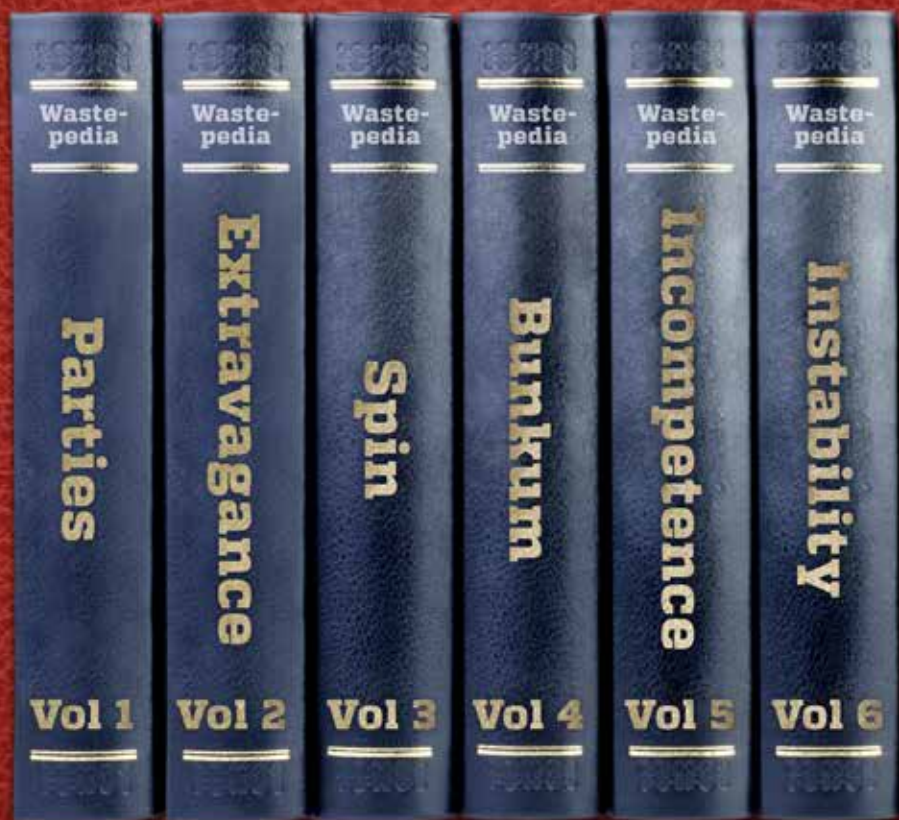


The Taxpayer's Guide to

# Liberal Waste





# The Taxpayer's Guide to Liberal Waste

## Introduction

Since their election in 2013, the Liberal Government under Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull have demanded ordinary Australians tighten their belts.

They created a completely false 'Budget Emergency' to justify constant attacks on pensioners, families and young people. They have both tried to dismantle Medicare and attack penalty rates.



But while they expect taxpayers to do the “heavy lifting”, their own behaviour has been careless and extravagant.

In two and a half years of scandal and chaos they have lost a Prime Minister, a Speaker and a swathe of Ministers. In the last six months alone there have been 14 changes to the Ministry.

All of this comes at a cost to the taxpayer. The public has a right to expect that the Government is making decisions in their best interest – but all too often this is not the case.

This is the taxpayer's guide to Liberal waste – a collection of some of the more outrageous examples of waste and indulgence under Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull.

There's plenty more that wouldn't fit here, which you will find at [www.wastewatch.org.au](http://www.wastewatch.org.au). You can also follow Labor's waste watch activities on Facebook and Twitter, or send a tip-off of your own.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pat Conroy". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Pat Conroy MP**  
Chairperson, ALP Waste Watch Committee

# A



The Government is spending millions to spruik themselves.

## Advertising

Talk about false advertising. The Liberals have spent close to a quarter of a billion dollars selling themselves over the last two years - but some of this is for policies that don't exist, infrastructure they didn't fund and blatant electioneering.

