

More aid cuts? It's news to Julie Bishop

Author : Ashlee Betteridge

Date : March 23, 2015

In [an article today in *The Australian*](#) on the newly launched innovation hub at DFAT (which we'll have more on soon), the newspaper's foreign affairs editor Greg Sheridan announced that there would be further aid cuts in May, on top of those announced in the MYEFO last year ([the largest cuts ever](#)).

Sheridan dropped the line into his article extolling the virtues of the new innovation hub: "The \$140m outlay over four years for the innovationXchange centre will come from the overall aid budget, which *The Australian* understands is likely to suffer a further small cut in the May budget."

His casual reference makes it seem as though this fact is well-known in Coalition circles.

But the Foreign Minister herself claims she has heard nothing of it.

As the *Australian Financial Review* [described it](#), Ms Bishop was "clearly peeved" when she [told Radio National this morning](#) that Sheridan's article was the first time she had heard about any further cuts to aid.

"Well I'm not aware of that detail, so I read that for the first time in Greg Sheridan's column today," Ms Bishop said.

When asked if she knew of further cuts, she said: "Well you'd hope I wouldn't you, so I'll certainly be taking that up with the Treasurer to find out the source of that story."

If this sounds familiar, it is because the scenario is [very similar to what happened in the lead-up to the MYEFO last year](#), right down to the tip-off in *The Australian* by Sheridan.

Others might speculate on what this apparent lack of communication means for the unity of Cabinet, on what it means about Julie Bishop's ability to influence her colleagues and exert control over her portfolio and on who has leaked this tidbit to Sheridan. But for those in aid, the more pressing questions are: is it going to happen, and how much will go this time?

Update: Bishop has reportedly [been assured](#) by Treasurer Joe Hockey that there will be no further cuts to aid, while Finance Minister Mathias Cormann has also [denied cuts](#). The Opposition has strongly [criticised the confusion](#).