

Media Release



28 July 2025

MILDURA GROWERS WARNED TO AVOID LABOUR HIRE SCAMS

Unlawful labour hire companies are targeting horticulture businesses in Mildura, putting growers at risk of fines, disruption and involvement with criminal elements.

In late July, Labour Hire Authority (LHA) officers attended the premises of several horticulture businesses and worker accommodation sites, as part of an ongoing operation in the Sunraysia region.

With regulators already identifying criminal syndicate involvement in the region, and issues as serious as forced labour – a type of modern slavery – LHA has found labour hire companies attempting to avoid scrutiny through licence fraud.

Labour hire providers have been found:

- producing fraudulent paper licences
- doctoring digital files relating to their licensing status
- claiming to be a specific licensed company without that operator's knowledge, then giving a grower their own contact and bank details for payment.

Under Victorian law, companies require a labour hire licence to supply workers to plant, pick, pack, sort, label, grade, thin, prune or spray plants.

Licensing helps to ensure that labour hire businesses are run by fit and proper persons, and comply with relevant laws – to protect workers and provide a fair playing field for businesses doing the right thing.

Host businesses found engaging unlicensed labour hire companies risk fines of over:

- \$650,000 as a company
- \$160,000 as an individual.

LHA asks all Victorian horticulture businesses to arm themselves with tools and knowledge to avoid deception, and to stay on the right side of the law themselves, via a dedicated web page:

labourhireauthority.vic.gov.au/hort-host

Protect your business and your workers. Always check the labour hire licence.

Quotes attributable to Labour Hire Licensing Commissioner, Steve Dargavel:

"These operators can be involved in crime across state and international borders, so they're not people you want to do business with."

"It's obvious why criminals might want to avoid the checks involved in holding a labour hire licence, so it's critical that growers are diligent in checking our public register to ensure a licence is legitimate."

"We've made it easy for growers to avoid these dodgy operators, so if you use an unlicensed provider, you can expect to feel the full force of the law."

For any queries on this release, contact the LHA media team on 0400 301 840 or communications@labourhireauthority.vic.gov.au

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