Christopher Pyne spent **\$15 million** selling higher education reform, despite the plan for **\$100,000 degrees** being blocked in the Parliament.

Warren Truss spent **\$18 million** selling his infrastructure credentials, despite being responsible for a 20% decline in investment.

Sussan Ley forked out **\$20 million** for an anti-drug ad that turned out to be virtually identical to a campaign from five years earlier.

Christopher Pyne's and Wyatt Roy's **\$28 million** 'Ideas Boom' campaign features the PM's most famous tagline and favoured Liberal slogan - what a coincidence!

The Liberals earmarked **\$18 million** to spruik their childcare changes before the measures were even approved by Parliament. This money is on top of more than **\$640,000** spent on market research, and equates to around **\$21,000** per day on advertising before parents even see a change.

Advertising of the Liberals' politically charged 'Intergenerational Report' came with a price tag of over **\$30 million**, despite the star of the campaign quitting over the lack of attention given to climate change.

(See also *Spin*)



The Liberals' health policies are flat lining.

## Ailment

The Liberals' treatment of the health sector makes us sick, literally. On top of their **\$50 billion** in cuts to health and hospitals, there's plenty of unnecessary waste.

They broke an election promise and abolished Medicare Locals at a cost of **\$44 million**, only to spend a further **\$12.9 million** setting up Primary Health Networks to replace them. That is almost **\$57 million** of valuable health dollars spent on breaking contracts and establishment costs, with not a single cent benefitting patients.

The outlay for the Medibank Private sell-off is enough to make your head spin. Mathias Cormann hired a communications adviser to help market the sale at a cost of around **\$2,000 a day**, and then spent **\$50,000** on two bland press conferences to announce details of the float.

They want to privatise Australian Hearing as well, regardless of the community backlash – they've already spent around **\$440,000** on consultants.

(See also *Spin*)

## Audit

After allocating **\$1 million** to a 'Commission of Audit' to recommend all the ways the Federal Government can cut expenditure, the Commission was so confused it spent **2.5 times its budget**.

# B



Spending \$20,000 on parties is not tightening your belt.

## Belt-loosening

His Budgets called for the tightening of taxpayer belts, but former Treasurer Joe Hockey loosened his own – he spent more than **\$20,000 on parties** to celebrate on Budget night, including \$5,000 worth of canapes and \$4,000 for fine wines. He even spent \$500 for exclusive gold-embossed invitations.

(See also *Fine Dining*)

## Branding

What's in a name? For the Liberals, it's around **\$16 million**.

More than **\$10 million** has been spent on new uniforms, stationery and signage for the paramilitary agency the Australian Border Force, including more than **\$10,000 to dispose of stationery** with old logos on it.

Malcolm Turnbull spent around **\$700,000 rebranding the National Broadband Network** organisation, changing its name from 'NBN Co' to 'nbn' to make it more "inspiring". This equates to around **\$350,000** per letter.

# C

## Chopper



Up, up and (eventually) away.

Bronwyn Bishop's fascination with aviation saw her ejected from the Speaker's chair after she spent more than **\$5,200 on a chartered helicopter flight** instead of driving for an hour to a Liberal Party fundraiser.

It's no wonder her career went into a tailspin.

Bronwyn Bishop's fascination with aviation saw her ejected from the Speaker's chair.

## Cowboys

Cowboys may be known for their love of simple living, but Members from the National party have whiskey tastes on a sarsaparilla budget.

Barnaby Joyce and Warren Truss hoed in to more than **\$11,000 worth of tucker and booze** over a four day meeting with Indonesian cattle sector representatives, including a single dinner for 27 riding buddies which came in at a **whopping \$7,000**.

(See also *Fine Dining, Junket*)



Nationals have whiskey tastes on a sarsaparilla budget.

