

## **PAEC Inquiry into the 2017-18 Budget Estimates – Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearing**

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**Minister Hutchins, Industrial Relations, Friday 2 June 2017**

### **Question 5**

**Recommendations from the Victorian Inquiry into labour hire and insecure work – How will the adoption of recommendations from this inquiry assist in protecting Victorian workers from exploitation?**

**(Page 4 of the Industrial Relations portfolio transcript)**

### **Response**

The independent Victorian Inquiry into Labour Hire and Insecure Work (Inquiry) found that many labour hire workers are treated as a ‘second class’ of worker, with evidence of outright exploitation of workers in certain sectors. The Inquiry also heard accounts of the extent and use of insecure work, and the negative impact of this type of employment on workers and their families. The Inquiry report made 35 recommendations directed at addressing these issues, the majority of which the Government has supported (with 19 recommendations supported in full and 14 supported in principle).

The key recommendations supported are that Victoria:

- set up a licensing scheme to regulate labour hire operators;
- develop a voluntary code of conduct for the labour hire industry;
- advocate for a national licensing scheme for labour hire operators;
- use Government procurement mechanisms to promote secure work practices and ethical employment; and
- provide further funding to assist temporary visa workers with employment rights.

The Government’s response will ensure enhanced protections for vulnerable workers and appropriate regulation of the labour hire industry. The introduction of a labour hire licensing scheme will target ‘rogue’ labour hire operators who are exploiting workers with a view to improving compliance with minimum employment and health and safety standards. The promotion of secure work practices will reduce the negative impacts for workers associated with insecure work, which include financial insecurity, difficulty in planning and saving and stress. The Victorian Budget 2017-18 also provides funding of \$0.4 million in 2017-18 and \$0.4 million in 2018-19 to provide temporary visa workers with information about their employment rights and to assist them to enforce those rights.

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### Question 6

Fair and equitable Victorian workplaces (Victorian Budget 2017-18, BP 3, pages 27 and 31) - \$400,000 grants to community legal organisations to support advice on employment and workplace law cases for temporary visa workers.

Will these grants employ any lawyers to work on these matters in community legal centres? Please provide a breakdown of the \$400,000 of funds allocated for this purpose. What proportion of the \$400,000 will be spent on lawyers versus social media and other digital information channels?

(Page 7 of the Industrial Relations portfolio transcript)

### Response

In response to the evidence of exploitation of temporary visa workers, the Victorian Inquiry into Labour Hire and Insecure Work recommended that the Victorian Government consider further funding measures to provide assistance to temporary visa workers (*Recommendation 27*).

In response to this recommendation, the Victorian Budget 2017-18 provides funding of \$0.4 million in 2017-18 and \$0.4 million in 2018-19 to assist this vulnerable group of Victorian workers enforce their employment rights.

The majority of the funding will be provided as grants to community legal organisations to advise and represent temporary visa workers in employment and workplace law matters.

A component of the funding will also be for the development of a communications strategy to provide employment rights information to temporary visa workers through targeted social media and other digital communication channels.

Industrial Relations Victoria in the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources is currently preparing a detailed scope of work for the two initiatives and this will determine the allocation of funding.