LIVENEWS

EXCLUSIVE: Labor backflip on Brethren

Yoni Bashan

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PHOTOS: See where the money is going

The shadowy Exclusive Brethren religious sect has been guaranteed another $10 million in taxpayer funding for its school campuses, despite being branded an "extremist cult" which "breaks up families" by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd before the election.

In a stunning turnaround which could spark a rift inside Government ranks, Labor will continue bankrolling dozens of Brethren schools, even though it launched several blistering attacks on the group and demanded a review of its campus funding arrangements while in opposition.

According to budget estimate figures obtained by Livenews.com.au, more than $35 million dollars has been set aside for the sect's 31 schools since 2005.

In New South Wales there are 17 campuses, organised under the centralised Meadowbank Education Trust (MET), which received more than $4 million last year.

The figure is expected to rise by $300,000 under Labor while, nationally, Brethren schools will receive an estimated $10,106,948 in 2008.

The PM has been backed into a corner over the issue after vowing to maintain funding levels for all non-government schools in a bid to win office.

However, Kevin Rudd has raised serious concerns about the Exclusive Brethren in the past and slammed their teaching ideologies as counter-productive for students.
"I have real reservations having federal taxpayers' money going into those sorts of schools," Mr Rudd said in 2006.

"Based on my advice, [they] actively discourage children from using information technology [and] from learning how to use computers properly because they will provide avenues of contact with the outside world."

The decision is also likely to anger Left faction leader Anthony Albanese who's known for his bitter campaigns against the conservative sect.

Brethren students are discouraged from using computers and the Internet to minimise their contact with the outside world.

Critics say the funding decision flies in the face of Labor's "Education Revolution", which is centred around modern technology like computers.

Brethren officials say the technology is an integral part of their teaching agenda.

But Greens senator Christine Milne says it's just a ploy to receive more taxpayer-funded handouts, which are only provided if schools meet strict curriculum guidelines. election.

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COMMENTS

Monday, 14 January 2008

> I believe Mr Rudd is just about to show us what a great big "lily liver" he really is. Fancy funding an education system as dysfunctional as that perpetrated by the Brethren after beating up the so-called "Education Revolution' Labor is soft on hard decisions but then, nothings changed.

Posted by: Mike Dennis, Bella Vista

Reply

Monday, 14 January 2008

> There has been much untruth circulated about Brethern,why persecute christian folk who desire to bring up their children under biblical teaching,if there is funding for Schools they are entitled to their share from Government.The Brethern are not the monsters the press and general public make them out to be.

Posted by: Peter Millar, Banora Point N.S.W. 2486

Monday, 14 January 2008

> Any schools that practice extremism should never be allowed to become part of this society, they need to go back to their own country and do it there. I am sick of do gooders supporting this behaviour.Keep this place free of radical views.We should be able to live life to the fullest without fear or favour, which too often this doesn't appear to be the case. We have our own schools who accept everyone,these schools and yes like the one proposed at Camden is