# D

## Damages

A wild party in the Cabinet suite held on the night of the Turnbull political coup saw more than Tony Abbott's Prime Ministerial career destroyed - a bespoke marble coffee table was also worse for wear the following morning. The cost to replace the table is **\$1,000**, but with more cracks appearing in Government ranks it's only a matter of time till there is more destruction.



The Liberals have destroyed more than just political careers.

## Drum Solo

Scott Morrison authorised **\$20,000 worth of training** including drumming workshops for staff when he was Immigration Minister.

The novel training adds to some other interesting techniques such as those employed in the Social Services and Industry portfolios, whose respective Ministers authorised over **\$20,000** for workshops in role playing and yoga.



# F

## Fine Dining



Liberals like the finer things in life.

They like the finer things in life, these Liberals.

George Brandis spent **\$1,100 on dinner for four** at London restaurant Massimo, which included **\$400 worth of vintage wines**.

Former Defence Minister, David Johnston spent more than **\$6,300 entertaining stakeholders** who just coincidentally happened to be interested in bidding for government tenders.

Joe Hockey laid out a **\$50,000 degustation** for delegates at a G20 lunch in Washington, treating foreign Finance Ministers to wagyu beef and Western Australian truffles.

So keen on fineries was Tony Abbott that he even added his own hospitality officer to the payroll, despite having 16 departmental staff dedicated to **ceremonial and hospitality functions** in his department and five staff to cook for him at his official residences.

Even when travelling the ex-PM ate well – on his last visit to the Torres Strait almost **\$80,000** was spent on catering for the five day trip.

(See also G20)

# F

## Flights

When he was Prime Minister, Tony Abbott loved to fire up the Prime Ministerial VIP jet – which costs around **\$4,000 an hour to fly**.

He was caught taking a VIP flight to the **birthday party** of one of the Liberal party's biggest donors.

He also spent around **\$40,000 flying bureaucrats to a Cabinet meeting** in Perth just so he and his Ministers could attend a **\$1,000 a head Liberal Party fundraiser** on the eve of the West Australian Senate by-election.

He once used the VIP to fly to Sydney for a 20 minute press conference, at an estimated cost of **\$28,000**, despite the media being assembled in Canberra for a Parliamentary sitting week.

Even on his final flight from Canberra, en-route to Sydney to pack his belongings at Kirribilli House after being deposed by Malcolm Turnbull, Tony Abbott racked up an extra travel bill of up to **\$17,000 for an additional VIP flight** just so he didn't have to sit in the same cabin as the man who had taken his job.

# G

## Games

The Government has spent **\$45,000 on a 'Gamification Strategy'** to help make job seeking more fun. Yep, it's no wonder unemployment is so high.



## G20

No spend-a-thon can rival the Liberal's efforts in hosting the 2014 G20 Summit.

All up the conference cost the Australian taxpayer more than **\$66 million**, but not all of this was money well spent.

Multiple building upgrades were ordered at a cost of **\$9.6 million**. The cost of the conference table alone came in at **\$324,000**.

The accommodation bill was around **\$2.2 million**, more than twice the budgeted amount. Taxi costs went over budget too, coming in at **\$627,000**. Another **\$50,000** was spent on boat travel.

Employment was discussed at a seafood soiree at the MCG, at a cost of **\$18,000**. Energy was the topic at a luxury Mexican resort conference, at a cost of **\$45,000**. There was even **\$31,000 spent on coffee** - trying to stay awake, anyone?

(See also *Junket, Fine Dining*)

Unemployment is not a game.



# Hashtag



Tony Abbott calls it electronic graffiti...but the Liberals are responsible for some of the most lol-worthy moments in the #auspol Twittersphere.

**#choppergate #marblegate #borderfarce  
#ideasboom #ThanksTony #PutYourIronsOut  
#libspill #ImStickingWithTony #PutOutYourOnions  
#returnbull**

#NuffSaid.

# Hi-vis

The Coalition love a photo op.

