

## Half a million calls from small business reveals strong demand for online support

26 April 2018

The Fair Work Ombudsman has today launched its [Small Business Showcase \(www.fairwork.gov.au/small-business-showcase\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/small-business-showcase), a virtual hub providing a wealth of resources for small business owners seeking information about their workplace obligations.

The showcase commences as the Fair Work Ombudsman's dedicated small business helpline has received its 500,000<sup>th</sup> call since it was set up at the end of 2013.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James is urging small business owners to participate in the showcase to ensure they're up-to-date with their obligations under workplace law.

"Australia's workplace relations system is complex and can be hard to navigate, particularly for time-poor small and family businesses," Ms James says.

"Our experience, backed up by research, is that small businesses can be overconfident when it comes to compliance – failing to check the rules to ensure they've got things right."

Ms James says that successive campaigns undertaken by her agency have shown consistently lower rates of workplace compliance amongst small businesses when compared to larger businesses (an average 15 per cent lower over the past two and a half years).

"Our Small Business Showcase is a great opportunity for small businesses to brush up on their workplace relations knowledge, download practical resources and find out more about the assistance the agency can provide," Ms James says.

"We take a proportionate and fair approach to enforcement action, but we also expect employers to have checked the rules that apply to them – if not with the Fair Work Ombudsman, with a qualified adviser. We also need them to promptly rectify any errors and back-pay workers what they are owed when they arise."

Small businesses should also be aware that changes made by the Fair Work Amendment (Protecting Vulnerable Workers) Act 2017 have doubled the maximum penalty for failing to keep employee records or issue pay slips to \$63,000 for a company and \$12,600 for an individual, and tripled the maximum penalty for knowingly making or keeping false or misleading employee records to \$12,600 for an individual.

Ms James says that her agency receives thousands of calls from small business owners each year.

"We set up the small business helpline to ensure that the specific needs of small businesses are recognised and accounted for," Ms James says.

"While we offer this free service and I'm delighted half a million businesses have called since its establishment in 2013 to receive tailored workplace advice, too many small businesses are continuing to get the basics wrong when it comes to paying workers correctly and meeting record-keeping requirements," Ms James says.

"Small errors arising from issues such as not passing on the annual wage increase or incorrectly classifying workers can add up to big underpayments over time – which can make for expensive and unexpected back-payment bills down the track.

"What we want to do now is make it even easier for small businesses to access the information they need to implement positive workplace practices and help their business succeed at any time of the day."

The Small Business Showcase consolidates all the information and resources a small business needs in one place at [www.fairwork.gov.au/smallbizshowcase](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/smallbizshowcase) (<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/smallbizshowcase>).

The showcase covers topics including hiring employees, calculating pay, keeping accurate records and resolving workplace issues.

It also includes six instructional videos demonstrating how small business owners can use Fair Work Ombudsman resources to meet their obligations as an employer.

Opinion polls and surveys run throughout the showcase will provide small business owners with the opportunity to share insights and highlight the key workplace issues facing small businesses today.

The showcase is running alongside the Fair Work Ombudsman's Workplace Basics campaign (<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2018-media-releases/april-2018/20180411-workplace-basics-campaign-mr>) in which inspectors are auditing and assisting businesses access and navigate the wide range of free resources available to help them meet their obligations.

The Workplace Basics campaign will see inspectors audit 1,000 businesses across Australia to check compliance and ensure employers are getting the basics right.

"We're committed to equipping small business owners with the tools and information they need to confidently manage workplace relations issues and ensure they are doing the right thing," Ms James says.

"We have a wealth of resources that are free and available online, including many that are available in multiple languages.

"We want to see small businesses thrive. Participation in our showcase will assist in building positive workplace cultures to the benefit of both small business owners and the workers they employ."

Employers and employees seeking assistance can visit [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au) or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. Small businesses owners can opt for priority service by following the prompts.

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](http://twitter.com/fairwork_gov_au)) or find us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/fairwork.gov.au](https://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](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

Need language help?

Contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50

Hearing & speech assistance

Call through the National Relay Service (NRS):

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

Speak & Listen: 1300 555 727. Ask for the Fair Work Infoline 13 13 94

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