

Geelong businesses under FWO microscope

31 May 2019

Fair Work Inspectors today completed surprise audits of around 80 businesses in the university suburbs of Geelong, following intelligence that employers in the area were at risk of breaching workplace laws.

The workplace compliance checks, which commenced on Monday, targeted the suburbs in and surrounding the two Deakin University campuses (Waurin Ponds and Geelong Waterfront), and extend to Grovedale, Belmont, Newtown and other surrounding suburbs.

Inspectors have audited businesses from industries that typically hire high numbers of university students: fast food, restaurant, cafes, and retail.

In addition to the on-site audits, the Fair Work Ombudsman has requested records from approximately 150 other similar businesses in Geelong, raising the total overall audits to in excess of 200 employers.

Fair Work Ombudsman Sandra Parker said this week's activities were driven by requests for assistance from young workers in the Geelong region.

"We know university students can be particularly vulnerable to workplace exploitation if it is their first job or if they are reluctant to raise issues due to limited employment options near campus."

"Fair Work inspectors are on the ground in Geelong to check that businesses are paying their staff correctly and meeting their lawful obligations to employees under the Fair Work Act," Ms Parker said.

"Most requests for assistance we receive from students relate to underpayment issues, such as being paid unlawful flat rates which do not factor in higher penalty rates for weekend casuals, or not receiving important entitlements like annual leave if they are permanent employees."

"If we find non-compliance in Geelong businesses we audit, Fair Work Inspectors will ensure affected employees receive the wages and entitlements owed to them. We will also examine the pay records to determine if any further enforcement action is necessary."

"This week's Geelong audits are part of a broader campaign targeting university towns across the country to ensure that young workers are not being exploited by their employers. Any employees with concerns about their pay should contact the Fair Work Ombudsman," Ms Parker said.

The FWO is committed to improving workplace compliance in the hospitality industry and recently launched a suite of [new interactive tools](https://www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/fast-food-restaurants-cafes) (<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/fast-food-restaurants-cafes>) for employers and employees to help them better understand their workplace rights and obligations.

"Our free resources help hospitality workers and businesses to access key employment details such as base rates, penalty rates and overtime pay. Employers can use our [pay calculator](https://calculate.fairwork.gov.au/findyouraward) (<https://calculate.fairwork.gov.au/findyouraward>) to check they're doing the right thing by their staff when it comes to pay and workplace entitlements," Ms Parker said.

Employers and employees can visit www.fairwork.gov.au or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 for free advice and assistance. A free interpreter service is also available on 13 14 50.

Know a workplace that isn't doing the right thing but don't want to get involved? [Report](https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/how-we-help-you/anonymous-tipoff) (<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/how-we-help-you/anonymous-tipoff>) it to us anonymously – in your language.

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Media inquiries:

Michael Anderson, Assistant Media Director
Mobile: 0409 120 830

Page reference No: 8986

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