



TRANSCRIPT

ACCI CHIEF EXECUTIVE PETER ANDERSON ON ABC TV'S "LATELINE" PROGRAM - 3 SEPTEMBER 2009 - Award Modernisation

RAFAEL EPSTEIN, PRESENTER: There's been an embarrassing setback for the Government's promotion of its stimulus package.

Five thousand signs proclaiming the initiative will have to be changed to satisfy the nation's campaign advertising laws.

The signs have been set up outside primary schools where work is beginning.

But the Opposition's complaint against what it calls blatant government advertising has succeeded.

From Canberra, Hayden Cooper reports.

HAYDEN COOPER, REPORTER: When stimulus comes to a school near you, there's no doubting who's behind it. But there's a problem with the Government's policy of self-promotion and Mark Arbib is the minister sent to explain it.

SEN. MARK ARBIB, EMPLOYMENT PARTICIPATION MINISTER: Some signs will need to be moved.

HAYDEN COOPER: Five thousand are already in place outside the nation's primary schools. The Opposition's complaint is that they'll stay there until after the federal election at schools that double as polling places.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE, OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN: The signs are blatantly and transparently pro-Government. The signs shouldn't be in the place at all.

HAYDEN COOPER: And the Electoral Commission has decided it's a valid point. One by one the signs will be altered to add an authorisation like the ones used in other government ads.

SEN. MARK ARBIB: More than likely it will mean placing sticker, an authorisation sticker on the signage. During an election campaign it might mean covering up the signs, or moving them if they are within six metres of a polling place.

CHRISTOPHER PYNE: This is another bungle in a long list of bungles, from a bungling minister.

SEN. MARK ARBIB: If the Liberal Party think that this is some sort of win, they are kidding themselves.

HAYDEN COOPER: The Liberal Party is wrestling with itself on the question of winding back the stimulus dollars yet to be spent. In the west the state Liberal Government says it's a bad idea.

TROY BUSWELL, WA TREASURER: No I think that would be far too premature to argue for the Commonwealth to pull back on a stimulatory package. We see evidence of that here.

HAYDEN COOPER: But that's not the message from his federal counterparts.

JOE HOCKEY, SHADOW TREASURER: We have repeatedly called on the Government to reduce the stimulus it is pumping into the economy.

MALCOLM TURNBULL, OPPOSITION LEADER: Our criticism of the stimulus remains the same, that they spent too much money and in a very poorly targeted way.

HAYDEN COOPER: So on both sides it seems the politics of economic stimulus is not without its challenges. But for the Government the back down on school signs is an embarrassing mistake it didn't need, and it will be visible for many months to come.

Next year could bring another trap too, on the familiar topics of industrial relations. The Government's campaign to reduce the number of workplace awards from 2,000 to just 130 is proving challenging because no one wants to be worse off. But some people will be.

KEVIN RUDD, PRIME MINISTER: What Julia has said and I have said throughout this is our objective is to have a system where employees and employers are not disadvantaged by this system.

HAYDEN COOPER: The Industrial Relations Commission's verdict that some workers will lose out and some employers will too has everyone worried.

PETER ANDERSON, CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY: The Industrial Relations Commission has been handed a hand grenade by the Government's conflicting instructions. Employers are unfortunately the meat in the sandwich.

HAYDEN COOPER: It's one contest headed for a showdown.

Hayden Cooper, Lateline.