

## Fair Work Ombudsman targets businesses in Melbourne's inner eastern suburbs

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The Fair Work Ombudsman's latest proactive compliance and education campaign is targeting at least 200 businesses in Melbourne's inner east.

Fair Work Inspectors are checking wage and time records of a cross-section of businesses in Hawthorn, Kew, Camberwell, Doncaster and surrounding suburbs to ensure that they are complying with their workplace obligations.

The region is being targeted primarily due to the vulnerability of its workforce, with the large numbers of young workers and a significant culturally and linguistically diverse community. Thirty-one per cent of the population speaks a language other than English at home.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James said that young workers in particular are overrepresented in the disputes her agency deals with relating to the area.

"Around one-fifth of the workforce in Melbourne's inner east is aged between 15-24, yet this cohort makes up almost 30 per cent of the disputes we receive from this area," Ms James said.

This ranks the region ninth in the country in terms of the proportion of disputes received from young workers. Most of these disputes relate to the cafe, restaurant and takeaway foods sectors.

"Young workers can be particularly vulnerable to exploitation in the workplace due to their lack of work experience and limited understanding of their workplace entitlements," Ms James said.

With the region projected to experience strong growth over coming years, the Fair Work Ombudsman's proactive compliance activities will also help to ensure that new businesses entering the labour market fully understand and comply with workplace laws.

Businesses across a range of industries will be audited, including those in the retail trade, accommodation and food services and education and training industries.

Last financial year, the Fair Work Ombudsman received 244 disputes from Melbourne's inner east region. The agency recovered more than \$530,000 for 141 workers in the region during the same period.

"Our proactive compliance and education activities ensure that employers know how to access the advice and information they need," Ms James said.

"With the wealth of information freely available about workplace rights and obligations, there are no excuses for businesses to not be providing their workers with their lawful pay and entitlements."

Ms James said inspectors would be on the lookout for any instances of non-compliance and will take appropriate action in response to any identified breaches.

"We have a range of tools at our disposal, from letters of caution and on-the-spot fines to litigation in the courts for the most serious cases," Ms James said.

"With maximum penalties for certain workplace contraventions recently increasing by up to ten times, employers must be aware that serious breaches of the law can expose them to big fines.

"Employers should be on notice that they cannot get away with deliberately flouting workplace laws."

The Fair Work Ombudsman offers a range of free tools and resources for employers at [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://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 can visit [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au) or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 for free advice and assistance about their rights and obligations in the workplace. A free interpreter service is available on 13 14 50.

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## Contact us

Fair Work Online: [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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Call through the National Relay Service (NRS):

For TTY: 13 36 77. Ask for the Fair Work Infoline 13 13 94

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