



R&CA advice that could save you and your small business

As a small business owner, you are used to wearing many hats on top of your day-to-day work front and back of house. You are a marketing manager, bookkeeper, technology problem solver, HR manager and much, much more.

Perhaps one of the most demanding – and most crucial – admin tasks is keeping up to date with a labyrinth of workers' conditions and pay rates. The penalties for not complying with workplace laws are very high, and could cost you large sums of money, your business reputation and even your freedom.

Under new 'closing the loophole' legislation that came into effect on 1 January 2025, any employer who intentionally underpays wages or entitlements owed to an employee may be committing a criminal offence, resulting in up to 10 years' imprisonment.

This may be on top of a fine of up to three times the underpayment amount, or \$1.585 million (whichever is greater) for an individual, or up to \$7.825 million for a company. Employers accused of wage theft also attract adverse media attention and a poor business reputation.

"We know hospitality business owners want to do the right thing," says R&CA National President John Hart. "But they must take concrete steps to ensure they comply with Australian laws, and are paying staff correctly according to industry award rates. Down the track, it can be very hard to prove any errors are accidental rather than intentional."

This is where Restaurant & Catering Australia members can rest easy. As a member you'll receive specialised workplace relations support, tailored to your business. This might involve direct phone advice from industry experts, reminders of upcoming public holidays and award changes, and online resources for onboarding, entitlements, and performance management.

John says for many members, the benefits of this advice and the resources available are worth their membership fee many times over.

"R&CA helps you stay compliant and supported, with expert guidance exactly when you need it," he explains. "This means you don't have to pay an employment lawyer or IR consultant, or try and muddle through complicated legislation on your own."

John adds, "the Association will continue to lobby and advocate to improve regulations and policies that impact our operating environment – we are also here to assist and guide all our members to ensure that the industry is respected for its integrity, professionalism, and dedication to excellence."