



INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Wages growth key to union, business push

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Workplace editor

Business groups and unions will press incoming workplace minister Kelly O'Dwyer to tackle stagnant wages growth and the need for reform of industrial relations rules.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's director of workplace relations Scott Barklamb said the government needed to focus on jobs growth to help boost stagnant wages.

Mr Barklamb said Ms O'Dwyer understood the challenges facing small businesses, including the need to simplify unfair dismissal laws, which were too complex and bureaucratic. "We think she as a minister in tackling various areas of superannuation and finance brings a background in good policy that bodes well for the area," he said. "We think she's an energetic and active minister."

Ms O'Dwyer said she wanted to focus on the unemployed and the employed, because the "best form of welfare is providing every Australian with the chance to get a job". "This means jobs not just in the cities but also in our vital regions. I also want to focus on the jobs that people create for themselves and for others in small business."

Julia Angrisano, national secretary of the Finance Sector Union of Australia, urged Ms O'Dwyer to tackle slow wages growth, the finance sector's large gender pay gap,

and reform of the Fair Work Act. She said many of her members had not had a pay rise in years.

"Kelly O'Dwyer had to be dragged kicking and screaming to believe there was a need for a finance sector royal commission," she said. "Let's hope that she isn't slow to realise that Australians deserve a pay rise and that the [industrial] rules are broken for working people in all sectors."

Master Builders Australia chief executive Denita Wawn welcomed the elevation of industrial relations to cabinet and was hopeful Ms O'Dwyer would persist with pushing to get legislation, including a bill to protect the integrity of registered organisations, passed in the Senate.

"It is important that IR is in cabinet, and Kelly understands issues regarding how IR has a significant impact on productivity within the economy, given her previous portfolio role," she said.

The Australian Resources and Energy Group (AMMA) also welcomed Ms O'Dwyer's appointment as minister for jobs, industrial relations and women, saying she had a strong knowledge of the resources and energy sectors and workplace issues.

"Her engagement and support of AMMA's government-funded national gender diversity initiative, the Australian Women in Resources Alliance, has supported the industry in lifting its promotion, attraction and retention of

women in resources and energy careers," AMMA chief executive Steve Knott said.

Australian Council of Trade Unions president Michele O'Neil said unions were concerned that Ms O'Dwyer, a former banker, "brings a big business approach to the industrial relations portfolio".

"Her approach to the structural inequalities facing women at work has been piecemeal, cosmetic and has placed the needs of big business over those of women and their families. There has been an unwillingness to engage on the level required for meaningful change," she said.



**Incoming
workplace
minister Kelly
O'Dwyer.**