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# Is this Australia's toughest boss?

**Steve Lewis and Alison Rehn**

**MORE** than half of Kevin Rudd's staff have fled the Prime Minister's office since the election less than two years ago.

Despite promising to rid Australia of workplace bullies, the PM — dubbed Kevin 24/7 — has emerged as one of the country's most demanding employers, with insiders describing him as "manic".

With the next election less than one year away, the PM has lost most of his senior

policy advisers, leaving an office that insiders say is almost unrecognisable.

"He's demanding and a bit all over the place," says one former staffer of the PM, who recently tore into Labor's factional chiefs with an expletive-laden rant. Another was more blunt: "He gives little in the way of constructive feedback. And he just doesn't listen to anybody."

The Herald Sun has found that 23 of 39 staff have left Mr Rudd's office — and there are whispers of more to follow.

Four senior staff — including

Jack Lake, a 25-year parliamentary veteran — have announced their departures in recent weeks.

Seasoned political advisers say that John Howard, Paul Keating and Bob Hawke enjoyed strong staff loyalty and only minor turnover. But public sector recruitment specialist Kathy Kostyrko warned that Mr Rudd's office management appeared a problem.

"That is a very high turnover rate. You need to look at the work environment and your recruitment (methods)," said

MS Kostyrko, a director with Hayes Specialist Recruitment.

While the PM makes no apology for his unrelenting pace, senior Labor figures worry these changes will leave the Government vulnerable heading into an election year.

Senior staff who have left — including policy director Pradeep Philip, education adviser Michael Lye and health adviser Rod Glover — are being replaced by advisers with little experience in the political hurly-burly.

P T O



**Captain Grim:** Prime Minister Kevin Rudd with Climate Change Minister Penny Wong. Picture: KYM SMITH



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### CONFIDENCE CRISIS CAUSE OF POWER ABUSE

**BOSSES** who are in over their heads are more likely to bully their workers.

Research by the University of California found supervisors or upper management staff who feel incompetent in their roles are most likely to lash out.

The findings from four separate studies found a

direct link among people in positions of high responsibility who feel unsure and aggression.

Study author Associate Prof Seren Chen said: "It's the combination of having a high-power role and fearing that one is not up to the task that causes power holders to lash out. And our data suggests it's ultimately about self-worth."