

Media Release

The Hon Tim Pallas MP

Treasurer

Minister for Industrial Relations

Minister for Trade and Investment



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PROTECTIONS, PERMITS ENSURE SAFETY FOR CHILD WORKERS

New laws to strengthen protections for children working in cafes, shops and other businesses and make it easier for responsible businesses to comply with their legal obligations come into effect on 1 July.

A child employment licensing system will replace the existing permit system and enable a business to employ multiple children under one licence, rather than having to apply for a permit for each child they employ.

The new licensing system includes a “fit and proper person” test which considers, among other things, an employer’s compliance with child employment and other relevant workplace laws.

Victoria’s child employment watchdog, Wage Inspectorate Victoria, will be given new powers including the ability to issue compliance and infringement notices to businesses that have done the wrong thing but may not meet the criteria for prosecution.

The maximum penalty for employing a child without a permit or licence will increase from \$18,500 to more than \$200,000.

In Victoria, employers require a permit to employ anyone under 15, but children can do delivery work from 11 and work in other roles from 13, including in retail and hospitality.

Research commissioned by the Wage Inspectorate shows that one in three Victorians mistakenly believe 14 and nine months is the age children can start working without restriction in Victoria – this used to be the age when children could leave school and enter the workforce, which is where the misapprehension has come from.

The misconception is more common in regional areas, with 40 per cent of people nominating the incorrect threshold for children to be able to work.

More information about child employment and the upcoming changes can be found at wageinspectorate.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Industrial Relations Tim Pallas

“The new system will make it easier for responsible businesses to understand their obligations when it comes to child employment.”

“The safety and wellbeing of children in the workplace is the number one priority – strengthening the law will help keep our kids protected.”

Quotes attributable to Wage Inspectorate Victoria Commissioner Robert Hortle

“One in 10 kids in Victoria are working which can provide valuable experience and spending money, but we need to make sure they’re taken care of in the workplace.”

“All workplaces have risks, and those risks are magnified for young workers. If you want to employ someone under 15, it’s important to do so safely.”

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