



MR RUDD'S ETS BACK-FLIP

Mr Rudd cannot give a speech or statement to the press without stating that he *"makes no apology"* for what he is announcing, re-announcing, changing, scrapping or abandoning. He *"makes no apology"* for his wasteful and mismanaged school spending, for his failed green loans scheme or for his disastrous home insulation scheme.

In the space of a single answer in question time, Mr Rudd described his immigration and border protection policy as *"unapologetically tough"* and *"unapologetically humane."* And Kevin Rudd made *"no apology"* for seeking to rush the ETS legislation before Copenhagen. He now *"makes no apology"* for delaying it.

How strange. Climate change was meant to be the *"great moral and economic challenge of our time"*.

Any inaction or delay to the ETS tax was *"absolute political cowardice, absolute failure of leadership and absolute lack of logic"*. We were told that *"Australia's fundamental economic and environmental interests lie in action. The argument that we must not act until others do is an argument that has been used by political cowards since time immemorial"*.

Climate change was the great big *"threat to our people, our nation and our planet"*, one which would *"permanently affect our way of life"*. Our only choice was a great big new tax on everything.

The Prime Minister's back-flip could not be more spectacular.

Mr Rudd lacks the courage to champion the policy which was to define his prime ministership. Mr Rudd's convictions have echoes of that old Groucho Marx line, *"I've got principles. And if you don't like them... well, I have others."* His government has dramatically stumbled. His retreat from what was supposedly the most important policy facing Australia betrays the moral and political cowardice of a panicked government.

The Prime Minister will not fight for his ETS, nor fully abandon it, casting a permanent shadow over the credibility of a government whose only competence lies in spin.

Climate Change Minister Penny Wong ridiculed anyone who erred on the side of caution, *"The fact is the longer we delay our response to climate change, the harder our job will become and the more it will cost; we cannot run and we cannot hide"*.

The Rudd Government is running and hiding from its most important policy. The only commitment that Mr Rudd has maintained is to doublespeak; the new announcement was not so much a delay but a *"point of implementation"* being *"extended"*.

Mr Rudd's great big new tax is not just delayed to 2013 but has probably been consigned to history. Having branded his ETS policy as one of the *"most important structural reforms to our economy in a generation"*, Mr Rudd is hung by his own rhetoric. He has just dumped his ETS without a fight.

Having now adopted a wait and see approach, Mr Rudd's push to pass the ETS tax before Copenhagen looks even more reckless and irresponsible. The Prime Minister's obsession with his multilateral credentials at Copenhagen contributes to a growing concern about his foreign policy approach and consistent neglect of key bilateral relationships.

Putting symbolism before substance and politics before policy, lurching from broken promise to botched program to policy reversal, Mr Rudd's Government is chaotic. The endless photos with children, the cynical use of the backdrop of church on Sundays and the constant spin is wearing thin.

It turns out that the greatest moral challenge of our time is just a little bit less important than Mr Rudd's own re-election.



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