

Andrew Bolt: Be careful what promises you keep, Bill

Andrew Bolt, Herald Sun, December 19, 2018 8:00pm

Subscriber only

Polls tell us Bill Shorten's promises will win him the next election. But history tells us some could cost the Labor leader the election after.

In 2007, Kevin Rudd launched Labor's successful election campaign with this cry against the Howard government's cash splash: "This sort of reckless spending must stop."

But once in power, Rudd launched his own titanic spending spree and critics flung his words back in his face.

SHORTEN FLEXES HIS MUSCLES AHEAD OF FIGHT
SHORTEN SET TO BECOME PM WITHOUT LOVE

In 2010 it was Julia Gillard's turn, promising: "There will be no carbon tax under the government I lead." Breaking that promise caused a collapse in voter trust that ultimately led Labor to sack her.

But some political lessons are never learned. In 2013, hours before he led the Liberals to victory, Tony Abbott vowed: "No cuts to education, no cuts to health, no change to pensions, no change to the GST and no cuts to the ABC or SBS."

That unnuanced assurance was branded a lie when Abbott produced his first and toughest Budget.

So what is Shorten promising now that he could regret later?

Let me give four examples. But note: unlike the examples above, these are promises that will hurt Shorten if he keeps them, not breaks them.

BLOG WITH ANDREW BOLT
MORE ANDREW BOLT



Opposition Leader Bill Shorten is making promises that he could regret later.
Picture: AAP

That makes them more like Rudd's fatal promise to close detention centres in Nauru and Manus Island — a catastrophic blunder that inspired 50,000 illegal immigrants to sail to Australia, with 1200 drowning at sea.

Speaking of illegal immigrants, Shorten promises to let any two doctors — likely to be activists — order an illegal immigrant in Nauru or Manus to be brought to Australia for examination. Despite what Labor says, the legislation it backs seems clear: an immigration minister can't stop the illegal immigrants from coming unless they're a threat to national security.

Sure, maybe nothing will come from that. Maybe Labor will broaden the definition of security. It also insists it will keep turning back the boats, so illegal immigrants could figure our door is still shut.

But at its worst, this weakening of our border laws could inspire another armada of boat people that will discredit Labor.

Then there's Shorten's promise to wind back negative gearing on investment properties. Labor announced that policy when house prices were soaring, but now prices in the big cities are falling fast, making many homeowners too scared to spend. Shorten insists his policy won't further hammer property prices for sellers, yet claims it would lower prices for young buyers. Both

statements can't be true. If Labor does make house prices fall even more, many Australians will want blood.

Shorten's third dangerous promise is to change the constitution to create another parliament, an advisory one just for Aborigines, to advise the real parliament meant to represent us all.

That promise, too, could turn ugly. I cannot believe Australians will ever vote yes at a referendum to this apartheid. Labor will fail and look stupid and divisive. But even if Australians do say yes, this will fix nothing, not the violence in Aboriginal communities, not the child abuse. It would just raise racial tensions and resentments on both sides.

Most dangerous is Shorten's promise to cut global warming gases by 45 per cent by 2030. Few realise those cuts don't apply just to coal-fired power stations, but also to cars, trucks, planes, farms, factories, mines and even cattle and pigs, huge sources of methane, a potent greenhouse gas.

That is crazy. Doing this, as the Chief Scientist admits, will make virtually no difference to the temperature.

And what problem would it fix? The slight rise in temperature at the end of last century didn't produce the predicted climate disasters. We instead got record crops and fewer cyclones. But the real reason Labor could regret this promise is that voters, already sick of soaring electricity prices, must eventually realise Labor's policy is not just useless but insanely expensive — and probably impossible.

At the end of this week the Morrison Government will release its own emissions projections report on our emissions targets under the Paris Agreement. It's releasing this report on the weekend before Christmas, when no one will read it, because it will show the government can't meet even its own promise of a 26 per cent cut, never mind Labor's 45 per cent.

Yes, Shorten feels he's had to make such populist promises to get elected and especially to keep Labor's Left on board. But it's exactly the dumb promises you make to get elected that could get you defeated next time.