

Melbourne entertainment hot spots targeted in Fair Work blitz

(www.fairwork.gov.au/%E2%80%9C#twitter) 24 August 2017

More than 50 restaurants, bars and cafes in some of Melbourne's most popular entertainment precincts have received surprise visits from the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Over the past two days Fair Work inspectors have been conducting on-site audits of businesses in Swanston Street and Lygon Street in Carlton, Sydney Road in Brunswick and St Georges Road in Fitzroy North.

Fair Work inspectors have been checking businesses' time and wage records to ensure that they are complying with their workplace obligations.

Inspectors are also talking to employees, managers and business owners about wage and entitlements matters as well as providing advice, assistance and information about how the agency can help.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James said the areas being targeted have a high density of hospitality businesses, which employ a large number of young and overseas workers.

Intelligence received by the agency in relation to some businesses operating in these areas suggest a culture of paying flat rates well below the minimum wage and potential record-keeping breaches.

"We know that young and migrant workers can be particularly vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace due to a lack of experience and a limited awareness of their workplace rights," Ms James said.

"This vulnerability may be compounded in highly competitive and price-driven markets, such as popular restaurant and bar strips, where some operators might attempt to gain an unfair advantage by cost-cutting through the underpayment of wages.

"These spot-checks are designed to identify any instances of non-compliance in these precincts.

"Building a culture of compliance where employers are fully aware of and abide by their workplace obligations will help create a level playing field for businesses in the interests of both employers and their workers.

"Businesses should be aware that refusal to cooperate with my agency or any examples of serious non-compliance may lead to enforcement action, including litigation," Ms James said.

The Fair Work Ombudsman offers a range of free tools and resources for employers at www.fairwork.gov.au, including the Pay and Conditions Tool (PACT) to assist business owners to calculate applicable pay rates and templates for pay slips and time-and-wages sheets.

Employers and employees seeking assistance from the Fair Work Ombudsman 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.

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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