



Staff blowout gets personal

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IN CANBERRA

THE number of personal staffers for top Labor politicians has blown out by almost 30 per cent since Kevin Rudd stormed to power in 2007.

Despite Labor partly staking its 2007 victory on a promise to slash ministerial staff by one third across the Federal Government, the number has steadily crept up, erasing all savings gains Mr Rudd initially made.

Five Labor staffers have been seconded to create a special carbon price "implementation team" task force, and a further 15 Labor staffers are being paid more than their position officially warrants.

New figures from the Department of Finance reveal there are now 420 personal

staff working for ministers and parliamentary secretaries.

The number is 28.8 per cent higher than the 326 in the Rudd government in February 2008.

When Mr Rudd was elected, he swiftly slashed staff, pledging to save money and criticising the Howard government for being over-staffed with up to 477 personal advisers.

But after the initial cuts, staff figures began to creep up amid claims advisers were being run ragged with gruelling work schedules.

Just before Julia Gillard took over the Government, there were already 368 staffers helping out ministers and parliamentary secretaries by May last year.

By October last year, there were 420 – about a 14 per cent increase, where the figure has since stayed.

The number includes nine principal advisers earning up to \$225,000 a year.

A further 14 chiefs of staff are pocketing up to \$160,000, five senior advisers are on up to \$169,000 and 43 senior advisers are taking up to \$146,000.

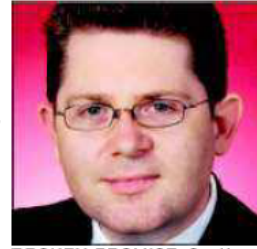
Ms Gillard herself has 51 staff at a cost of about \$1 million per year, while Deputy PM Wayne Swan has 21.

Liberal Senator Scott Ryan labelled the staff hike "another broken promise" from Labor.

"This is just another broken promise from a government that once said it would cut the

size of ministerial personal staff," he said.

Opposition staff numbers have increased 25 per cent from 70 in February 2008 to 88 this month.



BROKEN PROMISE: Scott Ryan condemns increases.