



13 MAY, 2023

## ALP hands Fair Work roles to union mates

Weekend Australian, Australia

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**EWIN HANNAN**  
WORKPLACE EDITOR

The Albanese government has made eight union-linked appointments to the Fair Work Commission, the second round of union-friendly appointments in weeks, as Labor addresses the Coalition's stacking of the tribunal with those from an employer background.

Resources sector employers accused Labor of turning the commission into a "retirement home for union bosses" but the ACTU said the appointments were another step towards rebalancing the tribunal.

Sydney barrister Tony Slevin, a former national legal officer with the CFMEU's mining and energy division, has been appointed a deputy president, while ACTU assistant secretary Scott Connolly will become one of seven new commissioners.

The government has made 13 union-linked appointments in six weeks, including five in March.

Given 26 of the 27 permanent appointments made by the Coalition came from an employer background, the majority of appointments still favour employers by 29 to 22. Other appointments announced on Friday include Susie Allison, a former Victorian secretary of the National Union of Workers and director of the Andrews government's Fair Jobs Code Unit; Stephen Crawford, the assistant national secretary and senior national legal officer at the Australian Workers Union; and Pearl Lim, a senior industrial officer with the Australian Services Union.

The government has also appointed Mark Perica, a senior legal officer at the Community and Public Sector Union who has

practised at the Victorian Bar; Emma Thornton, a former ACTU legal officer who is practice leader, employment and industrial with Johnston Withers Lawyers and worked at Maurice Blackburn Lawyers; and Oanh Thi Tran, the principal solicitor at the Young Workers Centre who has been national legal and industrial officer with the CFMEU's manufacturing division.

Industrial Relations Minister Tony Burke said the appointments were the next step towards restoring balance and ensuring workers have just as much of a voice as employers.

"The Liberals and Nationals spent a decade stacking the commission with appointees from employer backgrounds in a bid to silence workers," he said.

"This is the second round of appointments the government has made to the commission. But even with these appointments we are still short of balance. There is more work to do to correct the Coalition's shameless stack.

"I look forward to the day when I can return to appointing people from employee and employer backgrounds in equal numbers. But there is an immediate imperative to restore the balance."

Australian Resources and Energy Employer Association chief executive Steve Knott said the appointments would seriously undermine the business community's confidence in the commission.

"The Albanese government is not 'restoring the balance' at the FWC, they are making it a retirement home for ex-union officials," he said. "These are roles with

annual salaries of \$398,000 to \$484,000, and with tenure until 65 years of age. Unless they get some form of objectivity here and revert to balanced non-partisan appointments, the ALP is only setting the FWC up to be subject to calls for a complete 'spill and fill' in the future."

ACTU secretary Sally McManus said the commission had a "big impact on the lives of working people, so it is essential that it is just and balanced".

"The Coalition government stacked it with employer ideologues, and these new appointments help restore balance. All these appointments are of highly skilled people with great integrity," she said.

Meanwhile, the Australian Industry Group has called for a 3.8 per cent increase in award and minimum wages, claiming the ACTU's 7 per cent claim would fuel inflation.



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### LABOR'S PICKS

*The 13 union-linked appointees to the Fair Work Commission*

**TONY SLEVIN**

Barrister and former CFMEU national legal officer

**SCOTT CONNOLLY**

ACTU assistant secretary

**SUSIE ALLISON**

Director of the Andrews government's Fair Jobs Code Unit and ex-National Union of Workers official

**STEPHEN CRAWFORD**

Assistant national secretary at the Australian Workers Union

**PEARL LIM**

Senior industrial officer with the Australian Services Union

**MARK PERICA**

Senior legal officer at the Community and Public Sector Union

**EMMA THORNTON**

Former ACTU legal officer who holds a senior position at Johnston Withers Lawyers

**OANH THI TRAN**

Principal solicitor at the Young Workers Centre and ex-CFMEU legal officer

**THOMAS ROBERTS**

ACTU senior legal officer

**PETER O'KEEFE**

Shop assistants union's West Australian secretary

**JUDITH WRIGHT**

Australian Services Union NSW and ACT deputy secretary

**ALEXANDRA GRAYSON**

Maurice Blackburn principal lawyer and former Finance Sector Union national industrial officer

**SHARON DURHAM**

Former Queensland union official and chief of staff to Industrial Relations Minister Grace Grace