

Businesses urged to avoid increased penalties for record-keeping breaches

18 October 2017

Maximum penalties for businesses that breach record-keeping laws have recently doubled and the Fair Work Ombudsman is helping operators reduce their risk of being exposed to big fines with the release of a new online training course.

The course is available now in the Fair Work Ombudsman's [award winning \(www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/archived-media-releases/2016-media-releases/april-2016/20160428-fwo-wins-online-award\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/archived-media-releases/2016-media-releases/april-2016/20160428-fwo-wins-online-award) Online Learning Centre at www.fairwork.gov.au/learning (<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/learning>) .

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James said the short interactive course will help small businesses understand when, why and how they should make employment records.

"Every Australian employer is obligated to keep accurate employment records," Ms James said.

"We see far too many cases of businesses failing to get the basics right when it comes to record-keeping and regrettably it's often workers who get hit the hardest as a lack of accurate records can make it difficult to determine if they have received their correct entitlements.

"We welcome the penalty increase for employers who fail to meet their record-keeping obligations although we would prefer if business operators did the right thing from the outset.

"This is why we have released a new course with advice on how to make record-keeping practical and easy, particularly for time-poor small businesses, Ms James said

The course features practical examples, interactive activities and handy tips. They help businesses understand what records they need to keep, what information to include in pay slips and give practical tips on setting up a record-keeping system.

Last financial year two-thirds of the Fair Work Ombudsman's court cases involved alleged record-keeping or pay slip contraventions.

In one matter a [Queensland labour-hire company \(www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2017-media-releases/july-2017/20170726-hta-farmings-penalty\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2017-media-releases/july-2017/20170726-hta-farmings-penalty) and its manager were penalised more than \$84,000 for flouting their record-keeping and pay slips obligations, despite having been previously cautioned by the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Ms James said she understood that genuine oversights sometimes happen, but the agency would be taking an increasingly hard-line approach with those who make repeated mistakes.

"With the release of our new materials, there has never been so much freely available information to assist employers to understand their workplace obligations. The time for excuses is over," Ms James said.

The Fair Work Ombudsman's Online Learning Centre has attracted more than 50,000 users since it was launched in 2013 and is part of a range of free tools and resources provided by the Fair Work Ombudsman for small business owners.

Other online learning courses cover topics including hiring employees, having difficult conversations in the workplace, managing employees and managing performance. The courses are all designed with direct input from small business people.

Also available are fact sheets and templates, including a self-audit checklist for employers to make sure their records are complete and readily available, which can be accessed through the new course and at www.fairwork.gov.au (<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/>) .

Earlier this year the Fair Work Ombudsman launched the free 'Record My Hours' smartphone app (<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/how-we-help-you/record-my-hours-app>) to make it easier for workers to keep an accurate diary of the hours they work, available for download from the Google Play and Apple App stores.

Employers and employees can also seek free advice and assistance at www.fairwork.gov.au (<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/>) or by contacting the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. Small business operators can opt to receive priority service from the Small Business Helpline.

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