

Media Release

Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



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NEW LAWS TO KEEP WORKERS SAFE FROM ASSAULT AND ABUSE

The Allan Labor Government will better protect customer-facing workers in retail, fast food and public transport roles from assault and abuse.

Premier Jacinta Allan today announced the Labor Government will change the law to send a clear message that attacks against retail and other customer-facing roles like transport and hospitality workers are unacceptable.

The Government will convene a Worker Protection Consultation Group to oversee the development of the legislative approach, ensuring we hear from a wide range of people and get the balance of these changes right.

The Group will consider potential new penalties or offences, as well as how existing offences could be expanded or strengthened to protect these vulnerable workers. It will also consider protections against stalking, harassment, or intimidation towards workers.

This work will be done with the aim of introducing a Bill to Parliament by the end of 2025.

There is strong anecdotal evidence that both verbal and physical abuse towards customer-facing workers has reached a worrying level in recent years, with unions and employers raising concerns for the welfare of staff.

A national survey conducted last year of 4,600 members from the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employee' Association (SDA) found that a shocking 87 per cent of workers had experienced abuse from customers in the past year.

When compared to a 2021 survey of members, the reports of physical violence against workers increased by a staggering 56 per cent.

The changes will complement work already underway by the Labor Government to strengthen the state's anti-vilification laws, with many reports of abuse against workers relating to the worker's ethnicity, race or cultural background.

Quotes attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

"These new laws will send a powerful message: if you think you can get away with assaulting or abusing these workers – you're wrong and you will face the consequences."

"These workers deserve nothing but our respect. And we're going to help make sure they get it."

Quote attributable to Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes

"It's disappointing that we have to legislate against this – but clearly too many people think it's ok to intimidate and harass customer service workers. People must be safe at work from abuse – we'll do everything we can to ensure this."