

20,000 tip-offs shine a light on dodgy workplaces

23 February 2018

Thousands of anonymous reports from concerned members of the community are assisting the Fair Work Ombudsman to target unlawful practices in workplaces across Australia and deliver outcomes for workers who might otherwise not seek help.

Since the launch of its Anonymous Report tool in mid-2016, the regulator has received more than 20,000 tip-offs alleging potential workplace breaches.

The reports from the public are leading to positive outcomes for vulnerable workers who may be unwilling or unable to reveal their identity and approach the Fair Work Ombudsman.

In one matter, Fair Work inspectors conducted an unannounced visit at a Sydney retail business after receiving an anonymous report alleging employees received as little as \$8 per hour, cash in hand.

An audit of the company's records uncovered evidence of contraventions in relation to pay rates, break entitlements and pay slip requirements.

Inspectors issued the company with a Compliance Notice and a contravention letter, resulting in approximately \$50,000 in wages and entitlements being paid back to workers.

The company also increased pay rates to ensure compliance in the future.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James said information received from members of the public also provided valuable intelligence which helped design future compliance activities.

"The reports we receive enable us to identify trends and generate leads for our inspectors to follow up," Ms James said.

"This assists us to focus our priorities and direct our resources to those areas where we will have the greatest impact.

"For example, the hospitality industry accounts for 17 per cent of our formal requests for assistance, however it accounts for 36 per cent of anonymous tipoffs.

"We also know that most people who use the tool provide information about their current employment," Ms James said.

"We always urge employees to come forward if they have concerns in the workplace, but we appreciate that it can be a hard thing to do. With our Anonymous Report tool, workers can come to us and tell us what is happening now without the risk of being identified," Ms James said.

Ten thousand anonymous reports (www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2017-media-releases/may-2017/20170524-fwo-milestones-release) were made via the tool in its first 11 months of operation and this figure has doubled in just a further eight months - showing increasing take up of the function by members of the public.

A large proportion of anonymous reports received each month relate to the hospitality industry, with retail the next most-reported industry. The vast majority of reports contain allegations concerning pay.

Young people, students and visa holders all account for a significant number of the anonymous reports received, an indication of the vulnerability of these cohorts in the workplace.

In July last year, the Anonymous Report function was launched in 16 languages other than English, making it even easier for more sections of the community to report workplace concerns to the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Close to 800 reports have been received in languages other than English, with Chinese and Korean the most common languages used.

"These numbers show my agency's increasing reach into sections of the community that we may not have heard from in the past," Ms James said.

"It is fantastic that the community has embraced our Anonymous Report tool and is helping us by letting us know when they see or suspect something that isn't right."

Anonymous reports can be made in English or one of 16 other languages at www.fairwork.gov.au/tipoff (<http://www.fairwork.gov.au>)

[/tipoff](#)) .

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.

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Contact us

Fair Work Online: www.fairwork.gov.au

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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

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

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