

## Too many Chiefs and not enough Indians at Fair Work Commission

FOLLOWING today's appointments to the Fair Work Commission, national resource industry employer group AMMA has raised concerns about 'serious structural issues' within the tribunal that include too many roles at the presidential level and a disproportionate number of union and ALP-linked appointments.

"Employers are concerned that there are 'too many Chiefs and not enough Indians' at the Fair Work Commission. Six of the eight appointments are to the presidential level, leaving the tribunal with 22 'presidential' roles versus 24 commissioner roles," says AMMA chief executive Steve Knott.

"This is a system that is supposed to minimise industrial disputes but the government is loading up on senior members in anticipation of a much busier and more activist tribunal. This is inconsistent with allowing employers and employees to agree on their own workplace priorities.

"Today has also continued the succession of recent ALP and union-linked appointments to the Fair Work Commission. 18 of the 26 Fair Work appointments made under the ALP have had direct links to the party or trade unions, or undertaken legal work for trade unions.

"The recent appointments reflect an ALP version of the 'merit principle' that requires appointees to have worked directly or indirectly with Minister Shorten and/or President Ross. There is a danger that the tribunal will be perceived as a plaything of the ALP and their union affiliates.

"AMMA also notes our concerns and those of other key employer groups regarding the existing Vice-Presidents' effective demotion through these new appointments were not addressed in Minister Shorten's statement.

"All users of the system are entitled to expect an independent and efficient industrial body that supports a mature, productive and modern workplace relations system.

"For the Fair Work Commission to be a modern and independent tribunal it desperately needs members with real business experience. However, the union and ALP dominance of the tribunal has continued unabated with these most recent appointments.

"In order to restore balance to the Fair Work Commission, an incoming Australian Government will need more appointees from employer backgrounds and to properly structure the tribunal's seniority and administrative arrangements."

Despite its many concerns, AMMA congratulates today's appointees; discharging their duties consistent with the law and their best efforts will best serve the tribunal, employers and employees notwithstanding a flawed approach to appointments.

"AMMA particularly congratulates Jeff Lawrence, who employers held in high regard during his tenure as Secretary of the ACTU," Mr Knott says.

"Despite policy differences, AMMA has been able to work very constructively with Mr Lawrence in the past and we wish him well in his new role."

**CONTACT:** Tom Reid, AMMA media & government relations adviser, 0419 153 407 or [Tom.reid@amma.org.au](mailto:Tom.reid@amma.org.au)