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By scopical.com.au

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Rudd backflips on Exclusive Brethren issue

The Prime Minister has backflipped on a key issue for the second time this week, denying ex-members of religious sect the Exclusive Brethren an investigation into the organisation.

Thirty-three ex-members of the radical sect wrote to the Prime Minister in February requesting that he investigate their influence and structure, Fairfax Media reports.

Mr Rudd had prior to the election labeled the Exclusive Brethren, of whom the former Prime Minister John Howard met regularly, an extremist cult.

However in a return letter from the Prime Minister's office, Mr Rudd says that an inquiry into claims of "disproportionately high taxpayer funding of Brethren schools, dishonest political campaigning, their charitable status in relation to rate and tax exemptions, and their well-known intimidatory tactics during traumatic Family Court cases" would not go ahead.

The then Labor Leader had previously called on all four Federal police agencies to investigate the Exclusive Brethren.

In the letter, Mr Rudd's chief of staff David Epstein writes that the Prime Minister "remains concerned about the reported imposition of doctrines that weaken family bonds" and "prevent children accessing online learning tools".

Ex-members say that the Prime Minister's position is a let down, given claims of child abuse and disconnection from families.

The Exclusive Brethren has been the subject of much criticism in the last five years, including claims of political campaigning for the Liberal Party and secret donations.

The Greens are set to introduce a bill for an inquiry into the organisation's tax-exemption status and Government support.



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