Warren Truss' penchant for a good news story cost taxpayers more than **\$3,200** which he spent on props for press conferences, such as **maps, banners, hard hats and vests.**

Sussan Ley also donned the hi-vis for the **pouring of a concrete slab** to mark the start of construction of the \$56 million Palmerston Hospital project... but it turns out it was in the wrong spot and had to be **dug up within days of the stunt.**

# Hotel

Much like their policies, the Liberals have a habit of making **empty promises** when it comes to hotel rooms.

Christopher Pyne spent **\$1,352 on a room for just a few hours** while he waited for a flight out of the UK.

Tony Abbott's Torres Strait visit cost taxpayers **\$37,000 for unused hotel rooms** when he changed his mind about arrival dates.

And he sanctioned **\$40,000 for departmental staff** to stay and sample all New York's Waldorf Astoria had to offer ahead of the Brisbane G20.

(See also *Slumming It* and *Refurbishments*)



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# iSpend

The Liberals have spent more than **\$8 million on tablet devices** during their term of Government. Meanwhile, in storage, 60,000 pieces of unused electronic equipment lay in storage at an estimated cost of **\$8.8 million**.

(See also *Losers*)



Don't ask about the metadata.

# J

## Joyride

Let's hope Kevin Andrews doesn't lose his wallet, because under his watch the Department of Defence lost a fuel card, took a year to register that it was missing, and then found more than **half a million dollars worth of stolen goods** had been racked up on it.

Is it possible the oversight occurred due to constant changes in the Department, which has endured three Defence Ministers in as many years?

(See also *Losers*)

## Junket

The ACCC's international conference saw taxpayers foot the bill. Mathias Cormann authorised around **\$50,000** to be spent on cocktails and canapes, **\$32,000** for a Sydney Harbour cruise and **\$263,000** for meeting facilities in a fancy hotel.

# K

## Koalas

They're an Australian icon but get a Liberal near one and they'll pay anything for a cuddle.

Julie Bishop has spent over **\$400,000 on events featuring koalas and other marsupials**. This includes **\$133,000** to fly four Koalas to stay at the Singapore Zoo (along with a twice weekly supply of eucalyptus). She posed with Alfie the Koala during a **\$62,500 a day tour** of Kangaroo Island with foreign diplomats. Wombats and Kangaroos were also special guests during a three day diplomatic tour of Western Australia, part of a total cost of **\$150,000**.

Not to be out-cuddled, Tony Abbott spent **\$24,000** at the G20 Summit in Brisbane for foreign heads of state to get snuggly with Blinky and his mates.

(See also *Rockstar*)

Liberals will pay anything for a koala cuddle.



# L

## Library

George Brandis may call himself 'Minister for Books', but that doesn't excuse spending **\$16,000** on a bookcase for his bush ballads.

Though his library would pale in comparison, Barnaby Joyce spent **\$200 on a book** called *How to be a Minister* (pretty sure he hasn't read it yet).

## Lords

A Freedom of Information request doth decree, hear ye, hear ye, that Sir Tony, his Chief of Staff, Peta Credlin and three advisers supped on a **\$2,285** dinner with his old chum Lord Alexander Downer of Baghdad in jolly old London town (where such honours as Knights and Dames belongeth).

Ye Olde Liberals doth spend your sovereigns.





# Losers

The Liberals have lost a lot in this term of Government – their economic credibility, their legislative agenda, their Speaker, their Prime Minister and a bunch of Ministers.

But they also managed to **lose more than \$100,000 worth of communications and IT equipment.**

Mobile phones, laptops, remote access tokens and tablet devices were among the goods most lost, misplaced or stolen from Ministerial and departmental staff last year.

In addition, around **\$900,000 was defrauded** from the Human Services' portfolio under the Liberal's watch, with a further **\$100,000** across remaining Departments.



The Liberals and taxpayer funds are not a perfect couple.

# Lovers

Money can't buy you love, not even if you're a Liberal.

