

# Media Release

Mr Tim Pallas MP

Treasurer

Minister for Economic Development

Minister for Industrial Relations



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## WAGE THEFT NOW A CRIME IN VICTORIA

From today, wage theft is now a criminal offence in Victoria, and employers who deliberately underpay or don't pay their workers now face fines of up to almost \$1 million for companies and up to 10 years' jail or up to \$200,000 for individuals.

Under the Wage Theft Act 2020, which took effect today, it is a crime for an employer in Victoria to deliberately underpay employees or dishonestly withhold wages, superannuation or other employee entitlements.

The new laws deliver on the Andrews Labor Government's commitment to establish criminal offences targeting employers who commit wage theft.

The law also makes it a crime to falsify, or avoid keeping, employee entitlement records to gain a financial advantage.

The legislation covers dishonest conduct by employers who are seeking to deliberately avoid their lawful responsibilities.

Employers who make honest mistakes or who exercise due diligence in paying wages and employee entitlements are not guilty of wage theft offences.

A new statutory body, Wage Inspectorate Victoria, also begins operations today and has the power to investigate and prosecute wage theft offences.

Led by newly appointed Commissioner Robert Hortle, Wage Inspectorate Victoria will also promote and enforce existing Victorian laws covering child employment, long service leave, and contractors in transport and forestry.

Allegations of wage theft can be reported to Wage Inspectorate Victoria via its website at [wageinspectorate.vic.gov.au](http://wageinspectorate.vic.gov.au), which also contains comprehensive frequently asked questions, fact sheets, and information for employers about their responsibilities.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Industrial Relations Tim Pallas

*"These laws are designed to target employers who deliberately short-change and exploit their employees for financial advantage, which is unfair for both workers and businesses."*

*"Wage theft is an insidious crime that often takes advantage of vulnerable employees who may be too afraid to speak up – these laws send a strong message that Victoria takes the exploitation of workers seriously and that wage theft is intolerable and will be punished."*

*"While deliberate underpayment is one element of wage theft, falsifying or failing to keep records to conceal underpayments is just as serious and also targeted by Victoria's laws."*

### Quote attributable to Commissioner of Wage Inspectorate Victoria Robert Hortle

*"This is a landmark day for Victoria - Wage Inspectorate Victoria was established with the purpose to protect vulnerable employees from exploitation and hold employers to account if they commit wage theft."*

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