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## Rudd stuck in the dumps

**A**t the half-way mark of the official election campaign Kevin Rudd is in trouble. Deep trouble. It won't be fixed by another school visit or the endless repetition that Tony Abbott has a secret plan to "cut, cut, cut".

Rudd has to show there is a real reason to vote for him — a reason beyond his personal desire for vindication.

After he was dumped by factional powerbrokers in 2010, Kevin Rudd nursed a fanatical desire for revenge.

He plotted his comeback. He ruthlessly undermined his successor. He determined he would humble his detractors and force them to accept his terms when he returned to the leadership.

One would be a rule change that would prohibit them ever doing again what they did when they deposed him. He would outlaw their conduct.

That would send a message

to the world that he was right and they were wrong, weak, and treacherous.

He has returned to the prime ministership. Most of his enemies are leaving parliament. He has triumphed — or so he thought.

But the one thing that people who run for election should always remember is: "It is not about me."

It is not about how they feel. It is about the millions of voters and their hopes and aspirations. They will vote on the things that worry them.

They don't care whether Kevin is vindicated. They want to know who they can trust to run the country so they can keep their jobs, afford housing,



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raise their children and live decently in retirement.

It's almost as if Rudd had no plan beyond getting the leadership. Now he seems all at sea about what he wants to do with it. He is flying around the country making promises for particular seats — money for carmakers in Adelaide, a company tax cut in the Northern

Territory. He is against the politics of negativity, unless Labor happens to be running its attack ads against Tony Abbott. He is against simplistic three-word slogans unless they are "cut, cut, cut".

People can't get a handle on the new Kevin. Or worse, they think the new Kevin might turn out to be the same as the

old one — lots of activity, and lots of talk, but very little by way of practical outcomes.

If Rudd wants to get a hold of this campaign he has to show he has changed. The only way he can do that is by acknowledging the failures. A Kevin who admitted his mistakes would make voters sit up and take notice.

When this campaign started it was all set up for that kind of approach. Labor was promising "A New Way".

This slogan was designed to allow Rudd and Labor to distance themselves from the recent past. But Rudd can't do it. He keeps wanting to justify the past rather than admit the fail-

ures and show people he has moved on. He can't convince people he will never repeat those mistakes because he is still in denial.

Rudd inherited a perfectly workable situation in respect of boat arrivals. In the year before his election there were 148 arrivals. There were no children in detention. Arrivals were processed offshore and there was excess capacity to house them. So far this year there have been 18,797 arrivals. There are now 1731 children in detention. The processing centres are overflowing.

Rudd is announcing ever more harsh measures to try to stop the flow he started but he

doesn't apologise for measures that led to this chaos. He says he had to soften border control because that's what the people voted for.

Well, only because he told them that softer border controls would make no difference. They believed him and they voted for him. It doesn't seem to occur to him it was his fault for coming up with the wrong policy.

Does this sound like a person genuinely determined to halt the flow of arrivals to Australia once the election is over?

Does it sound like someone prepared to incur the wrath of the media and "human rights" lawyers in an effort to stem this trade?

Does Rudd really recognise the damage he has caused?

So too on the budget. He smashed the budget with unfunded spending on school halls and increases in benefits.

We might be in our sixth year of deficit but if anyone claims it is time to curtail spending, he attacks them.

He says that will bring on a recession. That was the reason for starting all this spending in the first place — allegedly to avoid recession.

And now he has thought up a reason to keep it going if he is re-elected.

Rudd hasn't apologised, he hasn't demonstrated change.

Every ounce of his being tells you that he thinks that if everything would go back to where it was before his party dumped him then that would be a perfect outcome.

Rudd had better figure this out and quickly. He needs to show he now understands what got Labor into this mess. He either takes "A New Way" or else it will be the highway.