

Thursday 31 December 2009

INDEPENDENT PANEL TO SCRUTINISE TAXPAYER-FUNDED ADS

An independent Government Advertising Review Panel to oversee, scrutinise and approve taxpayer funded advertising will be established by a Liberal National Coalition Government.

A Coalition Government will set up an independent review panel to ensure taxpayer funded government advertising campaigns were not party political and did not inappropriately use taxpayer funds to promote the government of the day.

This announcement follows a recent recommendation from the NSW Auditor-General, which recommended that all publicly-funded campaigns over \$50,000 (except for statutory and regulatory notices) be subject to review.

Under a Coalition Government an Independent Government Advertising Review panel will be established with members of the panel to include retired members of the judiciary, senior academics, and former public sector auditors. The panel will be funded at up to \$100,000 per annum and will independently review government advertising to ensure campaigns would not be seen as party political and were not excessive.

Victorian families are being bombarded with party-political advertising funded by the taxpayer.

You cannot turn on your TV in Victoria without the Brumby Government boasting about itself, yet Victorians are struggling from record violent crime, transport and road chaos and disastrous shortages of hospital beds and vital welfare services as a direct result of Labor's incompetence.

John Brumby promised in 1999 to *'end misusing taxpayers' money for disguised political advertising'* and *'prevent publicly funded advertising being inappropriately used to promote the government'*.

This government cannot be trusted to keep its promises.

The government's response to criticism of their abuse of advertising has been foolish and designed to cover up their brazen grab of taxpayers' money to promote John Brumby.

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Public education campaigns such as TAC road safety ads, bushfire and water-saving information are clearly important and necessary, but John Brumby is taking millions of taxpayers' dollars and inappropriately using it to promote himself.

This includes recent ads promoting the government's performance on transport when our public transport system is failing, education when our schools are broken-down and hospitals that haven't even been built. "Instead of wasting \$4 million dollars on the *Shine* schools TV ads promoting the Brumby Government, John Brumby could have provided air-conditioners for 2,000 classrooms where children swelter in summer heat.

It is shocking that John Brumby allows hospitals and schools to suffer because of a lack of funding while he spent desperately-needed funds on advertising propaganda to promote his government.

An Independent Government Advertising Review panel will put an end to John Brumby's rorts and ensure taxpayer funds are only used for legitimate public education and information campaigns instead of political self promotion.

John Brumby must immediately cease the use of public funds to promote himself and Labor's political interests.

We have already written to the Victorian Auditor-General asking him to immediately investigate the sudden and unprecedented avalanche of advertising by the Brumby Government and report before next year's State Budget.

The NSW Auditor-General's recent review of advertising campaigns conducted by the NSW Government revealed shocking abuses.

Even in NSW there is far more rigorous oversight of the use of taxpayer funds for advertising campaigns, and it is clear that John Brumby would have never got away with many of his ads in NSW.

We have an urgent need for government funding for our hospitals, transport, additional police, ambulance services and child welfare.

There is a shortage of government funds for all of those critical needs, but when it comes to John Brumby promoting himself and his government with taxpayer funds, money is no object and millions of dollars are inappropriately spent on advertising.

The Brumby Government is incompetent and tired and has left the electorate

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struggling from record taxes, violent crime, collapsing public transport, water shortages and hospital waiting lists.

Now it is using hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' funds to try to con voters into believing that they are better off.

We don't know how you can trust a government that promotes itself at taxpayers' expense while basic services fall apart.