

The Reality of the Liberals' Cuts

The Liberals have revealed their plans to gut public services in order to pay for their reckless election spending commitments.

When it dawned on them that their un-funded and undeliverable election policies would end up sending the ACT's Budget into deficit, they put together a desperate "savings" plan that will result in job cuts, slashing of public services, neglect of our city and a complete inability for the ACT to respond to crises.

This slash and burn of the public service shows that the Liberals have no plans or policies for Canberras future.

Here are just a few of the lowlights:

- **Shopping Centre upgrades stalled**

The Liberals' plan to cut \$1.41 million over two years for the design of shopping centre upgrades will mean the planned improvements at Deakin and Scullin will not proceed. Upgrades at Waramanga, Red Hill, Lyons and Farrer will be delayed for a further two years.

- **No more playground and park upgrades**

The Liberals will cut \$4.5 million over 3 years from the program to upgrade neighbourhood playgrounds and parks

- **Emergency response funding cut**

The Liberals' proposed multi-million dollar cut to the ACT Government's justice area will jeopardise the ACT's ability to cope with a major terrorism or emergency incident. They will cut \$2.56 million over four years to the ACT Government's emergency response capability in the event of a terror attack or other major disaster. This includes public information and warnings and co-ordination with the Commonwealth Government, the armed forces, police and other ACT Government agencies.

- **Climate Change back-flip**

The Liberals' plans to slash \$17.5 million from this vital area of Government will mean job losses and jeopardise the success of the Sustainable Schools initiative and the Government's water efficiency and waste programs. It will also mean the objectives in our Weathering the Change climate change strategy – which commits the ACT to carbon reductions of 60% of 2000 levels by 2050 – will not be able to be achieved.

Tree planting to the value of \$5 million every year over the next three years will not happen. These cuts will also get rid of our programs around improving the knowledge and awareness of climate change, making the Government more energy efficient, showcasing renewable technologies and promoting green power.

- **Community safety at risk**

The Liberals' cuts will also jeopardise community safety by impacting negatively on crime prevention measures such as the engine immobiliser program and CCTV. The CCTV cameras would not be able to be maintained.

- **Slashing of funds to charities and volunteers**

The Liberals plan to cut the community inclusion fund that is used to support Canberra charities and community groups in urgent need. In the past 12 months it has supported Red Cross, Salvation Army, Red Shield Appeal, Legacy and Downs Syndrome Association.

- **No new street lights**

The Liberals plan to slash the \$6 million program to install new street lights. Hundreds of streetlights won't be replaced and new suburbs may be delayed due to the unavailability of lighting.

- **An end to community celebrations**

Canberra's beloved Nara Candle Festival, Christmas in the City, New Year's Eve in the City, Australia Day and the 'round town program will be abandoned.

- **Cutting jobs for people with a disability employment**

The Liberals' plans to change the contract arrangements for public area horticultural maintenance and cleaning will jeopardise organisations like Koomarri, the staff of which carry out these duties for the ACT Government.

- **A loss of expertise in Treasury**

This savings measure would decimate the branch which provides high-level advice to Government on significant long-term financial issues and risks likely to impact on the Territory's Budget. This time of global financial turmoil is not the time to cut this important part of Government.

- **Cutting car parks in Commonwealth Ave loops**

The Liberals will take away funding for this work which will mean more pressure on existing car parks in the City.

- **Decelerated Land Development**

The Liberals will cut funding from the Accelerated Land Development program which will mean less affordable housing.

- **No more urban open space and landscaping programs**

The Liberals will cut this \$4.5 million program which upgrades and beautifies our city.

- **A slash and burn of the capital upgrades budget**

The Liberals' plans to cut more than 31% of the total capital works budget will result in cut backs to our programs in the areas of road construction and repair, opening a new tip, upgrading and maintaining drains, delivering land releases, developing new suburbs, buying new buses and upgrading school buildings.

- **A cut to school maintenance and upgrades**

The costings reveal that the Liberals will slash capital upgrades to our public schools by using existing funding to pay for their smaller class sizes policy. They will reduce the future capital upgrades funding, which 30% is allocated to Education spending for projects such as capital upgrades for our older schools.

Schools such as Canberra, Stromlo and Alfred Deakin high schools as well as Telopea School are all due to have upgrades undertaken by 2010.

In addition they will run down our schools with the \$11 million yearly provision for basic ongoing maintenance of our schools to cease.

- **\$600k slashed from UC programs**

Funding for programs at the University of Canberra will be slashed at a time when skills shortages are one of the most important challenges facing our community.

- **\$1.6 million “absorbed” from within education for the education complaints commissioner**

The Liberals’ plan to remove over \$1.6 million from the public education budget to fund an education complaints commissioner rather than provide additional funding for the extra layer of bureaucracy will see programs cut to public education.

- **New school builds frozen**

The Liberals’ have not provided any money for the new Harrison High School demonstrating they have no commitment to Gungahlin community.

- **A sham tourism policy**

The Liberals say they want to bring an arts event to Canberra yet they are cutting money from the Canberra Museum and Gallery. They are going to rob the tourism budget by \$1.426 million to create a new stand alone agency. This will mean the slashing of front line services delivered by tourism such as marketing.

The con that is the Liberals’ Floriade policy has also been revealed. The \$10 million for upgrade to Commonwealth Park is now contingent on them getting a lease from the Commonwealth. There are serious doubts about whether the Commonwealth would hand over ownership of land within the Parliamentary Triangle.

- **Sport and recreation grants to go**

To be able to afford the \$1.426 million that will be used to pay for new stand-alone sport and recreation agency, the Liberals’ will slash front line services, such as grants to sporting organizations, to the tune of \$500,000 per year.

- **An attack on fair and safe work places**

The Liberals have finally revealed their true colours on fair and safe work places in the ACT by announcing they will slash the nearly \$1 million allocated to the policy area of the ACT Government’s industrial relations unit.

Media release

This policy area looks after worker safety, injury prevention and workers' compensation. This move demonstrates the Liberals' contempt for workplace safety. First they voted against the Workplace Safety Bill and now they propose to slash the policy area that advises the Government on these important issues.

- **Massive cuts to major projects and facilitation**

The massive cuts to this important part of Government will seriously impact our land supply strategy and rollout, see the scrapping of the Housing Affordability Action Plan and downgrade the Aged Housing Land Supply Strategy.

- **Public Service jobs axed**

Based on preliminary advice from Treasury, the savings put forward through the Liberals announced job cuts, will mean 162 public servants will lose their jobs in this financial year with the potential for more to come. This will include 19 from Shared Services (Intact), 17 from CMD's Government Policy and Coordination Unit and 9 from CMD's Major Facilitation Unit.

A total of 193 public servants will lose their jobs under a Liberal Government over the next four years. This figure includes:

- 41 from Shared Services – Intact
- 24 from the CMD's Government Policy and Coordination Unit
- 20 from the CMD's Major Facilitation Unit
- 20 SES positions across the public service
- 11 from JACS' Policy Advice and Justice Programs
- 9 from the CMD's Communications and Events Unit
- 8 from Treasury's Financial Management Branch
- Alexander Maconochie Centre - 3 from health services area and 3 from centre operations

How many more jobs will be cut if the Liberals get into Government and their promises end up costing more than they realised?

Statement Ends

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