

CONTROLLING GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Over the past thirteen years the people of NSW have seen the State Labor Government spend more and more on taxpayer funded advertising, or 'spin'.

Taxpayers deserve higher standards of accountability from a State Government that spends nearly \$100 million a year of taxpayer money on political advertising.

Labor Failure

In 2007, the State Labor Government became the seventh biggest advertiser in the country, spending \$95 million on taxpayer-funded advertisements – a 20% increase from 2006.

It put the NSW Labor Government ahead of the annual advertising expenditure of McDonalds and Coca Cola combined.

The NSW Auditor-General put this figure even higher at \$111.7 million.

The NSW Labor Government has spent almost **\$1 billion** on advertising over the past decade.

In 2007, the Auditor-General found, *“guidelines are not adequate to prevent the use of public funds for party political purposes”* and an absence of any *“central record of the total amount spent on advertising across government that includes the costs of research, development, production and placement.”* (NSW Auditor-General, Performance Audit August 2007)

Solution

Labor's blatant waste of public money with political advertising has not changed over the past decade and it should be open to independent scrutiny.

The NSW Liberal/Nationals will ensure public money is not spent on political advertising by introducing legislation to curtail political advertising by requiring Auditor-General approval for advertising campaigns.

Proposal

In June 2007 NSW Liberal Leader Barry O'Farrell, introduced the *Government Publicity Control Bill 2007* (the Bill).

The purpose of the Bill is to ensure public money is not expended on government publicity for a partisan political purpose and to give the NSW Auditor-General the authority to scrutinise government publicity that appears to have the capacity, in whole or in part, to influence public support for a political party.

It would give the Auditor General the power to send bills for taxpayers funded advertising that he believed were politically motivated to the governing political party for payment.

In May 2007, Federal Labor leader Kevin Rudd indicated Federal ALP's concerns over taxpayer funded government advertising promising that if elected, Labor would introduce strict new conditions on government ads. Like the NSW Coalition, Rudd also sees a need for the Auditor-General's office to apply its independence to determine the validity of government advertising.

However, the State Labor Government showed their commitment to 'spin' over substance when they voted against supporting the NSW Coalition's Bill in October 2007.

A Liberal/Nationals Coalition will introduce the policy in government.