

Media Release

Mr Tim Pallas MP
Treasurer
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VICTORIA LEADS ON UNIFORM LABOUR HIRE LAWS TO PROTECT WORKERS

Victoria will play a key role in the creation of nationally consistent labour hire laws in an acknowledgement of the state's pioneering actions in regulating the sector and protecting vulnerable workers.

Minister for Industrial Relations Tim Pallas and his Commonwealth, state and territory workplace relations counterparts today adopted a model to harmonise laws to create consistency and allow for recognition of licences across borders.

This will create efficiencies for business while ensuring labour hire laws meet a minimum standard that is as strong as the existing schemes in Victoria, Queensland and the ACT.

As host jurisdiction in the national harmonisation project Victoria will be responsible for passage of a model law and for establishing an independent statutory body, the National Labour Hire Regulator, modelled on Victoria's Labour Hire Authority.

A senior officials working group, led by Victoria and the Commonwealth, will develop an inter-governmental agreement to govern the harmonised system to be presented to ministers with a view to endorsement being obtained by 1 July 2024.

The Allan Labor Government created the Labour Hire Authority in 2018 after the Government-commissioned *Inquiry into the Labour Hire Industry and Insecure Work* uncovered widespread abuse and exploitation of labour hire workers across Victoria.

The Authority has established itself as a leading workplace regulator in Victoria, protecting labour hire workers from unethical and unlawful practices and improving the transparency and integrity of the labour hire industry.

A licensing scheme applies to providers of labour hire across all industries and requires that:

- Labour hire providers must be licensed to operate in Victoria
- Parties that use labour hire providers must only engage licensed providers
- Labour hire providers must comply with workplace and other laws, and report annually on their activities.

The Authority is responsible for reviewing hundreds of licence applications each year as well as regulating and educating licence holders.

The Authority prosecutes operators and individuals alleged to have broken the law, this month obtaining penalties of \$264,000 in the Supreme Court against a company and its director that engaged seven unlicensed labour hire companies to obtain workers to pick fruit around Cobram.

Weeks earlier, Australian record fines for breaching labour hire laws of \$617,000 were imposed in the Supreme Court for a case involving horticulture workers unlawfully engaged in areas including Rosebud, Koo Wee Rup, Torquay and Devon Meadows.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Industrial Relations Tim Pallas

"We've licensed labour hire companies and the Labour Hire Authority is out in the field making sure the rules are followed – all in the name of protecting vulnerable workers."

"We're pleased that a model national law will be developed and that Victoria is again leading the way."

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