

Gold Coast eateries face workplace audits

7 December 2020

The Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) is making surprise visits to restaurants, cafes and fast food outlets in popular food precincts between the Gold Coast's Southport and Mermaid Beach from today.

At least 50 businesses face audits, with Fair Work Inspectors speaking with business owners, managers and employees on the ground to check that workers are being paid correctly.

The regulator is acting 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 breaches by businesses in the area.

Fair Work Ombudsman Sandra Parker said the audits will focus on employers that have sponsored visa holders, who can be particularly vulnerable to exploitation.

"With several tertiary institutions surrounding Southport and Mermaid Beach, a large number of students – including international students – live and work in the area. We know that visa holders can be vulnerable due to a lack of knowledge of workplace laws or willingness to speak up."

"In today's audits, inspectors will assess employment records for compliance with workplace laws. We will hold employers to account if they are not meeting their lawful obligations and consider enforcement action where appropriate. We will also educate workers about their workplace rights."

Ms Parker said protecting vulnerable workers such as students and visa holders, and improving compliance in the fast food, restaurant and café sector were ongoing priorities for the FWO.

"Our targeted food precinct activities across various cities have uncovered high levels of non-compliance. We found that cheap eats in these precincts have come at the expense of workers receiving their lawful wages. Any workers with concerns should contact the FWO for free advice."

Fast food, restaurant and café matters accounted for 50 per cent of the Fair Work Ombudsman's new litigations in 2019-20. The FWO secured court ordered penalties of \$1,877,162 from 13 litigation decisions in this sector. Visa holder workers were involved in 44 per cent of all litigations last year.

Earlier this year, the FWO [released its findings \(www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2020-media-releases/september-2020/20200904-food-precincts-melbourne-brisbane-and-food-retail-report-media-release\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/news-and-media-releases/2020-media-releases/september-2020/20200904-food-precincts-melbourne-brisbane-and-food-retail-report-media-release) of audits targeting popular food precincts in Melbourne and Brisbane, as well as of broader national food and retail sector audits, which recovered a total of \$1,212,727 in unpaid wages for 1351 workers. The rate of non-compliance was 88 per cent in Brisbane and 84 per cent in Melbourne.

The FWO has targeted [interactive tools \(www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/fast-food-restaurants-cafes\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/fast-food-restaurants-cafes) to help employers and employees in the fast food, restaurant and café industry, as well as for any franchisees (www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/franchises). Employers can also use FWO's [pay calculator \(https://calculate.fairwork.gov.au/findyouraward\)](https://calculate.fairwork.gov.au/findyouraward) and [Small Business Showcase \(www.fairwork.gov.au/small-business-showcase\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/small-business-showcase). The FWO has targeted resources for [visa holder \(www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/visa-holders-migrants\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/visa-holders-migrants) workers.

Call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 or a free interpreter service on 13 14 50. Know a workplace not doing the right thing but don't want to get involved? [Report it anonymously \(www.fairwork.gov.au/workplace-problems/fixing-a-workplace-problem/anonymous-report/anonymous-tipoff\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/workplace-problems/fixing-a-workplace-problem/anonymous-report/anonymous-tipoff) – in your language.

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Contact us

Fair Work Online: www.fairwork.gov.au

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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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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