

# Media Release

**Mr Tim Pallas MP**

Treasurer

Minister for Industrial Relations

Minister for Economic Development

Minister for Trade



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## **WAGE INSPECTORATE HELPS 15,000 VICTORIANS IN FIRST YEAR**

The Andrews Labor Government's Wage Inspectorate has clawed back \$1 million in unpaid long service leave for workers and helped more than 15,000 employees and businesses in its first 12 months.

The Labor Government created the Wage Inspectorate to oversee Victoria's nation-leading wage theft laws along with long service leave obligations and child employment and owner driver laws – educating the community and taking enforcement action where required.

The Inspectorate's work means the vast majority of Victorian employers who do the right thing by their workers are able to compete on a level playing field.

The regulator's 2021-22 figures show 295 Victorians claimed they were underpaid long service leave and \$309,367 was recouped with the Inspectorate's help.

The Wage Inspectorate also took strong action in the courts with seven matters before court during the financial year, including a successful action against Coles Supermarkets that led to more than 4,000 workers being paid back more than \$700,000 in long service leave.

More than 7,700 permits were issued to employers of children under 15 and 329 child employment compliance checks and investigations were conducted.

The regulator's child employment team conducted almost 100 field visits and sent over 200 letters to businesses suspected of employing children under 15 to educate them about the law.

In one of the most serious cases taken to court, a travelling circus pleaded guilty to three charges, admitting it breached the law by employing Chinese nationals as acrobats without a mandatory child employment permit. One of the children spent 10 days in hospital after being hit by a trapeze.

The Wage Inspectorate also commenced intelligence-led, criminal wage theft investigations using the powers granted under Victoria's new wage theft laws, including executing search warrants, issuing compulsory notices, entering premises and seizing evidence.

Hirers of owner drivers were audited, with the Wage Inspectorate checking compliance with Victoria's owner driver and forestry contractor laws for 259 individual drivers.

Members of the retail, hospitality, manufacturing and services industries were the most likely to call the Wage Inspectorate. About 3,000 calls came from employers seeking to understand their obligations, with employees, parents or people calling on behalf of a worker or business making up the balance of calls.

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

*"The Wage Inspectorate provides a vital service to workers and businesses – it helps employers navigate state workplace laws and ensures workers are supported with information about their rights."*

*"It's great to see so many Victorians using the free support available and that there's a strong, independent regulator taking appropriate action to uphold the law and ensure fairness in our workplaces."*

**Media contact:** Shaun Phillips 0407 553 763 | [shaun.phillips@minstaff.vic.gov.au](mailto:shaun.phillips@minstaff.vic.gov.au)

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

*“We’re aiming to have an even bigger impact over the next 12 months through our intelligence-led compliance activities, prosecutions and the release of new educational tools to make complying with the law even easier.”*