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**OPINION PIECE**

**TASMANIA NEEDS ADVOCATES NOT ABBOTT APOLOGISTS**

*["No cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC"](#)* – the commitment of a would-be Prime Minister on the eve of a federal election.

Sixteen months later and a \$1.6 billion cut to health and education has led to the slashing of teachers and nurses in Tasmania and a campaign to cut support for university students by 20 per cent looms large.

Pensions have been cut, the ABC has been cut, the petrol tax has gone up, and a new GP tax leaves a litany of broken promises impacting the daily budget of every Tasmanian.

The delivery on these promises and commitments specific to Tasmania by our trio of Liberal MPs, Eric Hutchinson, Brett Whiteley and Andrew Nikolic stands as an indication of their influence within the Federal Government.

So what have the Liberals in Government actually done for Tasmania?

They promised to create new jobs.

But their signature jobs program, subsidising 2000 long-term unemployed Tasmanians into work over two years, has created just 114 positions in year one. A program to support older workers has generated a meagre 15 positions. By their own figures they have failed.

Tasmania has the highest unemployment rate and the lowest participation rate in the country and more than one in five young Tasmanians in Devonport, Burnie and the South-East can't find work.

This Government cut our Local Employment Coordinators and slashed \$1 billion for Trade Training Centres across the country leaving 64 Tasmanian Schools without the ability to support young people into trades.

They promised to tackle the cost of moving freight and passengers across Bass Strait. But nearly 12 months later they have failed to respond to a report they commissioned, let alone do anything about it.

A \$38 million commitment to extend the Hobart Airport runway still has no start date or a detailed business case and we are now the only capital city airport without a permanent federal police presence.

Not one cent of the \$16 million for a new Cadburys visitor centre has been seen, even though the business case is with the department.

They promised to make Hobart the ["world class centre for Antarctic research and capabilities"](#) and then cut our new research vessel's operating days in half and slashed jobs at CSIRO.

The Midland Highway funding was cut by \$100 million.

At risk of simply publishing an endless list of failed Liberal promises, it is also important to remember that the opportunities for Tasmania do in fact exist.

In government Labor almost doubled infrastructure spending in Tasmania to an unprecedented level.

We developed a long term economic plan and invested in emerging industries that facilitated real opportunities and jobs in mining, fisheries and agriculture.

Labor's investments in projects like the Three Capes Track, ranked as one of the world's hottest new tourist experiences, are now helping Tasmanian businesses take advantage of a growing tourism market.

But these things don't just happen, they take confidence in our economy from private investors and they take leadership from government to drive innovation.

Delivering Labor's \$100 million Jobs and Growth Plan, including the \$11 million industry and innovation fund and \$4.5 million Tourism Fund; delivering the NBN Tasmania was promised; and committing to new irrigation schemes our farmers are calling out for are all part of the puzzle.

Labor in government provided Tasmania with unprecedented investment and opened up new areas of growth but Mr Hutchinson, Mr Whiteley and Mr Nikolic are fast running out of time to take advantage of these opportunities.

Tasmania needs advocates in Federal parliament, not Abbott apologists and more cuts.

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