

to win over the undecided

Border calls for unity behind PM

BY BRAD WORRAL

BORDER Labor Party members have penned a letter of support to Julia Gillard.

This week, and before the decision to hold a leadership showdown on Monday, rank and file members agreed to write the letter to the embattled Prime Minister.

But Albany-Lavington branch president Darren Cameron said it was a call for unity behind the leader and not necessarily an endorsement of Ms Gillard over her likely challenger deposed prime minister Kevin Rudd.

"The branch has been unhappy about the lingering disunity for some time, we simply feel it can no longer be tolerated by the party or the Australian public," he said.

"This week the branch passed a motion in support of Julia Gillard and wrote a letter of support to that effect.

"That is not to say there were not people within the branch who had differing opinions over who should be leader.

"But we all believe that Labor needs to be unified behind whoever leads the party, the bickering has to stop."

Mr Cameron said Monday's leadership challenge should be the chance to unite Labor.

"Personally I'm not con-

cerned about who leads the party out of either Julia Gillard or Kevin Rudd," he said.

"But clearly this matter has to be resolved.

"At the moment it appears Gillard has the numbers. But whoever wins, the party has to unite behind them, anything less would be disloyal."

Labor candidate for Indi in the last federal election Zvele Leschen believes Mr Rudd may dodge a bullet by not accepting Ms Gillard's challenge.

"I would hope that if there is a vote that he accepts the message the party seems almost certain to deliver," she said.

"As we have seen this week it appears that his ego blinds him to reality.

"I'm not 100 per cent sure he will even challenge, he has a history of backing down when he doesn't have the numbers.

"In some ways this is like lancing a boil — there is a lot of nasty stuff that comes out but in the long run we are all better off."

Mr Cameron does not accept the suggestion that Mr Rudd will challenge again even if defeated on Monday.

"I think people are making that call on what happened between Paul Keating and Bob Hawke but they were different circumstances, a different time," he said.

"Whatever our differences in politics, I do not believe that these sorts of vicious personal attacks have a place in our national political life"
KEVIN RUDD, PICTURED, YESTERDAY



Poisoned chalice of the big issues

OPINION

BEN HABIB



THE Gillard-Rudd confrontation highlights the problems that Australia's 20th century political parties face in dealing with 21st century policy problems.

The rivalry is a story of ambition, bitterness and betrayal.

Gillard should have the numbers to see off former prime minister Kevin Rudd. That she has waited so long to bring the issue to a head may have been an error.

The Prime Minister is a master of negotiation and compromise, but until now, she has not demonstrated the ruthless streak necessary to kill Rudd's white-anting.

Yet there is a broader, more complicated dimension, to the Labor leadership crisis. Since World War II, both the Labor and Liberal parties have become catch-all parties chasing universal support.

Because of their broad base, both have significant factional divisions, which become exposed when they are forced to confront complex, big-ticket policy problems that aggravate the philosophical differences or the factions.

Labor's 2010 leadership change was a consequence of Mr Rudd's failure to deal with one of these immense policy issues — climate change.

That debate also claimed two Liberal Party leaders in Brendan Nelson and Malcolm Turnbull.

After decades of political and economic stability, political leaders are now confronting enormous international policy problems like the global debt crisis and climate change, challenges for which there are no easy solutions.

Regardless of where you stand on these issues, they are policy time bombs for broad-based parties.

The Coalition should beware.

The same pressures driving Labor's self-destruction are also likely to expose the deepening division between conservatives and small-L liberals in the Liberal Party.

As leaders across the world are discovering, winning government in these times can be a poisoned chalice.

Ben Habib is a lecturer in politics and international relations at La Trobe University, Albany-Woodonga

Rudd's plea to voters in bid to get back the top job

From page 1

Ms Gillard and her ministerial supporters continued the "shock and awe" campaign to discredit Mr Rudd, portraying his previous running of the government as dysfunctional.

Ms Gillard opened up on the faults of the Rudd administration — about which she has previously

been publicly circumspect — saying he had "very difficult and very chaotic work patterns" and contrasting this with his "excellent" campaigning skills.

Several Gillard backers in the ministry — Wayne Swan, Stephen Conroy, Jenny Macklin, Mark Arbib, Simon Crean, Craig Emerson and Brendan O'Connor — appeared

publicly to campaign for her.

Mr Rudd said he had been "shocked and disappointed by the tone and content of the intensely personal attacks" mounted on him overnight.

These included Mr Swan accusing him of "dysfunctional decision-making" and a demeaning attitude to caucus colleagues.

"Whatever our differences in politics, I do not believe that these sorts of vicious personal attacks have a place in our national political life," Mr Rudd said.

Countering Mr Rudd's claim that he was the only one who could beat Tony Abbott, Ms Roxon said: "We need to get out of this idea that Kevin is a messiah

who will deliver an election back to us."

The Rudd camp yesterday claimed to have about 40 votes in the 103-member Labor caucus, with 15-20 undecided.

The Gillard camp said Mr Rudd had about 30, and the PM more than 60.

Michelle Grattan's column — page 44

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