GetUp cashed-up for election

EXCLUSIVE
JOHN ROLFE

LEFT-wing activist group GetUp is amassing a multimillion-dollar war chest to attack Coalition MPs including Tony Abbott and Peter Dutton at the looming federal election.

GetUp’s latest financial report, recently filed with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, shows donations rose about 20 per cent in 2017-18 to $9.8 million, up from $8.3 million.

According to the group’s annual report, to be released today, the jump was the product of an increase in the average donation – from $44 to $50 – along with a rise in the number of contributions from 57,000 to 65,000.

“It’s clear that when politicians bicker among themselves while blocking action on the issues that matter, like climate change, you’ll see an uptick in the number of people looking to have their voice heard,” GetUp national director Paul Oostin said.

“Everyday people are desperate for new ways to hold politicians to account and that is reflected in our accounts.”

Last week The Advertiser reported Getup had put SA Liberal MPs in marginal seats Nicole Flint (Boothby) and Rowan Ramsay (Grey) on its election hit list.

The organisation has more than 63,000 members in SA after gaining traction during the Mayo by-election.

Trends in earlier accounts suggest GetUp enjoys a boost in donation rates in financial years containing a federal election, meaning it may be able to raise as much as $12 million in 2018-19.

“Certainly in election times, GetUp members recognise the opportunity to affect change on the issues that are important to them,” Mr Oostin said.

GetUp opposes new coal mines, offshore detention and Australia Day being on January 26. It fights for the ABC and a publicly-funded clean energy retailer. It says Australia does not need “meaningful government surpluses”. Its policy section says this is because “a government who issues debt in a currency they control is never at risk of default”.

While it says its “work is driven by values, not party politics”, its main focus this year will be getting rid of as many high-profile members of the Morrison Government as possible.

It is asking visitors to its website to “help determine which hard right MPs GetUp targets in the upcoming federal election” by voting for the top three they want ousted.

Home Affairs Minister Mr Dutton, who represents the north Brisbane seat of Dickson, is leading the vote, followed by Tony Abbott. GetUp has already run “calling parties” into the former prime minister’s North Sydney seat of Warringah. North Queensland’s George Christensen is running third.

University of Sydney political sociologist Professor Ariadne Vromen said these were high times for GetUp, which she has studied. “GetUp is a significant factor in elections,” Prof Vromen said.