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From: Art Department [mailto:artist@coffscoastadvocate.com.au]  
Sent: Friday, 4 November 2005 5:04 PM  
To: FPA, Committee (SEN)  
Subject: Submission for objection on IR advertising budget

Sir/Madam,

I wish to make a submission to voice my objection to the amount of money being spent on advertising for the new Industrial relations proposed changes.

I live on the Mid North Coast which as you know thanks to our member Andrew Frasers recent actions has been in the news of late but the real issue is not his behaviour in the senate but the lack of funding in this area. Not only in the undelivered promised funding for the Pacific Highway upgrade and the Bonville deviation but in all areas, especially health and its related services.

News stories have reported the amount of money being spent on advertising the Industrial Relations proposed changes ranges from \$35 million to \$50 million with many experts predicting the amount to go higher.

Those millions would be better spent in regional areas like Coffs Harbour on roads health and education providing both long and short term benefits for the residents. At the moment there is a 4-5 week wait to see a doctor, in the Womens Health Centre here, a clinic specially designed for Womens Health and related issues, tough luck if you need urgent attention. Some specialists have a 3 month waiting list, which is just unacceptable. Patients shouldn't have to travel away from their family and friend to get basic services available in major cities. Just recently my daughter needed medical attention, my local GP's surgery is closed on Wednesdays so I rang around 5 other medical centres and clinics to be told doctors were not seeing any new patients. There are no bulk billing clinics here and only one after hours clinic open from 6pm to 9pm, what a joke!! But then I suppose there is always a 5 hour wait at the New Health Campus, also under staffed and under funded!! I have lived in Sydney for 30 years before moving to this area so I know the level and range of services available to residents in the city.

Just ask Andrew Fraser how useful \$35-\$50 million would be in starting work on the upgrade of the Pacific Highway. Most residents here don't put any real worth on promises made by the Roads Minister, after all there have been 3 ministers come and gone with promises and people are still dying and being seriously injured. It's a laugh to think how much money is spent on roads, bypasses and tunnels in Sydney alone, those roads are built to just manage traffic flow and reduce traffic, money spent on the Pacific Highway can actually save peoples lives. The additional strain these types of serious accidents have on the health & emergency services here is another under funded area.

The whole approach to the Industrial Relations issue seems to have been approached by the back door, surely a good system wouldn't need hard core selling if it was a good system. An overhaul of this magnitude should have included investigations, submissions and advice from all relevant areas and services. Surely it is this failure to include these groups that have led to the unrest and skepticism of these changes. It seems obvious that groups representing workers and employers are much better informed on real issues and problems in the current system that need addressing then any government office or government advisers.

It is naive of John Howard to think that workers in regional areas have

bargaining powers. With 'real' unemployment rates in these areas higher than average, for unskilled or semi skilled workers there will always be someone willing to work for below standard conditions at reduced pay. If you happen to be a highly skilled worker, it could be different but why stay in a regional area with reduced services in health and education when you can bargain for more money and benefits in the city. This would be devastating for a city the size of Coffs Harbour to loose these skilled workers along with young people looking for better jobs and conditions.

This letter has just touched the surface of why I object to \$35-\$50 million being spent on advertising a system that is yet to be finalised. The current stream of ads are not informative, give you little or no information, pretty pictures and catchy lines may convince us we need to buy this or have that, but they do not install confidence or convince the public that they will be better off. True and honest information does, which is not what I feel we are getting for our advertising dollar. Just try calling the information lines and asking a question about your pay rate and/or proposed changes in conditions and how that will affect you. Apart from reading from prepared statements the call centre staff are not very helpful at all, they have no more information than what is already available on the web site. How can they be properly informed when even some government ministers seem not to have been fully briefed. In TV and radio interviews I have heard them fail to answer some questions or conveniently side step the issue. All this ads up to the misuse of tax payers money to sell an ill prepared Industrial Relations reform.

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