



Kevin Rudd turns on Brethren which he once praised

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Darrell Giles

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KEVIN Rudd, who has labelled the Exclusive Brethren as "an extremist cult and sect", once congratulated Brethren members in his Brisbane electorate for their good work.

Mr Rudd, the Member for Griffith, expressed his pleasure at the Brethren's "dedication to providing the highest quality of education for your students".

A few months later, Mr Rudd was accusing the Brethren of being a dangerous cult, as having a lack of tolerance and antiquated policies, particularly with regard to the treatment of children.

Mr Rudd said the Brethren broke up families and denied education opportunities to children.

"I also believe that there are real problems with the provision of modern education to kids under their system where they, for example, are not given the full range of access to information technology," he said.

But in a letter dated May 31, 2007, Mr Rudd wrote a gushing letter to Greg Thomas, principal of the Brethren-run Agnew School in Norman Park.

"I am pleased to inform you that the application tendered by Agnew School for the provision of wordex machines and computers has been successful," he said.

"I am pleased that your dedication to providing the highest quality of education for your students has been rewarded through this funding initiative."

Mr Rudd seemed to have forgotten comments he made in September last year when he called for a review of federal funding to Brethren schools.

"The Exclusive Brethren, based on my advice, actively discourages children from using information technology, from learning how to use computers properly because they will provide avenues of contact with the outside world," he said.

Brethren members are prohibited from voting, attending university, having TVs, radios, personal computers or mobiles phones.

Brethren leader Bruce Hales said: "Contrary to what Mr Rudd claims, our schools have IT facilities and

audio-visual equipment, which the students are encouraged to use, and the level of curriculum offered provides access to tertiary studies."

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