

modelling & acting

People wishing to pursue careers in modelling or acting have to be very careful about who they do business with. In Victoria, there are no registration requirements so anybody can set up a modelling agency or market themselves as an actor's agent.

Modelling and acting have a very glamorous image. Sometimes the experience does not live up to its image. Unfortunately there are many operators who will rip you off and several things can go wrong before you start work.

People seeking modelling or acting work have contacted Job Watch with a range of complaints including:

- demands that models or actors pay for expensive and unnecessary portfolios of photographs before work is provided;
- sexual harassment or assault;
- demands that models or actors pay high registration fees;
- photographs being featured on the internet;
- agents falsely claiming to have modelling or acting work on their books (it is very easy to get conned by false promises); or
- being pressured into enrolling in a modelling or acting course with high course fees.



Job Watch Inc is

an independent, not for profit, employment rights legal centre. It provides a free, confidential telephone information and referral service and other assistance to Victorian workers.

Hours:- Monday – Friday 9am-5pm
(Except Tuesday 12-2pm)

Phone: (03) 9662 1933 or
1800 331 617

Website: www.job-watch.org.au

In some circumstances you might be able to get fees refunded. Contact Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (see over for contact details).

With those complaints in mind we have developed this list of dos and don'ts for those people interested in becoming a model or actor.

Things you should do

1. Be realistic

Most models and actors don't earn a lot of money. Having other employment options is important because very few people spend their entire working life in the modelling or acting industry.

2. Use a reputable agency or agent

In the case of **modelling**, ask experienced models, large fashion houses, advertising agencies and reputable photographers which agencies they use before committing yourself to a particular agency.

In the case of **acting**, ask experienced actors, Film and TV production companies, theatre companies, reputable drama schools like NIDA and the VCA, or TV channels about actors' agents before committing yourself to a particular agent.

Do an internet search (eg. on Google) about particular modelling agencies or actors' agents. You should also check with Consumer Affairs Victoria if they have issued a public warning about unfair business practices against a particular agency or agent.

If the agency encourages you to use their preferred photographer, research the photographer first and check what the costs will be.

3. Beware of the claims made by agents

Ask for the names of models or actors the agent represents and the names of companies they provide clients to.

4. Signing a contract

If you are asked to sign a contract, make sure you read it carefully. The agency or agent should not have an escape or termination clause which makes it impossible for you to leave. If there are clauses you do not understand, **do not sign** the contract until you have checked it with a lawyer.

For your nearest local community legal centre contact the Federation of Community Legal Centres Tel. **(03) 9654 2204**.

**Remember:
always keep a copy of any
contract you sign!**

5. Check how much you will be paid for the work you do

Ask the agency or agent what you will be paid and what sort of commission or other cut they take. You should also contact the Workplace Infoline (1300 363 264) to check what the legal minimum pay rate for that particular type of work. You may also contact the relevant union and ask what the going rate is for that particular type of work.

6. Get a business address, telephone number and the full name of the person you are dealing with

Some operators are reluctant to give this basic information. Genuine operators will not

have any problem with providing this kind of information. If things go wrong, such as not getting your pay, you know where to go to try and sort out the problem if you have those details.

7. Keep copies of all written information

Always keep copies of any written communications between you and the agency or agent. This includes copies of information leaflets, promotional material, course information, contracts etc.

8. If you are under 15

Make sure that if you are under 15, your parent or guardian obtains a child work permit from Industrial Relations Victoria – Department of Industry, Innovation and Regional Development. There is also a mandatory code for the employment of children in the entertainment industry.

9. Consider joining the relevant union

The Models and Mannequins Guild is part of the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees Association (SDA). The SDA is the union that covers modelling. You can contact them on **(03) 9698 1400**.

The Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA) is the union that looks after actors. You can contact them on: **(03) 9691 7100 or 1300 656 312**.

Unions can give you advice about what to avoid, (e.g. exclusive contracts to one agent) information about the current going rate for particular types of work and assist you if problems arise.

Things you shouldn't do

1. Don't be fooled by flattery

Don't accept a promoter's word without question. If you are considering employment in the modelling or acting industry it is very important to keep your feet firmly on the ground so you don't get ripped off or exploited.

2. Don't consume alcohol, other beverages or drugs at an interview

3. Don't pay an excessive joining fee

Reputable agencies don't ask for an excessive fee. If you are required to pay a fee, check what it is for.

4. Check carefully if the agency charges any periodic fees

For example, does the agency charge a monthly administration fee?

5. Don't give personal details

You shouldn't give your details, including your telephone number and address before you know about the agent or photographer.

6. Don't go to a first interview alone

Always take someone you trust and discuss how you both felt about the situation afterwards.

7. Beware of travelling to out of the way locations and be cautious if you are asked to attend an interview organised outside business hours

8. Don't enrol in expensive and unnecessary training courses

Talk to reputable agencies or agents, the union, and working models or actors about the courses they would recommend.

Where to get help

Job Watch Inc:

(Metro) (03) 9662 1933

(Rural) 1800 331 617

ACTU Worker Connect

1300 362 223

for referral to relevant union

www.actu.asn.au

Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC)

Info Centre 1300 302 502

to report misleading employment ads

www.accc.gov.au

Consumer Affairs Victoria

1300 558 181

to report misleading employment ads

www.consumer.vic.gov.au

Federation of Community Legal Centres

(03) 9654 2204

for referral to closest centre

Industrial Relations Victoria Department of Industry, Innovation & Regional Development

1800 287 287

for child employment permit

www.irv.vic.gov.au

Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance (MEAA)

1300 656 512 or (03) 9671 7100

www.alliance.org.au

Models & Mannequins Guild - SDA

(03) 9698 1400

www.sdavic.org

Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

(03) 9628 9700

www.vcat.vic.gov.au

Workplace Infoline

1300 363 264

for wage rate

www.workchoices.gov.au

Workplace Ombudsman

1300 724 200

Important disclaimer

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