

From Rudd the Real to Concocted Kevin

MICHAEL KELLY



It was midway through his debate with John Howard leading up to the 2007 Australian Federal Election. From nowhere a

transformation came over Kevin Rudd. Suddenly, he looked every bit the prime minister of Australia. The subtle swagger of his body language, the measured lyrical voice, the even, commanding manner and presence, all coalescing at once.

While Howard became petulant and defensive, here was Rudd projecting genuine passion for Australia and her people. Here was Rudd projecting dignity under pressure – projecting the personality, bearing and worldview of a leader of state.

Rudd won the debate and he and his party won the election. But then Rudd appeared to stop being genuine.

Or perhaps he just returned to his pre-opposition leader, false image he had been crafting throughout his political career. Or perhaps he didn't have the courage to leave that false image behind – and to follow through on the stellar, statesman-like presentation and vision he delivered on that debate night.

Whatever the reason, after becoming prime minister, Kevin Rudd seemed to become less and less genuine and more and more artificial. He became more Concocted Kevin.

Since 2007 to the present I've analysed the body language and speech of Kevin Rudd on the public stage.

My opinion of Rudd is this:

He believes he is the cleverest person in any room. Due to this, Rudd believes he can concoct idioms (eg. "fair shake of the sauce bottle mate") turns of phrase, body language and mannerisms, to manipulate how the electorate perceives him.

Because he is three to four steps ahead in thought of everyone else (they of limited intelligence) he imagines beforehand what will "play well" with the electorate – what will cast him in the best light. Then he acts out that script through the idioms, body language and other affectations. In effect, he's often having a chuckle at the electorate's expense.

Rudd is clearly an intelligent person. But instead of using his intelligence to authentically communicate with people – he uses it to mock them.

Below is a chronicle of examples of Rudd phoniness. **Interaction with George Bush at the G20 meeting, November 2008**

This was the first face-to-face interaction Rudd had with Bush, after he had reputedly said that Bush was ignorant for not knowing what the G20 was. In the interaction Rudd displays his false, pat, wet smile. Bush looked frosty and placed his arm down the side of his body to put a "barrier" between himself and Rudd.

Air rage incident, April 2009

In explaining why he abused an RAAF stewardess Rudd delivered a Clayton's apology. When saying "I'm really sorry" Rudd look downward. In effect, he was dismissing his apology and conveying that he didn't want to deal with it. In

this incident Rudd's tightly corked bottle of emotion popped, revealing the true aspect of his character.

Resignation on the steps of Parliament, 24 June 2010

In this press conference Rudd initially joked about the large size of the gallery, to hide the enormity of his anguish. He tried to hide himself with the innumerable "I'm proud of the fact" statements. This was his final chance to catalogue, technocrat style, his achievements – to, in effect, say, "look at all I've done for you... why don't you appreciate this... why am I being dumped", but his voice and face weren't playing along.

The man who relied on fact, after fact, after fact, finally had no more facts, no more "I'm proud of" left. With no words left, he turned to his wife for guidance on what else he should say, as if there must be something to say to salvage this situation. But no salvage was available. His phony mask had finally fallen.

Poker-faced Rudd is a threat to Gillard, February 2013

Rudd tried hard to play a straight bat in responding in a press interview to questions about his interest in the prime minister's job but his words and feeling tone weren't cooperating. He was playing a game of reverse psychology where he says one thing but actually means another.

His language in particular gave him away. For example: "It's time this debate was put into cryogenic storage, frankly it ain't happening." He casually added: "And you know something, I'm pretty happy being where I am." The key word was "pretty" happy – but not entirely.

Rudd's first press conference as re-instated PM, 28 June 2013

In this conference Rudd was a pig in mud. His limelight deprivation of the past three years was over. He displayed the full repertoire of his scripted affectations including the faux pout, pastor Kevin blessing the throng, the circus master, the orchestra conductor, the expanded arms, "I can handle anything", chorus boy.

And so Kevin Rudd keeps on concocting and burnishing his plastic image. Within the last two weeks there was a news video-clip capturing Rudd in his PM car arriving at a kerb.

In the clip Rudd, in the front passenger's seat, is pre-occupied as the car stops. A person quickly arrives at Rudd's passenger door to greet him. In a nanosecond Rudd's face and eyes stiffen realising a public interaction is about to occur. In the next second, seamlessly, he concocts the phony smile as he exits the car and shakes the person's hand.

Michael Kelly is a communication and body language expert and director of Kelly Speech Communication