



Miners demand Fair Work overhaul

EXCLUSIVE

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Resource sector employers have urged Employment Minister Michaelia Cash to review the “highly dysfunctional” Fair Work Commission, criticising the Coalition for not proposing changes to workplace relations laws.

In a letter to Senator Cash, Australian Mines and Metals Association chief executive Steve Knott said “several senior members” of the commission had told him they intended to retire early because of the tribunal’s “dysfunction and politicisation”.

Mr Knott, a long-time commission critic, attacked the involvement of tribunal president Iain Ross in the high-profile Country Fire Authority and Grocon

disputes. He said Senator Cash should order an independent review of the commission “as it is highly dysfunctional, not serving users well and appears to be pursuing political agendas, as opposed to assisting constructive workplace relations outcomes for employers and employees”.

“The FWC is an administrative body, not a court,” Mr Knott said. “There are countless examples of where the FWC is not approving agreements based on technicalities; something the tribunal in the past has attended to in a practical sense to assist enterprise agreement making that has been subject to genuine agreement by employees and employers.”

An overhaul of the commission was one of the recommendations of the Productivity Commission’s inquiry into the workplace relations framework last year.

The Coalition decided before the election not to seek voter

support for changes to employee conditions recommended by the Productivity Commission because of fears it would provoke a campaign by unions in marginal seats.

Senator Cash is unlikely to divulge whether the government will seek to implement any recommendations until next year.

Mr Knott asked when the government would act on the recommendations and “address real problems in the operation of the Fair Work Act that are damaging enterprises, employees, jobseekers and the wider Australian community”.

He said the government should act to restrict strike action, limit union rights to enter workplaces, wind back unfair dismissal claims, and change the agreement making process.

Senator Cash and Justice Ross declined to comment