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Tim Pallas MP | Minister for Industrial
Relations

Industrial Relations Portfolio

Victorian Budget 2024-25

Key Achievements for 2023-24

Industrial Relations Victoria has:

- Reached in-principle agreement with the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) on terms for a new agreement covering the Victorian Public Service (VPS)
- Engaged in broader public sector enterprise bargaining - approving 17 public sector enterprise agreements
- Developed a model for National Labour Hire Regulation, which was accepted by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Workplace Relations Ministers
- Led advocacy to the Commonwealth on industrial relations reforms impacting Victorian workers including Fair Work Act amendments and the Annual Wage Review
- Launched the Gender Equality Toolkit for small and medium businesses
- Updated the Government's Building Equality Policy

Portable Long Service Authority

- The scheme is now in its fifth year of operations, and the portable long service authority will commence processes and systems to administer claims from 1 July 2026 (seven years from the commencement of the scheme).
- The Authority is an established and respected employer in the City of Greater Bendigo, providing skilled and secure employment for more than 50 staff.
- The Authority has now registered almost 350,000 workers and over 3,300 employers – all part of a self-funded scheme that will ensure workers in the contract cleaning, security and community services sectors have access to long service leave.
- The Authority launched two new compliance and enforcement initiatives: to target covered employers who have not registered for the Scheme and employers who are late in submitting their quarterly returns for the Fund and service records.

Wage Inspectorate Victoria

- In 2023-24, Wage Inspectorate Victoria has answered 8,106 phone calls and responded to more than 600 written queries from Victorians relating to Victorian industrial relations laws. On 1 July 2023, the child employment regulatory regime moved from a permit to a licensing system and has issued 662 licences (as at 31 March 2024) and 724 child employment investigations were completed.
- The Inspectorate has also recovered hundreds of thousands of dollars in unpaid long service leave, amounting to \$1.3 million for Victorian workers. In the last year it has successfully prosecuted Woolworths Group for breaches of long service leave laws and employers including TK Maxx and Red Rooster and Muffin Break franchisees among others have been sentenced for breaches of child employment laws.
- From 1 July 2023, new child employment laws, designed in consultation with stakeholders and the community, saw a licensing system replace the permit system and enabled businesses to employ multiple children under one licence, instead of needing a permit for each child they employ, while maintain and ensuring child safety in their employment. The maximum penalty for employing a child without a licence also increased from \$18,500 to more than \$200,000.

Labour Hire Authority

- The Labour Hire Authority (LHA) administers the labour hire licensing scheme (scheme) in Victoria. In the financial year to 30 April 2024 the LHA granted 1050 licences (with 98 application refusals). As at 1 May 2024, the total number of current licences is 5539.
- Now into its fifth year of licensing operations, the LHA now deals with almost as many licence renewals as it does new licence applications. Many of its currently licensed operators now have renewed licences, having been through one full cycle with their initial licence.
- It also means the LHA is continuing to expand its focus on compliance and enforcement outcomes. In this financial year to 30 April 2024, 59 education and compliance inspection activities were undertaken which included field inspections of premises where labour hire workers were engaged.

Labour Hire Authority

- The LHA is also removing non-compliant operators from the scheme. It has cancelled 678 licences since the scheme's commencement for suspected contraventions of relevant laws and non-compliance with the Labour Hire Licensing Act. LHA has prosecuted five matters in the Supreme Court of Victoria in the period, with two resulting in significant penalties imposed for breach of labour hire laws with total penalties of more than \$1.1 million.
- The LHA collaborates with a range of law enforcement agencies, including the Fair Work Ombudsman, Australian Taxation Office, WorkSafe, and the Queensland Labour Hire Licensing Compliance Unit to successfully target rogue and unlawful operators.

Industrial Relations Portfolio

Key Priorities for 2024-25

- Lead the national labour hire project and advocate in the Commonwealth for fair system reforms for workers including review of Victoria's industrial relations laws in light of recent Commonwealth legislative amendments
- Continuing to advocate for women's workplace equality – including in male dominated industries like construction and manufacturing
- Promote the Victorian public sector as a model employer and finalise key enterprise agreements through good faith negotiation with employers and their unions
- Develop and/or support policy and legislative reform that contributes to fair, equitable and productive Victorian workplaces

National Labour Hire Harmonisation

- Work is underway, led by the Victorian Government and the Commonwealth, to adopt a harmonised model for labour hire regulation across Australia, following successful development of the model accepted by jurisdictions at the end of 2023, led by Victoria and Queensland.
- 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.
- Victoria is the proposed host jurisdiction for the national project and is currently leading work with the Commonwealth and other states and territories to progress next steps including development of an Intergovernmental Agreement and costing and funding modelling.

On-demand 'Gig' worker Support Services and Standards

- Gig workers will soon be able to pursue matters in the Fair Work Commission and seek the support of the Fair Work Ombudsman in relation to their rights and protections including minimum standards orders.
- Through the work that Victoria has undertaken, we've significantly influenced policy and legislative reforms nationally. We've been able to clarify the nature of the policy problem, the obligations for platform operators and businesses (or identify how few apply to them), and target initiatives to improve working conditions for countless workers now and into the future.
- The Government will continue engagement with the Commonwealth Government to advocate for national minimum standards and protections for gig workers.

Building Equity

- The Government continues its commitment to implement medium and longer-term action to achieve greater representation of women in construction.
- The *2023-24 Budget* provided \$2.4 million to implement a new women in construction strategy.
- Our Building Equality Policy is fundamental to this strategy. It has three key actions:
 - i. To set onsite targets for women in trade, nontrade, management and supervisory roles
 - ii. To set targets for the engagement of women as apprentices and trainees
 - iii. To require development of Gender Equality Action Plans to address the structural and cultural barriers to women's workforce participation.
- The policy seeks to work towards equal representation by taking steps to attract, recruit and retain women in the industry.
- The Government aims to break down the barriers to women's workforce participation and challenge existing attitudes and norms.

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