

## PM won't submit to polygraph

AAP

By Shane Wright and Belinda Tasker

PRIME Minister John Howard today turned down a lie detector test to determine if he was telling the truth over the children overboard affair.

But the man who claims he told Mr Howard there were doubts about allegations of refugees throwing children overboard from a boat shortly before the 2001 election, has passed his own polygraph to prove he is telling the truth.

Mike Scrafton took the test at the Australian Polygraph Services' (APS) Melbourne office today to prove he was not lying about what he told Mr Howard three days before the 2001 election.

"In layman's terms, he passed the test," APS director Steve Van Aperen, who has been trained by the FBI and is a consultant to the Victorian Homicide Squad, told Channel 9.

"There was no strong responses indicative of concern or fear of being caught in a lie."

"It's my opinion, according to these charts, that he's in fact being truthful."

Mr Scrafton said the test made him feel totally vindicated and he had never doubted that he would pass the polygraph, which was organised by Nine.

Asked if he believed Mr Howard should take a similar test, Mr Scrafton told Nine: "That's the prime minister's call, not mine."

But Mr Howard dismissed as a gimmick the suggestion he follow Mr Scrafton and take a polygraph test.

"I'm not going to get into gimmicks like that," he told ABC radio.

"If people don't believe what I say on the basis of looking at me and listening to my words then going through a mechanical process like that is not going to alter their opinions."

Mr Scrafton, who worked for former defence minister Peter Reith, revealed this week he told Mr Howard neither photographs nor video footage supported claims that children were thrown overboard from the refugee boat, known as SIEV4, just days before the 2001 election.

But Mr Howard then repeated the claim that children had been thrown overboard the day after he talked to Mr Scrafton.

Mr Howard denies he talked to Mr Scrafton about the photographs, prompting the former public servant to say he was willing to take a lie detector test.

Mr Howard's refusal to take the lie detector test came as Labor and the minor parties signalled a major pre-election headache for the prime minister by backing plans for a Senate inquiry into the whole affair.

Australian Democrats leader Andrew Bartlett, who took a lie detector test earlier this year, said by rejecting the offer Mr Howard was admitting to the Australian people he had lied.

"The fact that John Howard has deigned to respond to the challenge indicates that he is rattled and running scared," Senator Bartlett told AAP.

"Enough questions have been raised in the last few days to make even his staunch supporters question his credibility."

Opposition Leader Mark Latham said Mr Howard owed the voters of Australia an apology.

"The Prime Minister ... owes the Australian people a huge apology for the acts of deceit, the acts of deliberate dishonesty, in the days leading up to the last federal election," he told reporters.

"The Prime Minister has shown that he's not fit to hold the high office."

Mr Scafton stood by his claims, saying his decision to speak out had not been easy.

"Like everybody there are things in my past that people might bring up to use against me and discredit the messenger," he told the John Laws radio program.

"There are risks in this for me rather than benefits."