



More spin than a Hoover washing machine

These days, it seems, all the important changes happen in such a rush. In the age of mass media, our politicians (federal, state and local) have learned how to get what they want almost every time, regardless of what the people want.

Our government has mastered the art of spin. Discussion is discouraged and legislation is hurried through. Most worrying of all, there is no longer a dynamic and effective opposition.

John Howard is spending millions of our tax money on an advertising campaign to convince us that the changes to the Industrial Relations laws will be good for us.

Recently, Mr Howard was asked about the amount the government had spent on the advertising campaign. He casually said it was in the mid to high 30s. Millions, that is.

And where is the opposition? Well, Kim Beazley is too busy agreeing with the government to ensure the passage of the anti-terror laws.

Governments and politicians are not the only spin-masters at work. Sydney property lawyer David Singer has been learning one or two tricks from the Prime Minister.

He has advocated for land tax reform in NSW for some time now. He wants a 'fairer' and 'simpler' land tax system. Fairer and simpler? Doesn't that sound just like those 'Work Choices' ads?

Mr Singer, often referred to by the media as a land tax

'activist' has been pushing for land tax reform ever since he lodged a complaint with the NSW Ombudsman in 2004.

In that complaint and the subsequent 36 letters he sent to the ombudsman, he explained that the current valuation system was unreliable and therefore land values should not be the basis for assessing land tax. ("Whose side is David Singer on?" Pages 14).

His 'fairer' and 'simpler' system would see all property owners paying land tax as a percentage of the council rates they pay.

Currently 3 per cent of all NSW properties pay land tax. Mr Singer's proposed changes mean all property owners will pay land tax.

This will only benefit a relatively small number of property investors who may currently pay up to \$10,000 per year in land tax. They will reduce their liability to as little as \$350. That's because the other 97 per cent who currently pay no land tax will subsidise them.

This is also at a time when councils have indicated their desperate need to raise rates to keep up with the needs of a growing population ("We want a share of the GST: councils" Page 12).

Mr Singer, we don't want a 'fairer' or 'simpler' land tax system, and Mr Howard, it goes the same for the Industrial Relations laws.



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