



Miners urge Fair Work review

EXCLUSIVE

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Resource and energy employers are urging the Coalition to review the operation of the Fair Work Commission, alleging female members and those with previous business experience have been “inexplicably sidelined” from full-bench deliberations.

Analysis by the Australian Mines and Metals Association, a long-running and vocal critic of tribunal president Iain Ross, found 24 per cent of positions on full-bench matters this year were allocated to members with a business or employer background, compared to 49 per cent with a union background.

Just 4 per cent of full benches this year have been presided over by female members. AMMA chief executive Steve Knott said members appointed by previous ALP governments presided over 95 per

cent of full-bench determinations despite comprising 38 per cent of presidential members. While Coalition-appointed members comprised 63 per cent of presidential resources, they had overseen just 5 per cent of full benches.

“With the FWC’s leadership seemingly unwilling or incapable of addressing these concerns, AMMA encourages the Morrison government to undertake a full-scale review of the FWC,” Mr Knott said.

“Such a review would seek to ensure the FWC is utilising its substantial resources and public funding to deliver better outcomes for its customers — employers and employees — in the Australian labour market.”

An ACTU spokesman said the commission should be a strong independent umpire and its members should reflect the diversity of the working people whose rights they oversee. “The majority of recent appointments to the commission have been from the Liberal Party and business, and we do

not believe Mr Knott or his organisation are interested in creating an independent and strong commission,” he said.

A spokesman for Attorney-General and Industrial Relations Minister Christian Porter said the commission was an independent body and it was up to Justice Ross “to ensure the breadth of experience within the commission is utilised appropriately”.

Commission sources rejected Mr Knott’s claims, accusing him of being partisan, while they maintaining the make-up of the full benches reflected the seniority of members.

Mr Knott said despite Coalition appointees being in the majority, and women being much better represented, both groups were “presiding over or being involved in a tiny percentage of important full-bench matters”. “This shows just how effective the former ALP government was at capturing the apex of leadership at the FWC, and thus its direction for many years to come,” he said.