

Workplace Relations Advisor interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Workplace Relations Advisor roles test legal knowledge of the Fair Work Act and modern awards alongside judgement in live disputes. Expect a mix of technical questions on legislation, behavioural questions about past mediations, and scenarios that check how you'd advise a manager under pressure.

- **Technical/legal knowledge:** Checks your working knowledge of the Fair Work Act, National Employment Standards, award interpretation, and Fair Work Commission processes.
- **Behavioural:** Asks about past grievances, investigations, or negotiations you've handled, looking for evidence of sound judgement and fair process.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Presents a live workplace situation, often involving a manager wanting to act quickly, to see how you'd balance legal risk against business pressure.
- **Process:** Asks you to walk through how you'd run an investigation or prepare for a Commission matter, step by step.
- **Client-facing/stakeholder:** Tests how you'd communicate a difficult industrial relations decision to staff or a resistant manager.

Usually a panel of the HR manager and a senior advisor or legal counsel. Panels typically open with a couple of technical legislation questions to confirm baseline knowledge, move into behavioural and scenario questions that make up most of the interview, and close with a process question or two plus time for your questions about caseload and the types of matters the team handles.

1. Talk us through the key steps an employer needs to follow to make a redundancy genuine under the Fair Work Act.

Why they ask

Redundancy is one of the most common sources of unfair dismissal claims, so the panel wants to confirm you know the legal tests before they trust you to advise on one.

How to structure your answer

Walk through the requirements in order: role no longer required, consultation obligations under the applicable award or agreement, consideration of redeployment, and correct notice and entitlements.

Example answer

"I'd start by confirming the position itself is no longer needed, not just the person in it. Then I'd check the award or enterprise agreement for consultation clauses and make sure those steps happen before any decision is communicated. I'd also document consideration of redeployment options elsewhere in the business, because failing to do that is one of the most common grounds an unfair dismissal claim succeeds on. Finally I'd confirm notice periods and redundancy pay against the NES and get the paperwork signed off before anything is said to the employee."

2. Tell us about a time you mediated a dispute between an employee and their manager.

Why they ask

Mediation is core to the role, and the panel wants evidence you can stay neutral and get a workable outcome rather than just escalate the matter.

How to structure your answer

STAR: situation, task, action, result.

Example answer

"An employee raised a grievance that their manager was excluding them from team communications. I met with each of them separately first to understand their version, then brought them together with clear ground rules for the conversation. I kept the discussion focused on specific incidents rather than general character claims and helped them agree on a communication protocol going forward. The relationship recovered enough that the employee withdrew the formal grievance, and I followed up with both of them a month later to confirm the protocol was holding."

3. A manager comes to you wanting to dismiss an employee immediately for poor performance, with no prior warnings on file. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests whether you'll push back on a manager under pressure to protect the organisation from a claim, which is a routine and important part of the job.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: state the immediate risk, the advice you'd give, and how you'd manage the manager relationship while holding the line.

Example answer

"I'd tell the manager directly that dismissing without any documented warnings creates real exposure to an unfair dismissal claim, because there's no evidence the employee was given a chance to improve. I'd explain the manager still has options, starting a formal performance process now with clear expectations and a review date, and I'd offer to help draft that document immediately so the manager feels the issue is being acted on rather than ignored. I'd also flag the timeframe pressure, if there's a genuine safety or conduct issue that changes the analysis, and ask directly whether that's actually what's going on here."

4. Walk us through how you'd investigate an allegation of workplace bullying.

Why they ask

Investigations need to be procedurally fair to hold up if challenged, so the panel wants to see a structured approach rather than an ad hoc one.

How to structure your answer

Step-by-step process walk-through from intake to outcome.

Example answer

"I'd start by taking a detailed statement from the complainant and clarifying the specific allegations rather than general impressions. I'd then notify the respondent of the allegations in enough detail for them to respond, and interview any witnesses separately, keeping notes contemporaneous. Throughout I'd apply the same standard of proof and give both parties a genuine opportunity to respond to anything raised against them. At the end I'd prepare written findings against each allegation with reasons, and recommend outcomes to management separately from the fact-finding itself so the process stays defensible."

5. How would you explain a change to an enterprise agreement to staff who are unhappy about it?

Why they ask

Advisors often have to communicate unpopular decisions clearly and this checks whether you can do that without losing trust on either side.

How to structure your answer

Audience-focused communication approach: what you'd say, how, and how you'd handle pushback.

Example answer

"I'd avoid legal jargon and focus on what actually changes for a typical employee's pay and conditions, using specific examples rather than clause numbers. I'd hold a session where people can ask questions directly rather than just sending an email, because unanswered questions turn into rumours. If people push back, I'd acknowledge what's worse for them rather than only selling the positives, and be clear about what has and hasn't been decided versus what's still open for feedback before the vote."

6. Describe how you'd prepare for a Fair Work Commission conciliation conference.

Why they ask

Representing the organisation at the Commission is a core task in this role, and the panel wants to see you treat preparation seriously rather than winging it.

How to structure your answer

Preparation checklist talked through in sequence.

Example answer

"I'd review the full file first, including the original claim, any internal investigation notes, and the employee's employment history, to know exactly what's being alleged and what evidence supports our position. I'd brief the manager involved on likely questions and agree on our settlement parameters with senior management before the conference, so I'm not making decisions on the spot. I'd also think through what a reasonable settlement looks like versus running the matter to a hearing, because conciliation works best when you go in with a realistic view of the risk, not just the strongest version of our case."