



Libs fail to curb media costs

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The State Government has failed to meet self-imposed targets to reduce spending on media monitoring and abandoned efforts to bring the process in-house.

Four years ago, the Government justified an expansion of its internal media monitoring unit by saying it would cut the need for departments to contract externally for the service, saving taxpayers \$1 million a

year. But analysis of parliamentary documents shows that rather than being progressively phased out, expenditure on external media monitoring services has increased from \$1.35 million in 2013-14 to \$1.64 million last financial year.

About \$1.1 million has been spent this financial year between July and February.

The increase comes despite departments having access to the Department of the Premier

and Cabinet's centralised MMU, which employs 13 people full-time to monitor the Government's messages.

Last year, the DPC identified media monitoring as the type of "non-essential spending" that departments needed to target in lean times, and vowed to slash its own spending on the MMU 14 per cent from \$1.36 million in 2013-14 to \$1.16 million last financial year.

Instead, the cost of running the MMU rose 3 per cent to \$1.4 million last year.

Labor frontbencher Rita Saffioti said the figures showed the Government was not only "addicted to spin" but also incapable of following through on a Budget strategy.

"It's excessive to have your own media monitoring unit and buy the same information from external services," she said.

"It's no wonder the Government can't manage the Budget,

because they continue to allow these excesses to grow."

Colin Barnett said the MMU provided a limited service of broadcast summaries of daily news bulletins and talkback radio. "Some government agencies have a need for transcripts of news reports and therefore use external services," the Premier said.

Mr Barnett said the MMU was upgraded because it was at the end of its useful life and needed replacing to be of use to ministers, but "upgrades and ancillary costs of this were greater than anticipated".