

200 regional NSW businesses being audited by the Fair Work Ombudsman in New England and North West

24 May 2018

The Fair Work Ombudsman has commenced audits of more than 200 businesses across the New England and North West regions of NSW, as part of its latest campaign checking businesses' compliance with workplace laws.

Fair Work inspectors are auditing businesses across a range of local industries, including agriculture, forestry and fishing; construction; manufacturing; accommodation and food services; and retail.

Inspectors will check that employers are up to date with their obligations, paying employees their lawful minimum wages and entitlements and complying with record-keeping requirements.

The region ranks fifth nationally in terms of the proportion of requests for assistance to the Fair Work Ombudsman from workers aged over 55.

Mature age workers can be vulnerable to being underpaid if they are reluctant to complain due to fears relating to job security.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says it is important that her agency is proactive about checking that workers in the region are being paid correctly.

Businesses found to be non-compliant during the campaign will be required to rectify any breaches and provided with the information they need to ensure compliance going forward.

"In addition to the wealth of information that's available on our website at www.fairwork.gov.au, anyone seeking advice and assistance can speak to one of our expert advisers by calling our Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94," Ms James says.

"With more information freely available to help employers understand their obligations than ever before, there is no excuse for failing to check lawful minimum wage and pay rates."

Ms James warned that serious, repeated or deliberate breaches identified during the campaign could attract significant enforcement action, ranging from the issuing of Infringement Notices (on-the-spot fines) through to litigation.

"While a key focus of this campaign is on educating regional businesses about their obligations and the assistance my Agency can provide, we will not hesitate to take enforcement action where it is required," Ms James says.

"Business operators risk facing enforcement action if we find significant compliance issues at their business that are a result of them deliberately flouting the law or failing to make a concerted and genuine effort to comply.

"Businesses in the region also need to be aware that, under recent law changes, new higher penalties now apply in relation to certain breaches of workplace laws, including those related to record-keeping."

The maximum penalties for failing to keep employee records or issue pay slips have doubled to \$63,000 for a company and \$12,600 for an individual, and the maximum penalty for knowingly making or keeping false or misleading employee records has tripled to \$12,600 for an individual.

"With such serious potential consequences for workplace breaches, it is crucial that businesses understand and comply with their obligations," Ms James says.

The campaign is running alongside the Fair Work Ombudsman's recently launched [Workplace Basics Campaign \(https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2018-media-releases/april-2018/20180411-workplace-basics-campaign-mr\)](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 1000 businesses across Australia to check compliance and ensure employers know how to access and navigate the free resources available to them.

It also follows the launch of the Fair Work Ombudsman's [Small Business Showcase \(https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2018-media-releases/april-2018/20180426-small-business-showcase\)](https://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2018-media-releases/april-2018/20180426-small-business-showcase), a virtual hub specifically designed to provide small business owners with the resources and tools they need to comply with their workplace obligations.

"These initiatives show that we're committed to equipping businesses with the tools and information they need to comply with workplace laws and build a culture of compliance amongst Australian workplaces," Ms James says.

“Through our proactive compliance and education campaigns, we hope to reach out to businesses across Australia, including in remote and regional locations, and show them how they can access advice to get on top of their workplace obligations.

“We have a range of resources available to businesses that are serious about ensuring compliance.”

Ms James encourages businesses to use the Fair Work Ombudsman's wide range of free tools – including its [Pay and Conditions Tool \(https://calculate.fairwork.gov.au/\)](https://calculate.fairwork.gov.au/) (PACT), which provides advice about pay, shift, leave and redundancy entitlements – and to register for a free [My Account \(https://www.fairwork.gov.au/my-account/registerpage.aspx?utm_source=webchat&utm_medium=SB-Myacct-sign-up&utm_campaign=MyaccountLP\)](https://www.fairwork.gov.au/my-account/registerpage.aspx?utm_source=webchat&utm_medium=SB-Myacct-sign-up&utm_campaign=MyaccountLP) to receive tailored information.

Employers are also encouraged to access the Fair Work Ombudsman's [online training modules \(http://fairwork.cls.janison.com/Auth/Login?ReturnUrl=/\)](http://fairwork.cls.janison.com/Auth/Login?ReturnUrl=/), which cover an array of topics – including a record-keeping and pay slip module which can assist employers in learning how to make, update and manage employment records for their business.

Employers and employees can seek assistance at www.fairwork.gov.au or contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. Small businesses can opt for priority service by following the prompts. A free interpreter service is available on 13 14 50.

Information on the website can be translated into 40 languages.

Follow Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James on Twitter [@NatJamesFWO](http://twitter.com/NatJamesFWO) (http://twitter.com/NatJamesFWO), the Fair Work Ombudsman [@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 (http://www.facebook.com/fairwork.gov.au).

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Contact us

Fair Work Online: 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

The Fair Work Ombudsman is committed to providing advice that you can rely on. The information contained on this website is general in nature. If you are unsure about how it applies to your situation you can call our Infoline on 13 13 94 or speak with a union, industry association or workplace relations professional. Visitors are warned that this site may inadvertently contain names or pictures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have recently died.