

Rights expert to head gambling body

Leading human rights lawyer Chris Sidoti says he has been appointed to oversee the new Casino, Liquor and Gaming Authority in New South Wales to help minimise the damage caused by gambling.

The former federal human rights commissioner has had a lengthy involvement in international human rights issues and is the chairman of the UK Government's Northern Ireland Bill of Rights Forum.

Mr Sidoti says he has no experience in the gambling sector but brings to the job a wide range of legal and community work experience.

Gaming and Racing Minister Graham West says the lawyer will chair the existing Casino Control Authority until the new body is established to enact an overhaul of the state's liquor and gaming laws.

„Part of the Government's intention is to make sure the community has an input into the process regarding liquor,“ he said.

„[The] Gaming and the Casino Control Authority will now take on this task as an independent body with people like Mr Sidoti, who is chairing it.

„It will make independent decisions in the best interests of the community with regard to liquor, gaming and of course the control of casinos in this state.“

Mr Sidoti says he is an unlikely candidate for the job but looks forward to the challenge.

He says he is not a gambler but is looking forward to the

challenge of helping others strike the right balance.

„We need, through the authority, to give people the opportunity who wish to do so to exploit the recreational advantage [of gambling] while at the same time not causing broader harm,“ he said.

Mr Sidoti says the new body will also work to eliminate criminality in gaming and enforce fairness.

„We have to pursue all ... of those objectives by ensuring the authority is functioning properly, provides opportunities for fair hearings, and has proper investigation and control arms,“ he said.