



# Budget was 'shameless con', MPs

**LEIGH DAWSON**

TWO leading West Australian Federal Liberal Party Members of Parliament have labelled the recent Federal Budget as "a shameless con", saying Kevin Rudd's proposed return to surplus in 2012-2013 is wishful thinking.

Federal MP Barry Haase and Senator Alan Eggleston said the Prime Minister was conning the ignorant people of Australia with his "Robin Hood" reforms, in a bid to win back his ailing public approval.

In his budget speech, Treasurer Wayne Swan said the \$40.8 billion deficit incurred at the end of the upcoming financial year would be shaved by more than \$27 billion based on an increase in company tax receipts.

The "no-frills" budget would also slap smokers with another \$5 billion tax increase in a bid to deter people from smoking, in addition to the resource super-profits tax which was set to yield \$12 billion from 2012-13 if passed in the Senate.

It has since been announced the cigarettes tax will pay for the Federal Government's proposed \$2.2 billion investments in health – including slashing waiting times for elective surgery.

But Mr Haase said the tax increases were a necessity to correct the Government's financial mistakes.

"This really wasn't a budget speech, it was a rehash of the announcements that were made more than a week ago in response to the Henry tax review," Mr Haase said.

"Consider the hypocrisy or double standards of the budget – in 10 years (the Government) aims to reduce

smoking by imposing an additional \$2 billion tax, but we've imposed a \$9 billion tax on the mining industry and we are led to believe this will encourage commercial activity in the community."

"(Rudd) thinks he can flog this to an ignorant south-eastern population, but those jobs in Melbourne and Sydney also benefit from the wealth of Western Australia and mining activities.

"If you dig down deeper (the Government) had to put in another \$1 billion to house the refugees that wouldn't be here if he hadn't screwed up the policy."

Mr Eggleston expressed concern the Australian people would have to foot the peak debt bill of \$93.7 billion to pay for Mr Rudd's spending spree.

He was also critical of the Prime Minister's capacity to make "a tough economic decision" and said the proposed super-profits tax was a dagger to the heart of the Australian economy.

"Spending in this budget will increase by \$26 billion over the next three years ... the Government will have to borrow over \$700 million a week to fund its reckless and wasteful spending," Mr Eggleston said.

WA Opposition Leader Eric Ripper said the Federal Budget would deliver a strong investment in skills, health, renewable energy and infrastructure.

"Skills training will mean more Western Australians will be capable of taking up employment opportunities that arise," he said. "Unfortunately the Barnett Government has been missing in action when it comes to investment in training throughout our State."

  
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Mr Haase throws up his arms in dismay.