

Cyclone Latham rides another ill wind



RAY STRANGE

Mark Latham confronts Tony Abbott during a function for war veterans at Penrith in western Sydney yesterday

Abbott intimidates ex-leader, says body language expert

MARK Latham was less aggressive in confronting Tony Abbott than he was with Julia Gillard, and even seemed intimidated himself, a body language expert says.

Five days after coming face-to-face with the Prime Minister in Brisbane on assignment for *60 Minutes*, the former Labor leader yesterday stalked the Opposition Leader in Sydney's west.

Whereas Mr Latham had pointed his finger at Ms Gillard

and demanded to know why the ALP had complained about him to his employers at the Nine Network, he made no such attack when questioning Mr Abbott, who holds two Oxford blues in boxing.

Michael Kelly, a body language and speech communication expert, reviewed video clips of both meetings and said Mr Latham appeared to lose a little nerve when Mr Abbott eyeballed him back. "He still went in hard to begin with," Mr Kelly said. "But when Abbott fronted up to him he wasn't so aggressive, and his voice shook a little bit too. There was a quaver there. Abbott kind

of intimidated Latham a little bit I think. It's typical bully behaviour, really. A lot of these guys are weak underneath — they're all upfront."

Mr Kelly also praised Ms Gillard's handling of her confrontation with her former colleague, saying she handled him with "dignity".

He noted that the Prime Minister's gender might have played a role.

"Reading into it, maybe because Gillard is a woman, Latham thinks he can have that bravado," Mr Kelly said.

"But with a guy standing up to him, he was much more wary."

DREW WARNE-SMITH