

Rudd's electoral cracks about to open further

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By Paul Sheehan

The Rudd government is fighting damage-control battles on many fronts but one potentially fatal front is all its double speak about human rights. By way of confirming its double-speak, the government has introduced a stealth version of a charter of human rights.

If the government was to be honest about what it was doing, the wider electorate would likely be highly unimpressed, and we saw a clue to the electorate's thinking on Monday.

Despite the best efforts of the human rights industry, backed by an obsessional and systemic bias on the subject of asylum seekers by ABC news and current affairs, Australians have shown, by a two-to-one majority, that they want a punitive and effective deterrent to those who seek to enter Australia as refugees, yet want to bypass the off-shore refugee program.

The Rudd Government's electoral cracks could be about to deepen.

This is politically non-negotiable.

It is also political kryptonite for the Prime Minister who came to think he was a political Superman, and is now paying the price for such hubris.

The latest Herald/Nielsen poll, released this week, found a resounding 62 per cent majority of those surveyed supported a return to the previous Howard government's "Pacific solution" of moving boat people and airport visa-jumpers to third countries while their bona fides are checked and their applications for asylum status examined. This is the same policy pilloried as a national disgrace by the human rights industry, the ABC and a notable section of the print media.

But the government can count, up to a point, and has begun to belatedly toughen its response.

Within a year of its announcement that it was softening its approach to border protection and detention, the system has been filled to overflowing, with boat arrivals

now being housed in makeshift accommodation on Christmas Island, the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

Not surprisingly, the Herald/Nielsen poll found only 19 per cent supported current government policy, and 18 per cent supported the Greens' policies on this issue.

Yet the handling of boat people and asylum seekers is a core issue for the left. This, combined with Rudd and Julia Gillard's spectacular back-flip on supporting a carbon emissions trading scheme, have caused a sharp drift of voters from Labor to the Greens.

This, in turn, has translated into a sharp decline in the government's fortunes, as measured by the opinion polls. But anyone who would vote Green is highly unlikely to vote Liberal or National Party, so Coalition leader Tony Abbott still has far to travel.

Into this anti-government drift comes another blunder, a stealth and incremental introduction of a human rights charter. The Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) Bill and the Human Rights (Parliamentary Scrutiny) (Consequential Provisions) Bill are designed to make Australian laws conform as much as possible with international human rights charters.

Not surprisingly, Catherine Branson, QC, the president of the Australian Human Rights Commission, an organisation in a constant search for relevance to justify its heavy cost and basic irrelevance, welcomed the introduction of the legislation.

"The Bills will focus attention on progress in implementing and respecting our human rights obligations under all seven major human rights treaties," Branson said in a statement posted on the commission's website.

Just in case visitors to the website were not already aware of the commission's ideological obsessions, the poster woman depicted on the front page of the website is a beautiful Arab woman wearing a hijab. The perfect victim.

The human rights industry is obsessed with the subject of racism, but only a certain kind of racism - white racism. This is why the commission's fingerprints were all over one of the most divisive and outrageous lies ever told about the Australian people; that they had committed genocide against the Aboriginal people. This claim was contained in the infamous *Bringing Them Home* report of 1997, a report immediately and emotively labelled the "Stolen Generation" report by the media.

The report's appallingly shoddy methodology and unsupported hyperbole were later shredded in several subsequent landmark legal actions. Back to the stealth charter: "The commission is also pleased to see the requirement for all legislation to be accompanied by a statement of compatibility with Australia's international human rights obligations," Branson droned on.

This is the absolute core goal of a human rights charter, which has the prospect of a Shangri-la of endless human rights consultation and litigation, by the human rights industry, funded by the taxpayers who never voted for it and would be most oppressed by it.

Fortunately, the systemic disingenuousness of the human rights industry's self-interest was exposed by a priest, though a priest up to his neck in the same self-serving industry, Father Frank Brennan.

Writing in the latest newsletter of the Australia Institute, he said that although the government rejected the idea of a charter of human rights in April, it accepted other recommendations that would have much the same effect. "Parliament will legislate that each new bill is accompanied by a statement with the seven UN human rights treaties."

That is the legislation introduced last week. As a result of this legislation, Father Brennan argued, the government would inevitably have to introduce a human rights charter because of the requirements set in train by these new bills.

And so a charter by stealth. This, too, should become an election issue, and the electoral crack on human rights should open further.

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