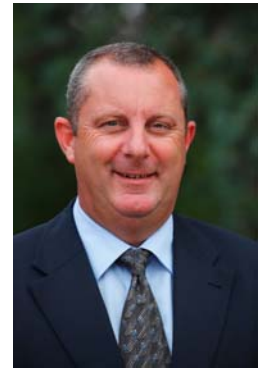


# Michael Johnsen

The Nationals Spokesperson for Hunter



## Newspaper Editorial

18 May 2011

### 2011 - Not the Year of the Hunter

The recent federal budget handed down by the Gillard government is nothing but a slap in the face for the Hunter.

Instead of advocating on behalf of the Hunter electorate, the local Member and Chief Government Whimp, Joel Fitzgibbon is a lame duck in this parliament.

In the Hunter we are exposed to the imposts the government is pursuing, such as a carbon tax and mining tax, both of which put jobs at risk and place added pressure on the cost of living. And we get a paltry \$2 million over three years for the Scone Rail Overpass - for planning only.

My discussions with representatives of both the Australian Rail Track Corporation and the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority have been useful in determining the value of the proposed spend on the Scone Rail Overpass study.

It's way over the top and could be done in a few months at around 25% of that cost.

One can only assume the \$2 million is a figure used to placate the noise coming from the Hunter and hide the incompetence and lack of influence of the local member.

Following are some examples of the costs to the Hunter electorate alone (not an exhaustive list by any means), of the federal government's lack of economic management. These are national figures and denote the Hunter's share, based on the number of registered voters;

Roof Insulation - Initial Program and Fix	=	\$ 22,089,491
Interest on Government Debt 2012/13	=	\$ 42,229,909
BER Overspend (above average cost per m2)	=	\$ 64,969,091
Proposed Mining Tax	=	\$3,000,000,000
Total above	=	\$3,129,288,491
Plus next year lost opportunity....		
2012 Budget Deficit	=	\$ 324,845,456

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Our federal government representative (as opposed to the real job of being the electorate representative), will have you believe that the challenges we face as a society are due to the global financial crisis. Clearly, when you look at the figures shown, they do not understand what gross mismanagement does and the opportunity cost to our community.

If federal government members really care about representing our community and its interests, we would have received more than 0.06% of what may be considered, our fair share.

We don't expect 100%. As a society we all agree that cross subsidisation is needed - to provide equality of access for the public to utilise services such as health, education, roads, rail, etc.. But - 0.06% - they must be joking.

We are rapidly descending into a familiar pattern of Labor racking up debt through mismanagement, the Coalition having to repay it then look to invest to get things back on track.

Only when the state election results are replicated on a federal level, will we have any chance of restoring equity in the Hunter and set our sights on a long term vision for local growth and prosperity.