# Voluntary Administration Creditor Information Sheet

## Offences, Recoverable Transactions and Insolvent Trading

ARITA
AUSTRALIAN RESTRUCTURING INSOLVENCY & TURNAROUND ASSOCIATION

## Offences

**A summary of offences under the Corporations Act that may be identified by the administrator:**

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| 180 | Failure by company officers to exercise a reasonable degree of care and diligence in the exercise of their powers and the discharge of their duties. |
| 181 | Failure to act in good faith. |
| 182 | Making improper use of their position as an officer or employee, to gain, directly or indirectly, an advantage. |
| 183 | Making improper use of information acquired by virtue of the officer's position. |
| 184 | Reckless or intentional dishonesty in failing to exercise duties in good faith for a proper purpose. Use of position or information dishonestly to gain advantage or cause detriment. This can be a criminal offence. |
| 198G | Performing or exercising a function or power as an officer while a company is under administration. |
| 206A | Contravening a court order against taking part in the management of a corporation. |
| 206A, B | Taking part in the management of corporation while being an insolvent, for example, while bankrupt. |
| 206A, B | Acting as a director or promoter or taking part in the management of a company within five years after conviction or imprisonment for various offences. |
| 209(3) | Dishonest failure to observe requirements on making loans to directors or related companies. |
| 254T | Paying dividends except out of profits. |
| 286 | Failure to keep proper accounting records. |
| 312 | Obstruction of an auditor. |
| 314-7 | Failure to comply with requirements for the preparation of financial statements. |
| 437D(5) | Unauthorised dealing with company's property during administration. |
| 438B(4) | Failure by directors to assist administrator, deliver records and provide information. |
| 438C(5) | Failure to deliver up books and records to the administrator. |
| 588G | Incurring liabilities while insolvent |
| 588GAB | Officer's duty to prevent creditor-defeating disposition |
| 588GAC | A person must not procure a company to make a creditor-defeating disposition |
| 590 | Failure to disclose property, concealed or removed property, concealed a debt due to the company, altered books of the company, fraudulently obtained credit on behalf of the company, material omission from Report as to Affairs or false representation to creditors. |
| 596AB | Entering into an agreement or transaction to avoid employee entitlements. |

## Recoverable Transactions

### *Preferences*

A preference is a transaction, such as a payment by the company to a creditor, in which the creditor receiving the payment is preferred over the general body of creditors. The relevant period for the payment commences six months before the commencement of the liquidation. The company must have been insolvent at the time of the transaction, or become insolvent because of the transaction.

Where a creditor receives a preference, the payment is voidable as against a liquidator and is liable to be paid back to the liquidator subject to the creditor being able to successfully maintain any of the defences available to the creditor under the Corporations Act.

### *Creditor-defeating disposition*

Creditor-defeating dispositions are the transfer of company assets for less than market value (or the best price reasonably obtainable) that prevents, hinders or significantly delay creditors' access to the company's assets in liquidation. Creditor-defeating dispositions are voidable by a liquidator.

### *Uncommercial Transaction*

An uncommercial transaction is one that it may be expected that a reasonable person in the company's circumstances would not have entered into, having regard to the benefit or detriment to the company; the respective benefits to other parties; and any other relevant matter.

To be voidable, an uncommercial transaction must have occurred during the two years before the liquidation. However, if a related entity is a party to the transaction, the period is four years and if the intention of the transaction is to defeat creditors, the period is ten years. The company must have been insolvent at the time of the transaction, or become insolvent because of the transaction.

### *Unfair Loan*

A loan is unfair if and only if the interest was extortionate when the loan was made or has since become extortionate. There is no time limit on unfair loans – they only must be entered into before the winding up began.

### *Arrangements to avoid employee entitlements*

If an employee suffers loss because a person (including a director) enters into an arrangement or transaction to avoid the payment of employee entitlements, the liquidator or the employee may seek to recover compensation from that person or from members of a corporate group (Contribution Order).

### *Unreasonable payments to directors*

Liquidators have the power to reclaim '*unreasonable payments*' made to directors by companies prior to liquidation. The provision relates to payments made to or on behalf of a director or close associate of a director. The transaction must have been unreasonable, and have been entered into during the 4 years leading up to a company's liquidation, regardless of its solvency at the time the transaction occurred.

### *Voidable charges*

Certain charges over company property are voidable by a liquidator:

- circulating security interest created within six months of the liquidation, unless it secures a subsequent advance;
- unregistered security interests;
- security interests in favour of related parties who attempt to enforce the security within six months of its creation.

## Insolvent trading

In the following circumstances, directors may be personally liable for insolvent trading by the company:

- a person is a director at the time a company incurs a debt;
- the company is insolvent at the time of incurring the debt or becomes insolvent because of incurring the debt;
- at the time the debt was incurred, there were reasonable grounds to suspect that the company was insolvent;
- the director was aware such grounds for suspicion existed; and
- a reasonable person in a like position would have been so aware.

The law provides that the liquidator, and in certain circumstances the creditor who suffered the loss, may recover from the director, an amount equal to the loss or damage suffered. Similar provisions exist to pursue holding companies for debts incurred by their subsidiaries.

A defence is available under the law where the director can establish:

- there were reasonable grounds to expect that the company was solvent and they did so expect;
- they did not take part in management for illness or some other good reason; or
- they took all reasonable steps to prevent the company incurring the debt.

The proceeds of any recovery for insolvent trading by a liquidator are available for distribution to the unsecured creditors before the secured creditors.

**Important note:** This information sheet contains a summary of basic information on the topic. It is not a substitute for legal advice. Some provisions of the law referred to may have important exceptions or qualifications. This document may not contain all of the information about the law or the exceptions and qualifications that are relevant to your circumstances.