

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Communication activities during the caretaker period

The publication '[Caretaker Conventions and Pre-election Practices](#)', published by DPC, provides an overview of the expectations placed on agencies during the caretaker period, which begins on 17 February. The Electoral Act 1985 also contains requirements in relation to electoral advertising. This FAQ provides more detailed advice on how to manage communication activities during the caretaker period.

This information is provided as general advice only. Chief executives are responsible for the implementation of the caretaker conventions within their agencies and for the application of the conventions to specific cases. Where you are in any doubt as to the interpretation of the conventions, you should seek advice through the normal channels (ordinarily the Director of Communications in your agency), who can then seek additional counsel as appropriate.

How will the caretaker period affect my communication activities?

During the caretaker period, public funds should not be used for communications campaigns that could be perceived as unduly favouring the party in government. Publications and advertising material that could be reasonably construed as being for party political purposes should therefore be avoided.

Where advertising is of a political nature, it must meet the requirements of the *Electoral Act 1985*.

Advertising or promotional campaigns that do not favour the party in government, such as community based information campaigns, health and safety messages or operational advertising, may continue during the caretaker period.

What communications activities are affected?

All communication media are subject to both the caretaker conventions and the Electoral Act. This includes, but is not limited to, advertising (both brand and functional), websites, public relations, direct marketing, events, social media, signage, market research, and brochures.

What are the approval processes for communications during the caretaker period?

Your agency's usual communications approval processes apply throughout the caretaker period. This approval does not supersede your requirement for compliance with the caretaker conventions and the Electoral Act. This remains the responsibility for each agency.

What do I do if I've already booked advertising?

Prior to the caretaker period commencing, you should review all of your advertising to decide what might have to be withdrawn and discuss the cancellation with the Master Media Agency.

Individual agencies are responsible for removing advertising and for any associated costs. To minimise the cost to government, you should review your advertising well in advance, rather than waiting until the caretaker period begins.

What do I do if I have a communications activity that isn't compliant?

If you have a non-compliant activity during caretaker, you will need to contact the Master Media Agency to remove the material immediately. Any associated signage or promotional material will need to be withdrawn at the same time.

If in doubt, you are best to err on the side of caution until you have definitive advice. Failure to remove non-compliant material risks a breach of the Electoral Act.

What happens with websites?

As with any other form of media, websites should not feature any material that could be construed as supporting or promoting the policies of a particular party.

In most cases, material on websites will be apolitical and can be retained, but exceptions might include ministerial statements that criticise the opposition or material that promotes government policies or achievements.

Agencies should audit their sites to ensure that contentious material is removed, including images, copy, headlines, tags, links, URLs, newsfeeds, blogs, RSS feeds, or video content.

How do I manage social media during the caretaker period?

Being a two way conversation additional measures are required for social media where content can be difficult to control. The issues will vary depending on whether the environment is owned by government (such as a blog, message board, or engagement) or by a third party (such as Twitter and Facebook).

The overall objective is to prevent the posting of political material in social media environments. Each agency should consider the risks associated with their social media during the caretaker period and include it in their written social media policy.

RSS feeds from social media platforms should also be removed from websites during caretaker.

What will happen with YourSAy and other community engagements during the caretaker period?

Community engagement processes, including on YourSAy, should not be run during the caretaker period, but may continue up until 17 February. If your agency is planning community engagement activities, you should plan these so that they either conclude before the caretaker period begins or commence after the election.

Who can help me decide what is appropriate and what isn't?

In the first instance please refer your inquiry to the Director of Communications in your agency.

As required, your Director of Communications can seek further advice through your Chief Executive to the Caretaker Conventions Reference Group. The group will draw on past practices and on the advice of the Crown Solicitor in considering your query. The contact for the reference group is Michael Brougham, Manager, Cabinet Coordination, at Michael.brougham@sa.gov.au.

Further information on the Caretaker Conventions can be found on the [DPC website](#).