



## **MEDIA RELEASE – Putting Hume First - 2013 Budget in Reply - James Harker-Mortlock – Independent for Hume – 17<sup>th</sup> May 2013**

There were no major funding initiatives announced for Hume in the Liberal Party's budget in reply speech last night. As with the ALP, the Liberal Party's emphasis is upon urban areas and marginal seats. As will be the case with the federal budget, there may be smaller initiatives announced later as part of the day to day activities of government. However, as has been the case for many years, there are no new major projects planned for Hume. Voters in Hume have seen that the Liberal Party takes Hume for granted whilst the ALP has forgotten it. **This is confirmation that Hume will only obtain funding for major projects with a strong independent voice arguing its case in the federal parliament.**

The Liberal Party has committed to funding for major roads projects across Australia, principally in the cities, with work to start within twelve months on Melbourne's East West Link, Sydney's WestConnex, Brisbane's Gateway Motorway upgrade, Adelaide's South Road, Tasmania's Midland Highway, and key roads in Perth plus parts of the Bruce Highway. It is planned to duplicate the Pacific Highway within ten years. Apart from the already planned minor improvements to the Barton Highway announced some months ago by the ALP federal government, which it would be anticipated the Liberal Party would honour, **there is nothing more for the Barton Highway full duplication or for any other major road project in Hume.**

Also announced was a one-stop-shop for faster environmental approvals – **this may be of concern to residents in Hume in regard to coal seam gas developments as the Liberal Shadow Minister for Resources , Ian Macfarlane, is a strong advocate for the coal seam gas industry.**

There was no mention whatsoever of the Liberal Party's intentions in regard to the location of Sydney's second airport – presumably to avoid upsetting voters in marginal seats and to keep the Liberal Party's friends at Sydney Airport Corporation happy. **The effect of this leadership void is to leave the residents of Wilton in a state of unknowing about their future.**

It appears also that many, if not all, of the cuts announced by the ALP will be accepted by the Liberal Party if elected. So it appears that the cuts to tertiary funding will remain. **These cuts will have most impact upon rural and regional universities and students as they have the least capacity to find alternative sources of funds.**

The Liberal Party will scrap the carbon tax, which is a good thing. However, it is unclear how the Liberal Party intends to fund the retention of the current income tax thresholds and the current pension and benefit fortnightly rates which the ALP is funding via the carbon tax and the mining tax. **This will be tough, even taking into account the savings measures proposed.**

**I believe that it is a highly optimistic hope that electricity and gas prices will drop as a consequence of the removal of the carbon tax.**

**There was also no specific mention of the removal of the Renewable Energy Targets (RET) and attendant RECs scheme (which provides the funding for such things as wind turbine developments) although they would hopefully go with the Carbon Tax.**

The Green Loans scheme is to be cut.

**There is no indication of how the Liberal Party intends to fund its expensive Direct Action Plan.**

The mining tax will be removed, **although there is no suggestion of a replacement, such as a well-formulated resources rental tax.**

A comprehensive white paper on tax reform is a good initiative. **This will be urgent as very possibly the tax revenue base will be having difficulty meeting the demands to be placed upon it. We need action on tax reform, not just more talk.**

The previously announced and very generous paid parental leave scheme is on the agenda– **again, the funding for this, even with a levy on larger businesses, is questionable. Also, it does tend to discriminate in favour of more highly paid women living in the cities at the expense of funds being available to provide much needed services to lower income families in rural and regional areas.**

Two of the savings measures announced – the termination of the twice a year supplementary allowance to people on benefits and the removal of the low income superannuation contribution – **appear to hit the people who can least afford it and to dissuade low income earners from providing for their futures by way of superannuation.**

There are some good measures aimed at small business - cutting red tape (**something we have heard offered often before, so hopefully this time it will actually occur**), fairer rules for right of entry by unions, delaying by two years the ramp up in compulsory superannuation, a review of competition of policy to ensure that small business gets a fair go and small business will be a cabinet portfolio within the Treasury department. Also to be welcomed are a commission of audit to look at the role of government, maintenance of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, a white paper on COAG reform, re-establishing the Australian Building and Construction Commission, and the two-way version of the Colombo Plan..

Areas of uncertainty are company tax cuts, the NBN roll-out (**the aspirations outlined will be difficult to achieve**), school education reform (the Gonski reforms), work for the dole (**a complicated measure to administer**), rescinding the increase to the humanitarian migration intake (**we have yet to see this in practice**), and the reduction in the size of the Commonwealth public service (**which grew substantially under the Howard government**).

**However for Hume – what we need is real change – not just more of nothing from the Labor and Liberal parties!**

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