



**SENATOR THE HON GEORGE BRANDIS QC
ATTORNEY-GENERAL
LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SENATE**

MEDIA RELEASE

APPOINTMENTS TO THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Today I announce the appointment of the Hon Dr Kay Patterson as Age Discrimination Commissioner, Mr Alastair McEwin as Disability Discrimination Commissioner and Mr Edward Santow as Human Rights Commissioner. These appointments will be for five years and ensure that the Australian Human Rights Commission has its full complement of Commissioners.

The Hon Dr Patterson is a psychologist with expertise in gerontology and has had extensive experience advocating for older Australians. She is a current Commissioner of the National Mental Health Commission. Dr Patterson has had a long and distinguished career as a parliamentarian and an academic. She served as a Senator for Victoria for 21 years and has held a number of ministerial positions including as a Cabinet Minister as the Minister for Health and Ageing and the Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women's Issues. Dr Patterson is extremely well-placed to advocate for the transformation of community attitudes towards older Australians and continuing our national conversation on the rights and contributions of older persons to all aspects of our society.

Mr McEwin has been a longstanding advocate for the rights of people with disability, and has represented the interests of people with disability at all levels. He is a former Chief Executive Officer of People with Disability Australia and a former manager of the Australian Centre for Disability Law. In addition to his extensive qualifications and experience, Mr McEwin brings to the role lived experience of the issues confronting people with disability. He will be a fantastic leader and role model for the sector.

Mr Santow is the Chief Executive Officer of the Public Interest Advocacy Centre. He is a Senior Visiting Fellow at the University of New South Wales and a former Senior Lecturer. Mr Santow is currently a Director of the Australian Pro Bono Centre and the University of Sydney Law School Foundation. He has very strong academic and practical knowledge of human rights and I am confident that he will successfully prosecute the case for our fundamental political freedoms in Australia.

The Commissioners were selected following a comprehensive merit selection process that complied with the APSC Merit and Transparency Guidelines. The selection panel included the Secretary of my Department, the President of the Human Rights Commission, the President of the Australian Law Reform Commission, a representative of the Australian Public Service Commissioner and a former Director-General of the Queensland Department of Justice and the Attorney-General.

The success of the Australian Human Rights Commission should be measured by outcomes, not by rhetoric. I am confident that these new Commissioners will be strong advocates for their sectors by adopting a pragmatic and courageous approach to promoting human rights enabling the Australian Human Rights Commission to become a strong voice for all Australians, not just a select minority.

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