The Government was forced to axe its **\$20 million** marriage counselling program when it became obvious it was grossly underutilised – but despite the vouchers costing the government **\$846,000**, a further **\$1.3 million** was spent administering the program, and that didn't stop Scott Morrison wanting to spend almost **\$450,000** to review the scrapped policy.

# M

## Media

For a gaffe-prone Government, the Liberals have spent a lot of money on media monitoring and training. In fact, the Liberals spent almost **\$7 million on media monitoring** in one year alone.

This included the notoriously secretive Immigration Minister, Scott Morrison, who decided 'ego-surfing' wasn't an on-water matter – he spent close to **\$120,000** in his first year as a Minister, more than double the amount of the Foreign Minister.

His successor, the hapless Peter Dutton, blamed a poorly worded press release for his nonsensical 'Operation Fortitude', joked about climate change in front of a boom mike, and sent a nasty text message to a journalist by mistake – so it's a pity that the **\$79,000** he spent on media training for senior executives didn't include any tips for him.

(See also *Advertising, Spin*)

## Militarisation

Peter Dutton's quest to militarise the Australian Border Force has seen more than **\$1.3 million** spent on medals – more than the Department of Defence.



The Liberals spent more on medals for the Australian Border Force than for the Department of Defence.

N

## New digs

Barnaby Joyce spent **\$670,000** to set up offices closer to home, including his Ministerial office.

He is now on a quest to move **more Canberra-based agencies** to his home town.

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O

## Out of here

Fearing he'd be too focused on "getting even" if he stayed in politics, ousted Treasurer Joe Hockey resigned last year sparking a by-election for his safe Liberal seat of North Sydney.

The Government spent close to **half a million dollars** administering the election, including lanyards, advertising, printing and venue hire for the by-election.

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P

## Pool

Joe Hockey flew to Darwin for a press conference to announce he was spending **\$4.4 million** to shorten a pool by 30 centimetres.

# P

## Puppies

Peter Dutton bought **\$15,000 worth of toy dogs** with Australian Border Force branding, part of a **\$6 million** rebadging of his Department.



Operation Puppy Love.

# Q

## Quandaries

Barnaby Joyce's changing of the official record of Parliament, Hansard, has triggered an **\$80,000 review of procedures** in his Department after the Minister refused to respond appropriately to a Freedom of Information request.

Warren Truss also spent **\$14,000 on lawyers** to fight an FOI request into the Perth Freight Link during his time as Infrastructure Minister.

(See also *Zippered Lips*)

# R

## Refurbishments

Taxpayers spend a pretty penny on up keeping the Prime Ministerial suites, including **\$26,000 to polish a table** at the Lodge and **\$21,000 worth of pillows and curtains** for the Prime Ministerial Office.

Not be outdone, Former Speaker Bronwyn Bishop spent **\$23,000** installing a “hot box” and upgrading the kitchen in her Parliament House office and was found to have ordered a “mobile bar” to her suite on numerous occasions.



## Rock Star

Julie Bishop’s rock star antics are the stuff of legend in Liberal ranks – and like a true celebrity she makes sure her entourage is always invited to her A-list events.

The Foreign Minister spent over **\$50,000 a day** touring WA with 70 Canberra-based diplomats, but made sure she took a dozen staff along with her. On a \$125,000, two day tour of South Australia she took nine staff and a few State Liberal MPs with her, which included **\$38,000 for meals**.

Tony Abbott was partial to a good spread, too. He spent around **\$2 million entertaining** foreign Heads of State and dignitaries during his time as PM, including **\$24,000 for a bouquet of flowers** to welcome Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Australia in style.

Even the Human Services Minister managed to spend over **\$1 million on biscuits, tea and coffee** last year.

(See also *Koalas*)



Julie Bishop’s wasteful spending makes us crankier than the angry red face emoji.

# S

## Shībài

Simon Birmingham's **\$10 million app** to teach Mandarin and Indonesian to pre-schoolers has an uptake of less than four per cent, costing around **\$27,000 per day**.

