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## Federal election 2016: \$3bn dodge dismantles credibility

28 June 2016

Superannuation is one policy area that means a lot to certain people, particularly those in retirement and those heading for retirement. It is a potential vote-changer.

Until Labor's release of its costings on Sunday, many people would have taken the view that Labor's superannuation policy had more to commend itself than the government's raft of superannuation changes announced in this year's budget.

After all, Labor's policy, which was released some 18 months ago, had fewer moving parts and there was no intention to make any change to the annual concessional cap or to introduce a backdated, lifetime non-concessional cap.

To be sure, there was the 15 per cent tax on retirement superannuation earnings over \$75,000 a year, although there are serious question marks over the workability of this proposal. But it is not too different from the government's policy of limiting tax-free superannuation accounts to \$1.6 million.

After Sunday, however, Labor's superannuation policy is completely up in the air. It wants to take the budget savings of the government's superannuation changes — close to \$3 billion a year — but won't be bothering to release any details of its policy before the election.

Opposition Treasury spokesman Chris Bowen could only make this weak statement: "Given Labor's concerns about the government's superannuation changes, including retrospective elements, Labor would consult with stakeholders and take a broader examination of all these measures on coming to government."

This is as clear as mud. Labor won't be telling anyone what the superannuation measures will be, leaving it to some vague examination and stakeholder consultation, were Labor to win government. So much for the positive policy on superannuation released more than 18 months ago — voters are being told to ignore that and just hang on to their hats.

But there's more. Under pressure from public sector unions, Labor has also ditched the government's efficiency dividend announced in the budget. But again, it wants to count the savings, which are around \$1.4bn over the forward estimates.

Evidently, removing public sector waste and reducing the use of outside consultants will get Labor there without the loss of a single public sector job. Again, pull the other one. Counting the savings and making vague references about how you might get there just doesn't cut it.

Labor is really plumbing new depths when it comes to putting up policies for voters' consideration — assume the same budget savings but don't worry about outlining any of the details.

For those with a keen interest in superannuation, it really now boils down to the devil and the deep blue sea when it comes to choosing between the Coalition and Labor.

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