

Media Release



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VICTORIAN COMPANY AND DIRECTOR FINED FOR SUB-CONTRACTING TO UNLICENSED LABOUR HIRE PROVIDERS

A total penalty of \$264,352 has been issued to a Victorian company and its director for engaging seven unlicensed labour hire providers to source workers for orchards in the Cobram area.

The Supreme Court of Victoria issued penalties of \$211,481.60 against Honey Bunny Global Pty Ltd, and \$52,870.40 against director Surawadee Tanchote, after legal action by the Labour Hire Authority (LHA).

Labour hire companies must be licensed to operate in Victoria, and host businesses must only use licensed providers – the same maximum penalties apply for using or providing unlicensed labour hire services, under the *Labour Hire Licensing Act 2018* (Vic).

The company and its director had cooperated with LHA investigations, and the Court noted the contrition and remorse expressed by director Tanchote in determining the penalties.

The judgement comes just days after a separate labour hire company in Victoria's horticulture industry was issued the highest total penalty in Australian history for breaches of labour hire law, for knowingly and repeatedly operating without a licence.

A L Star Express Pty Ltd was penalised \$617,916 for supplying workers to pick fruit and vegetables and perform other horticulture tasks in Rosebud, Koo Wee Rup, Torquay and Devon Meadows.

Reinforcing its focus on the industry, LHA this week launched a communication campaign to inform horticulture workers of their rights, and how to report unfair treatment.

Horticulture workers will see targeted social media and digital advertising, and radio and press materials in Victoria's regions, where labour hire workers commonly pick and pack fruit and vegetables, and can access more information through a dedicated website: labourhireauthority.vic.gov.au/hort-worker

LHA held free information sessions in Victorian horticulture regions across 2023, to support labour hire businesses to understand and comply with their obligations.

Horticulture work such as fruit and vegetable picking often involves the use of labour hire workers, including workers on visa programs, who have historically experienced exploitation in Victoria.

Quotes attributable to Labour Hire Licensing Commissioner, Steve Dargavel:

"Any business attempting to hide unlawful behaviour through subcontracting is on notice – we will identify you, and we will take action against you."

"Victorian businesses need to be aware that the same significant penalties apply for engaging another company to provide unlicensed labour hire services as for providing those services yourself."

"Ensuring all Victorian labour hire companies are licensed is an essential way of protecting workers and improving the fairness and integrity of the industry."

For any queries regarding this release, please contact the Labour Hire Authority Media Team on 0400 301 840 or communications@labourhireauthority.vic.gov.au

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