the anti-terrorism ads, addressed the question of whether they functioned as propaganda. If we define propaganda as communication that attempts to persuade by tapping into 'pre-existing myths, stereotypes, images, ambiguities [and] assumptions', it is clear that, in the Australian advertisements, assumptions and stereotypes of what form a potential 'terrorist' threat might have worked to justify the ways in which myths of national identity were constructed. Here, unity was fostered through exclusion, outlining who was included in the national 'we' and who was not.

The accusation that government advertising is nothing more than thinly veiled campaigning for the incumbent is the most prevalent criticism in media and academic debate about these and many other government advertising campaigns. Such debates can overlook the way in which all government advertising will reflect an image of an administration that is busy making changes and implementing policies. Problems arise, however, when government ads contain little or no other information. In the case of the anti-terrorism ads, detail was limited to the positive steps taken by the Howard government to upgrade national security measures. Industry commentators criticised the campaigns because they did not communicate anything new to the market. David Fickling notes that the 'Let's Look Out for Australia' information kit 'semble[d] a party election manifesto that did little more than 'bullet point the ways in which the government is keeping Australia safe'.

Authorisation tags in the Australian ads associated the 'Commonwealth Government' with increased security measures, detailed plans in case of emergency, and the wider protection of the nation. Attributing the ads and the protective measures they promoted to the federal government can be seen as another form of political campaigning, discursively connecting the safety of the nation with the incumbent party. Stephen Bartos has questioned the validity of including the authorisation tag on government advertising, as it is only required by the Broadcasting Services Act 1992 on political advertising. He proposed removing the tag in 'neutral' campaigns, which would open up the ads to legal challenge if they were to contain party-political content and would therefore demonstrate the government's confidence in their neutrality. Graeme Orr supports this
suggestion, arguing that the 'Australian Government, Canberra' is an amorphous and indefinable entity, with the authorisation serving the purpose of a 'brag, not a tag' (see Chapter 2).65

Authorisation tags were used similarly in the US ads, which referenced the Department of Homeland Security and Ad Council. By contrast, at no time was it indicated that the Blair government's Home Office was behind the UK campaigns and the security measures they promoted. Responsibility was devolved to a departmental level, perhaps as a response to the controversial nature of British involvement in the Iraq War. The Blair government's attempt to separate the issue of 'terrorism' from its membership in the 'Coalition of the Willing' marks a striking difference from the Australian campaigns, where the federal government made a distinct effort to link the two in press releases and interviews, citing the need to protect Australia from terrorism as a major incentive to joining the Iraq War.66

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ANTI-TEROR CAMPAIGNS

The effectiveness of public health and safety campaigns is usually evaluated through statistics which measure changes in social behaviour, for example statistics on the rate of infection (for AIDS campaigns) or the number of road accidents (for TAC campaigns). The effectiveness of tourism campaigns is usually measured by whether there has been any increase in the number of visitors to Australia and/or in the income they bring and spend. By contrast, it is very difficult to measure the effectiveness of anti-terrorism campaigns, which have more nebulous aims such as raising awareness and providing reassurance.

Any attempt to measure the effectiveness of the Australian anti-terror campaigns must rely on government figures, since the results of focus group testing by Brown Melhuish Fishlock have not been made public. While there is no data measuring whether Australians changed their behaviour as a result of the information in the ads, Attorney-General Phillip Ruddock declared the campaigns a success based on the 64 000 calls the hotline received between December 2002 and September 2005.64 However, this alone is not a definite indicator of whether the ads were effective in making Australia 'safer' or reducing the terrorist threat through the efforts of 'alert' citizens: although 33 000 calls had provided 'useful' information, Ruddock declined to comment on whether any of these had directly helped prevent a terrorist attack. When re-launching the 'Help Protect Australia from Terrorism' campaign in July 2005, he stressed that although he could not provide examples of information that had been 'of considerable assistance both to police and intelligence organisations', 'the fact that we don't talk about it and don't catalogue it, doesn't mean it hasn't happened'.65

Another potential measure of effectiveness is how well the Australian ads were remembered by their audience. In April 2003, Melbourne advertising agency Magnum Opus conducted a survey of more than 1200 Australians, finding that the 'Be Alert, Not Alarmed' television ads were the most-remembered of the previous few months.66 The anti-terrorism ads beat such memorable campaigns as the Lleyton Hewitt toilet paper ads, and promotions for chicken feed, yoghurt and Vegemite, to claim the top spot. While it was the best result a government advertising campaign had achieved in the quarterly survey, this may have been more to do with its controversial nature and coverage in the news media than with the content of the ads themselves.

Despite trade journal B&T having voted Brown Melhuish Fishlock as 'National Agency of the Year' in 2003 for a portfolio that included the first anti-terrorism campaign, the ads came under industry criticism for being 'bland'. Furthermore, they were part of a major integrated media campaign, suggesting it was not necessarily the ads themselves that were memorable but actually the information kits mailed to every home in Australia, which attracted significant media attention (including coverage of a protest which saw several thousand kits returned to senders).67 It is worth remembering that the Australian ads were also run in conjunction with other significant public awareness campaigns by law enforcement agencies targeting 'terrorism', and that all of this was occurring in the context of prominent media coverage of the continuing 'war on terror' and conflict in Iraq. If public awareness of potential terrorist threats did in fact increase, and if such threats did not eventuate, we cannot attribute that to advertising alone.

Although there is no data available on the effectiveness of the UK campaigns, the availability of statistics from the USA provides an interesting contrast to the Australian case. The Ad Council has declared 'Ready' the most successful campaign in its history: not only did it receive unprecedented media support, but more than 210 million Americans saw or read about the campaign. By the end of October 2004, there had been more than 1.8 billion hits on the 'Ready' website, 214 180 calls to the hotline, and more than 3.6 million booklets and brochures requested or downloaded.68 While the Ad Council admitted that it was too early to gauge the long-term effects of the campaign on public behaviour, their surveying indicated early signs of progress. In a survey taken in early September 2004, they found that
58 per cent of Americans had taken at least one of the three 'preparedness' steps recommended by the ads.

**CONCLUSION**

Some of the cases discussed in this chapter vindicate government advertising's claim to be 'public communication for the public good'. Specifically, the NAC AIDs and TAC campaigns pursued legitimate public health and road safety objectives with apparent effectiveness, even if a question mark remains over the costs of the latter. In these cases, the advertising appears to have been effective because the words and images were integrated with more direct and concrete marketing strategies and the ads were broadcast in a supportive environment in which mainstream media coverage sent complementary messages.

The Tourism Australia case provides an ironic postmodern instance in which the job of elaborating and diffusing images of national identity is handed to a global advertising agency. However, the quite different images of nationhood employed in anti-terror campaigns since September 11, for which 'propaganda' does not seem too strong a word, have opened up the cracks in our presumed national unity and revealed the advantage which accrues to an incumbent government when it is in a situation that allows it to identify itself with the national good.

Of course, publics can and do respond to such appeals with scepticism, which brings us to the question of effectiveness. This appears to be more readily achieved, and demonstrated, when it concerns social behaviours rather than attitudes. We can take practical steps to adopt safe sex practices or drink less alcohol, but remain bemused as to just how we should 'be alert but not alarmed'.

British historian A.J.P. Taylor argued in 1957 that 'all change in history, all advance, comes from the nonconformist. If there had been no trouble makers, no Dissenters, we should still be living in caves.' Gelber considers what happened in three case studies of protest and dissent in Australia.
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