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Pru Goward among six Liberal-linked appointments by Coalition to Administrative Appeals Tribunal

Concerns sparked of repeat of 2019 when one in five named for government bodies before election called had Liberal or National ties

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Former **New South Wales** minister Pru Goward and a former chief of staff to Scott Morrison are among six people with Liberal links appointed to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal among 19 appointments.

On Monday the attorney general, **Michaelia Cash**, announced that Goward and Ann Duffield had been appointed senior members, jobs that receive pay of at least \$330,000 a year, if employed on a full time basis, for up to seven years.

The AAT appointments and separate jobs for former federal minister John McVeigh and NSW minister, Don Harwin, have sparked concerns of a repeat of 2019, when a **Guardian Australia analysis** found that one in five of those appointed to government bodies in the fortnight before the election was called had Liberal or National party links.

Duffield is a **lobbyist for DPG Advisory Solutions** and a former chief of staff to then-attorney general Phillip Ruddock, and Morrison while he was immigration minister before she left that role in February 2015.

Goward is a biographer of former Liberal prime minister John Howard, and represented Goulburn for 12 years in the NSW parliament, including a stint as family and community services minister.

Labor has repeatedly **criticised the Coalition** for the number of appointments to the AAT from the conservative side of politics, claiming that 85 members appointed since the 2013 election have Liberal or National links.

The tribunal is responsible for merits appeals against government decisions in areas including social security, the national disability insurance scheme, freedom of information and immigration.



◀ 'Qualified for what?': Labor questions Pru Goward's appointment to AAT - video

Among the 19 new appointments are two former Liberal members of the Western Australian parliament who lost their seats at the March state election: **Michael Mischin**, who was appointed deputy president and will receive pay of \$496,650; and **Peter Katsambanis**, appointed a member.

Cash appointed **Kate Chapple**, a senior adviser to foreign minister Marise Payne and former senior adviser to then-defence minister Linda Reynolds, as a member.

Cheryl Cartwright, who worked for Alexander Downer in opposition and was then chief of staff to Warren Truss as agriculture minister in the Howard government, was also appointed a member. Cartwright is currently a director of Barton Deakin government relations.

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The shadow attorney general, Mark Dreyfus, accused the Morrison government of “hanging on to power so they can hand out ... lucrative, taxpayer-funded jobs to themselves and their mates”.

“While Australians families struggle with the cost of living and stagnant pay packets, Scott Morrison is throwing around cushy, \$400,000-a-year jobs to former Liberal MPs and staffers,” he said.

“Since 2013 the Liberals have now appointed at least 85 of their mates to the AAT, where full-time senior members are paid almost \$400,000 a year and even junior members are paid at least \$190,000.”

Cash told Guardian Australia: “Fifteen of the new appointments are legally qualified, including eight barristers.

“All of the appointees are highly qualified to undertake the important task of conducting merits review of government decisions.”

In February 2019, Christian Porter appointed 19 former **Liberal party** advisers, candidates and politicians to the AAT out of 34 appointments.

On Monday the arts minister, Paul Fletcher, appointed Harwin, the former NSW arts minister, to the Australia Council board.

Harwin **resigned from the NSW ministry in April 2020** after he was fined \$1,000 for staying at his Central Coast holiday home in breach of a Covid-19 public health order.

On Monday the water minister, Keith Pitt, appointed former Liberal MP John McVeigh as the chair of the modernising Murray river systems technical panel.

McVeigh is a former minister for regional development and briefly served in Malcolm Turnbull’s cabinet after the December 2017 reshuffle.

Pitt said the role would “look for water infrastructure opportunities that could improve delivery and reliability of water rights in the southern basin”.

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