We say 'Shībài' (which means failure in Mandarin).



## Slumming It

As PM, Tony Abbott congratulated himself for choosing modest lodgings at the Australian Federal Police Headquarters while the Lodge's **\$11.6 million worth of renovations** were completed.

Unfortunately, a luxury home in Canberra was also rented for him at a cost of around **\$130,000** - or around **\$1,666 per night** for the house to sit empty for three months.

And despite the Prime Minister's department going on a Backyard Blitz, almost doubling the amount spent on **grounds maintenance at Kirribilli house to \$600,000** for a three year contract, it's not good enough for Malcolm Turnbull - he chooses instead to live in his **multi-million dollar waterfront mansion** in Sydney.

A modest Liberal residence.



# Spin

There is no expense spared when it comes to the Liberals propaganda.

When he was Treasurer, Joe Hockey parted with **\$650,000** to make his Tax White Paper palatable to taxpayers.

As Immigration Minister, Scott Morrison spent **\$330,000** on a state of the art media briefing room, including **\$800** for a door knob, despite refusing to actually disclose information to the media.

Tony Abbott kitted out his media advisers with **\$15,000** worth of top-notch videography equipment, though somebody should have told Jamie Briggs, who spent **\$75,000 on video** services when he was Infrastructure Minister.

Despite very clearly proposing to cut the pension, Tony Abbott spent **\$1.2 million to send a letter** to pensioners claiming he wasn't.

And despite wanting to be the country's first self-proclaimed Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs, only national media were invited to join Tony Abbott's most recent tour of the Torres Strait with **local news outlets snubbed**.

(See also *Advertising, Media Monitoring*)

No expense is spared for Liberal propaganda.

# T

## Tardy

The Liberals racked up **more than \$100,000** in late fees to creditors last year. Ministers kept businesses waiting for payment for services such as recruitment, relocation, repairs, travel, education, security, and IT services.



# U

## Unused space

The Liberals' pursuit of 'Small Government' has reached absurd proportions, with around 34,000 work spaces left vacant in Government offices across the country costing the taxpayer around **\$170 million a year**.



# V

## Venezia

Attorney-General George Brandis spent **\$6,000 for a water taxi** to paddle through Venetian canals while on a tour of Italy, which involved opening art gallery exhibits.

\$6,000 on a water taxi?  
Non bene.



# W

## War

Changes to departmental names following the 2013 Election were often unnecessary and politically driven. This resulted in more than **\$450,000 worth of signage and stationery costs**.

## Windfarm

Greg Hunt's controversial Windfarm Commissioner will be paid a **\$205,000 annual salary** to handle complaints about windfarms.

## Wrestling

While Liberals and Nationals wrestle for coveted Ministerial positions, the taxpayer foots the bill for the knock on effect of portfolio and title changes.

The Government has admitted around **\$30,000 was spent updating business cards, letterhead, signage and websites** following the Turnbull coup and Ministry appointments.



Liberals wrestle for Ministerial positions.

# X

## Xmas

The Future Fund's Christmas parties are a raging good time. In 2013, the agency marked the holy festival with an **\$8,000 party at a burlesque bar**. The following year was also a night to remember, with **\$11,000 spent on a booze-up at the Sheraton**.

## (e)Xodus

The mass exodus of Liberal staffers as a result of constant Ministerial reshuffles has cost more than **\$3.3 million in severance payments to staffers**.

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# Y

## Yarn

Taxpayers were slugged more than **\$18,000 for a one hour meeting** about ways to curb waste within the Federation, during a sitting of the Prime Minister's advisory panel in Melbourne last year.



Only the Liberals could waste money in discussions on efficiency.

# Z

## Zipped Lips

George Brandis is spending **tens of thousands** of dollars to fight his diary being made public through a Freedom of Information request.



For more examples of  
Liberal waste go to  
[www.wastewatch.org.au](http://www.wastewatch.org.au)

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