

FWO audits Brisbane's West End

25 July 2019

The Fair Work Ombudsman is today continuing surprise audits of 50 bars, restaurants and cafes in Brisbane's popular West End food district to check if they are compliant with workplace laws.

Fair Work Inspectors are in the area following anonymous reports and requests for assistance from West End employees, which suggest that some eateries may be breaking workplace laws.

These reports allege that some West End workers are being underpaid their minimum hourly rates of pay under modern awards. Other reports suggest that employees are not receiving their lawful entitlements such as overtime and weekend penalty rates, and special allowances.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has received more than 100 anonymous reports about restaurants, cafes and take away food outlets located in the area.

This represents 33 per cent of all reports about businesses in the area, which is disproportionately high considering only 12.3 per cent of employees in the region work in the food services industry.

The level of anonymous reports made about businesses in the West End area also makes it the third most complained about area in the country.

Underpayment of the hourly wage was the most common type of anonymous complaint made by workers, with over a quarter made by young workers (under 25) and visa holders.

Fair Work Ombudsman Sandra Parker said that young and migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to workplace exploitation.

"Vulnerable workers are especially at risk of workplace exploitation as they often are unaware of their workplace rights or are scared about losing their job if they challenge their employer."

"This activity in the West End is part of a broader national campaign involving Fair Work inspectors investigating workplace law compliance in cheap eat havens, where meal costs are low and have not risen in proportion with minimum wage increases," Ms Parker said.

"Our inspectors are on the ground speaking with employees and employers to check if staff are receiving correct wages, pay slips and that businesses are keeping accurate employment records."

"If eateries in the West End are breaking the law, we will help to recover the wages and entitlements owed to staff. We will also consider what enforcement action is necessary, including court action."

"The Fair Work Ombudsman is cracking down on underpayments in the hospitality industry and we urge employers to check they are paying staff correctly before we come knocking," Ms Parker said.

The FWO has developed [new interactive tools \(https://www.fairwork.gov.au/frac\)](https://www.fairwork.gov.au/frac) for the hospitality sector to make it easier to access information about key entitlements such as pay, hours worked, allowances, leave and termination. Employers and employees can call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 for free workplace assistance.

Concerned someone isn't following workplace laws but don't want to get involved directly? Make an anonymous report to the Fair Work Ombudsman online (www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/how-we-help-you/help-us-keep-workplaces-fair).

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