

Michael Ravbar blasts Qld Labor for giving plum IR positions to senior union figures

By SARAH ELKS, QUEENSLAND POLITICAL REPORTER
6:49PM JULY 5, 2019 • 130 COMMENTS

Queensland Legislative Assembly	
Number: 5619T 1342	
 22 AUG 2019	Tabled <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Labor powerbroker and union boss Michael Ravbar has attacked the Queensland ALP government as “out of touch” for giving plum jobs on the state’s industrial relations commission to political “mates”.

Industrial Relations Minister Grace Grace this morning announced Queensland Council of Unions general secretary Ros McLennan and Australian Workers Union legal adviser Jacqueline Power would start as commissioners next week.

Ms Grace — who was Ms McLennan’s predecessor at the QCU before she entered politics — also appointed barristers John Dwyer and Catherine Hartigan to the QIRC.

⇒ But CFMEU state secretary Michael Ravbar has slammed the decision, which he says will mean the QIRC will have “scant representation” for blue-collar workers.

⇒ “What we have here is a decision that commits taxpayers to funding millions in extra salaries over the coming years for a series of appointments that basically reward friends of the government,” Mr Ravbar said in a statement.

“These appointments reflect an appalling lack of judgment on the part of the Palaszczuk government — a government which when it comes to the interests of workers — is looking increasingly remote and intolerant of criticism.

“For the first time in years, the QIRC will have scant representation from blue-collar and trade workers in Queensland — exactly the sort of workers Ms Palaszczuk and her Ministers love to pose with in high-vis and a hard hat at every available photo opportunity.”

Earlier today, Ms Grace said the new appointments would replace four retirements at the QIRC, which is an independent tribunal established to arbitrate industrial matters in the state of Queensland.

The QIRC’s president is the Queensland Supreme Court judge Glenn Martin, and its vice president is Daniel O’Connor, a former barrister.

Liberal National Party industrial relations spokesman Jarrod Bleijie also attacked the appointments as “plum jobs going to Labor mates”.

“On the 30th anniversary of the Fitzgerald Inquiry, Premier Palaszczuk has no shame in appointing her MP’s wife to a role,” Mr Bleijie said.

“The QIRC has become politicised by the Palaszczuk government which is in no-one’s interests but the government.”

New commissioner Ms Power - a legal adviser to the AWU - is the wife of Queensland Labor MP Linus Power.

Ms Grace hit back at Mr Bleijie's attacks, labelling him a "misogynistic dinosaur".

"Ms Power is her own person and is eminently qualified to be appointed a Commissioner of the QIRC," Ms Grace said.

"She holds a Bachelor of Arts (UQ), Bachelor of Laws (QUT) and Master of Law (Griffith University) as well as a Certificate in Mediation and Participatory Processes from Harvard University Law School.

"She has been a course convenor, lecturer and tutor at the Griffith University Law School and a sessional academic at the QUT Law Faculty.

"That she is the wife of a member of parliament is totally irrelevant and, quite frankly, Mr Bleijie should apologise for this disgusting slur."

In December last year, Ms Grace appointed industrial relations barrister John Merrell and Queensland Teachers' Union vice-president Samantha Pidgeon to the commission.

Ms Grace said today's appointments had the necessary skills and experience.

"Each of the appointees bring the life skills, professional experience and expertise required of a commissioner of the QIRC and I congratulate them on their appointment," Ms Grace said.

Queensland Industrial Relations commissioners are currently paid a total annual remuneration of \$360,841, which includes an allowance of nearly \$20,000 to travel to conferences and pay for education expenses.

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Sarah Elks is the Queensland political reporter for The Australian. She began her career working for the newspaper in Sydney, before moving back to her home state of Queensland. After a stint in Cairns as the N... [Read more](#)