

Melbourne hotspots hit with workplace audits

11 December 2018

The Fair Work Ombudsman is targeting restaurants and cafes in the popular Degraeves Street and Hardware Lane dining strips in the Melbourne CBD with unannounced workplace audits.

Fair Work Inspectors are in the area speaking to business owners, managers and employees to check that workers are being paid correctly. At least 40 businesses face audits and inspectors are also examining their employment records for compliance with workplace laws.

The FWO acted after receiving intelligence from a range of sources, including [our Anonymous Report tool \(www.fairwork.gov.au/tipoff\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/tipoff) and various stakeholders, indicating potential workplace breaches by some businesses in the area.

Fair Work Ombudsman Sandra Parker said the audits are the latest in a string of proactive compliance activities targeting popular food hubs.

“Protecting the rights of vulnerable workers in the fast food, restaurant and café sector is a priority for the Fair Work Ombudsman. Successive activities in popular food precincts across Australia have revealed unacceptable breaches of workplace laws.”

“Our audits have established a link between prices and wage underpayments and it is clear that the true cost of cheap food may be the employees’ lawful entitlements. We will take enforcement action if today’s audits find serious breaches of workplace laws,” Ms Parker said.

The hospitality industry was again overrepresented in contacts to the FWO in 2017-18, with 18 per cent of workplace disputes recorded, a third of court actions and almost 40 per cent of all anonymous reports, despite representing just seven per cent of the workforce.

Ms Parker said the hospitality sector employs a large proportion of vulnerable workers, including young workers, students and visa holders.

“With several higher education institutes located in and around the Melbourne CBD, a large proportion of students live and work in the area. Our inspectors will educate workers about their workplace rights and empower them to seek help with any workplace issues,” Ms Parker said.

A report on the campaign’s findings will be published once the activity is completed.

Employers and employees can visit 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. Anonymous reports can be made in English and 16 other languages at www.fairwork.gov.au/tipoff.

We have a range of resources online to assist employers to meet their workplace obligations, including our dedicated [Small Business Showcase \(www.fairwork.gov.au/small-business-showcase\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/small-business-showcase) .

Earlier this year, the Fair Work Ombudsman [released its findings \(www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2018-media-releases/july-2018/20180711-food-precincts-mr\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2018-media-releases/july-2018/20180711-food-precincts-mr) of audits in Victoria Street, Richmond, Glebe Point Road, Sydney, and Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, which revealed 72 per cent of businesses were non-compliant and led to more than \$470,000 in recoveries for workers.

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Fair Work Online: www.fairwork.gov.au

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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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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