

Fair Work Ombudsman to audit 200 businesses in Wide Bay region

21 April 2017

The Fair Work Ombudsman has contacted 200 businesses in Queensland's Wide Bay region as part of a new proactive compliance and education campaign.

Fair Work Inspectors will audit time and wage records at randomly selected businesses across a variety of industries in Bundaberg, Gympie, Maryborough, Hervey Bay and surrounding areas.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says her Agency has been contacted by hundreds of workers in the region over the past two financial years alleging that they have been underpaid.

"In the last two financial years my Agency recovered \$402,805 for 220 workers in the Wide Bay region," Ms James says.

"The Wide Bay region has a high unemployment rate and a high youth unemployment rate, making workers in the region more vulnerable to exploitation and potentially more willing to accept sub-standard work practices."

Ms James says one of the aims of the campaign is to ensure employers are aware of their workplace responsibilities and how the Fair Work Ombudsman can assist them to access, understand and apply information to build a culture of compliance in their workplaces.

"It is important that we are proactive about checking that employees are receiving their full lawful entitlements and improving compliance in the region," Ms James said.

As part of the campaign, Fair Work Inspectors will provide employers with advice and access to resources that will assist them to meet their workplace obligations.

Local employer groups, including councils and business associations, have also been contacted to seek their assistance in promoting the campaign.

The Fair Work Ombudsman provides a range of free tools and resources, available at www.fairwork.gov.au, including the Pay and Conditions Tool (PACT), which provides advice about pay, shift, leave and redundancy entitlements.

Ms James says her Agency is also particularly focused on assisting workers who are new to the workforce because they can be vulnerable if they are not fully aware of their rights or may be reluctant to complain.

This month, the Fair Work Ombudsman launched the 'Record My Hours' smartphone app (<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/how-we-help-you/record-my-hours-app>) which is aimed at tackling the persistent problem of underpayment of vulnerable young workers. The app provides workers with a record of the time they spend at their workplace using geofencing technology and is available for download from the Apple and Good Play stores.

Employers and employees seeking assistance can visit www.fairwork.gov.au or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. An interpreter service is available on 13 14 50. Small business operators can opt to receive priority service from the Small Business Helpline.

Follow Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James on Twitter [@NatJamesFWO](https://twitter.com/NatJamesFWO) (<http://twitter.com/NatJamesFWO>), the Fair Work Ombudsman [@fairwork_gov_au](https://twitter.com/fairwork_gov_au) (http://twitter.com/fairwork_gov_au) or find us on Facebook www.facebook.com/fairwork.gov.au (<http://www.facebook.com/fairwork.gov.au>).

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Contact us

Fair Work Online: www.fairwork.gov.au

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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