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Minister for Industrial Relations
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Media Release

Minns Labor Government boosts NSW Industrial Relations Commission appointing Tony Howell as Deputy President

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The Minns Labor Government continues to deliver on its commitment boost the resources of the IRC and help the Commission manage the projected increase in caseload proceedings appointing Commissioner Tony Howell as Deputy President (non-judicial) of the Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) of NSW.

Commissioner Howell will commence in the role on 10 August 2026. His appointment will support the IRC as it responds to a broader remit, including new jurisdictions for bullying and sexual harassment and workers compensation matters.

Following the commencement of the Government's largest workers compensation reforms in a generation, the IRC now has an expanded jurisdiction that includes new workers compensation functions including determining if the conduct said to give rise to the injuries was bullying and harassment.

The boost to the commission strengthens the state's independent workplace umpire and ensures it is well equipped to deliver timely, fair and effective justice for workers and employers.

The Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) of NSW is the longest continuing industrial tribunal in the world. Its principal role is to hear and resolve industrial and work, health and safety disputes, settle employment conditions and remuneration for employees primarily in the NSW public sector and local government as well as regulating the terms and conditions of engagement for owner-drivers.

Commissioner Howell was appointed as a Commissioner of the IRC on 2 June 2025 and has since heard a diverse and complex range of matters, including sitting on the Full Bench of the IRC in the Superannuation Case 2025.

Before joining the IRC, Commissioner Howell worked as a solicitor, in-house counsel and barrister across industrial relations, employment and work health and safety law. He appeared before the Full Bench of both the IRC and the Fair Work Commission, as well as NSW and federal courts, including the High Court of Australia.

Earlier in his career, he worked with senior IRC members, including the Honourable Justice Leonne Glynn, the Honourable Justice Michael Walton and the Honourable Justice Lance Wright KC.

This appointment follows the announcement last month of Deputy President (non-judicial) Janet McDonald, four additional commissioners, and Deputy President and Judicial Member Lloyd Babb SC.

Minister for Industrial Relations Sophie Cotsis said:

“Commissioner Howell has built a distinguished career in industrial relations and employment law, with deep experience before the Commission and Australia’s courts.

“He brings a practical understanding of the issues that matter to workers, employers and their representatives, and I congratulate him on his appointment.

“A strong IRC helps ensure workplace disputes are dealt with fairly, efficiently and with the confidence of the people who rely on it.”

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