

THE LAW

Online advertising to stay on Government's most popular website

With over 470 million visits a year, it's no surprise that the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website is one of the most popular in Australia.

Whether you're a farmer growing crops, a surfer looking for the best break, or if you just want to know if you can leave the washing on the line, we all love to talk about the weather.

The BOM is renowned for being the leading authority on weather forecasts, warnings and advice and it provides critical information to individuals and organisations responding to the harsh realities of the Australian environment.

The BOM is one of the first federal Government websites permitted to have online advertising.

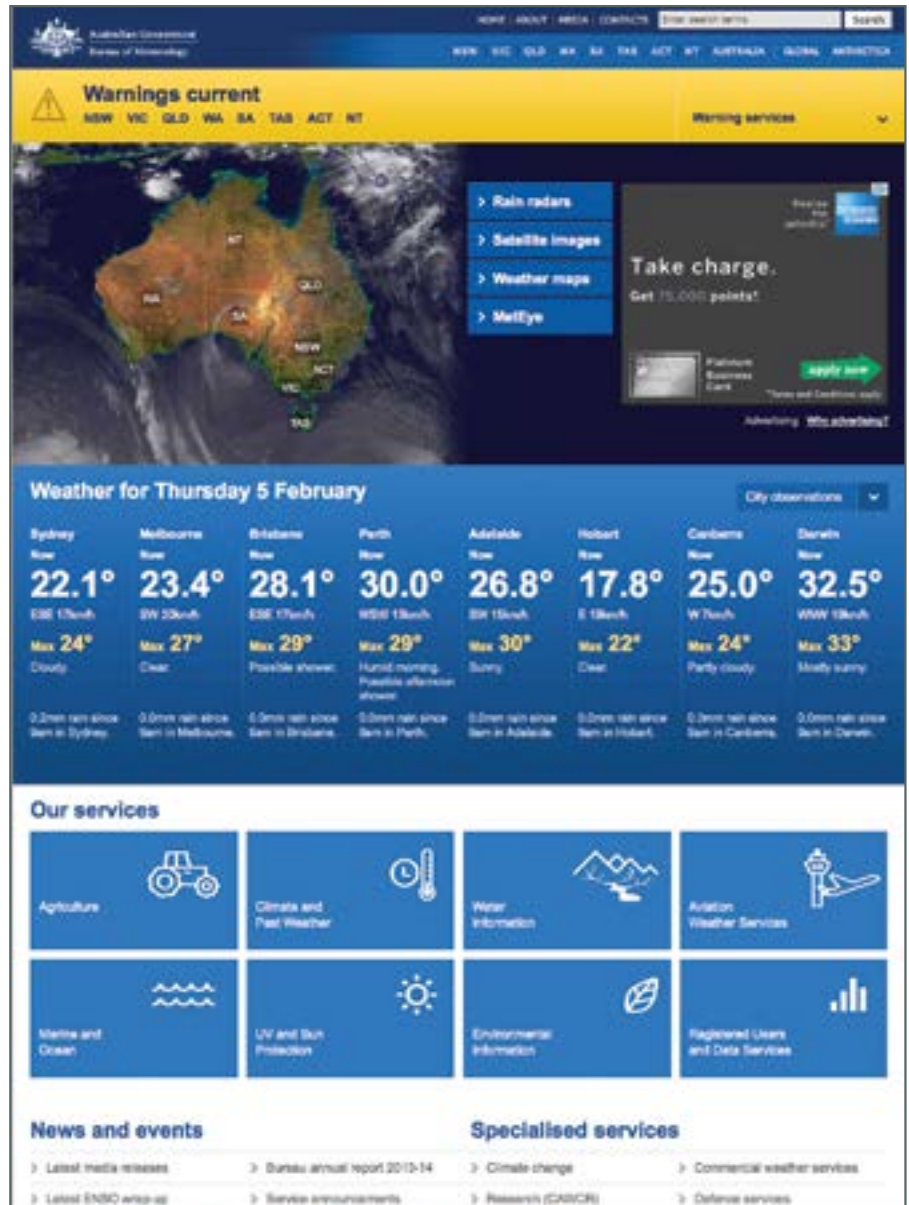
Recouping the cost of delivering this service is possible by selling advertising space on the BOM website. After a successful 12-month trial of advertising, Parliament has allowed the BOM to continue to capitalise on this opportunity.

The Meteorology Amendment (Online Advertising) Bill 2014 requires the BOM Director to develop guidelines on the types of advertising permitted.

Environment Minister, Greg Hunt (Flinders, Vic), said weather-watchers need not worry that the presence of advertisements will affect the quality of the website.

"The Government wants to provide certainty to ensure the Director of Meteorology's powers include advertising in connection with the Bureau of Meteorology services, and determine the types of advertising that the bureau displays," he said.

"This particular Bill ensures that the director has the power to prohibit advertising considered to be not in the Commonwealth's or the bureau's interests—advertising of things such as



BREAK IN THE WEATHER: Online advertising permitted on the BOM.

tobacco, alcohol, gambling, violence and weapons, and advertising that has a sexual content."

Pop-ups over the page or floating ads that can obscure content on screen are not allowed, so that users can still access information quickly in an emergency.

"This Bill will also remove any doubt and make it explicitly clear that the BOM can accept paid advertising. This allows the bureau to further diversify its

sources of funding ... as has been the consistent goal of governments of both persuasions," Mr Hunt said.

The BOM is one of the first federal Government websites to be allowed online advertising.

Although the profitability of accepting paid advertising is yet to be established, this new law may pave the way for other government agencies to use their online spaces to generate income. ■