



Regions forgotten in no-thrills cost plan, say candidates

Budget splits opinion

CALEB SAMSON

FEDERAL treasurer Wayne Swan's third budget is either "outrageous and illogical" or a welcome investment to the Mid West, depending on who you talk to.

"There is nothing in this budget for regional Australia," Liberal MP and candidate for Durack Barry Haase said.

Labor Durack candidate Shane Hill disagreed, and said training funds, small business tax breaks and indigenous programs would all help regional WA.

"In the treasurer's speech, he did not mention the word 'agriculture'.

"He said the word 'regional' just once," Mr Haase said.

"The two key principles of this budget are the resources tax and the tobacco tax.

"What doesn't make sense is Rudd's imposed the additional cigarette tax to reduce the number of smokers, but he's telling us the increased tax on miners won't hurt the number of resources projects."

Mr Hill said the taxes were necessary for a timely return to surplus.

"Overall it was a sound, steady-as-she-goes budget. No thrills," he said.

"Like any budget there are winners and losers. The big thing is a return to surplus in 2012-13.

"Like anyone we want to see our pennies back in the bank as soon as possible, particularly in light of what's happening in Greece and Portugal."

Treasurer Wayne Swan said the return to surplus was not based on the new resources tax, which would not deliver money until 2013.

Mr Haase said the budget was "predicated on the most outrageous forecasts of growth".

Mr Hill said plenty of people in Durack were supportive of the tax, but think 40 per cent is too high a rate.

"I'm not one to say 'let's lock into the rate straight away'. That's part of the negotiations."

State Labor leader Eric Ripper said the millions of dollars put into skills and training funding would enable people here to take advantage of the economic boom.

"Money into training is always a positive. We need to focus more on training," Mr Hill said.

But Mr Ripper remained cautious about the impact of the resources tax on the mining regions.

"Western Australian growth and jobs must not be undermined," he said.

From the upper house, the budget faced strong criticism from Western Australian Liberals and Greens, who make up eight of our 12 state senate seats.

Liberal senator Alan Eggleston slammed the "wasteful spending" of the Rudd government and said the taxes to improve the budget's bottom line would kill future prosperity.

Even though the budget announced a \$652 million renewable energy fund, Greens senator Rachel Siewert said budget cuts to Landcare and Caring for Country should ring environmental alarm bells in our region.

Mr Hill said the treasury's handling of the global financial crisis had made Australia the "envy of many other nations".

Mr Haase rejected claims the budget was restrained and economically responsible.

"To suggest that the Swan leadership of treasury is fiscally responsible, is like standing outside of Flemington, talking to punter who just happened to have picked the winner of the Melbourne Cup, and calling him fiscally responsible."

BUDGET REACTIONS

“

Overall it was a sound, steady-as-she-goes budget. No thrills

— SHANE HILL
LABOR DURACK CANDIDATE

“

There is nothing in this budget for regional Australia

— BARRY HAASE
LIBERAL DURACK CANDIDATE