

## Wimmera-Mallee hairdressing salons earmarked for random scrutiny

19 March 2010

The Fair Work Ombudsman has announced plans to randomly check a number of hairdressing salons in Victoria's Wimmera-Mallee region.

Employers will be selected from the following towns:

Horsham, Donald, St Arnaud, Charlton, Warracknabeal, Wycheproof, Boort, Birchip, Hopetoun, Rainbow, Dimboola, Nhill, Inglewood, Pyramid Hill, Kerang, Stawell, Quambatook, Cohuna, Sea Lake and Wedderburn.

Inspectors from the Fair Work Ombudsman's Bendigo office will write to employers in April to ask them to show evidence of their compliance with workplace relations laws.

Those businesses selected will be asked to supply time-and-wages records so inspectors can determine whether staff are being paid correctly and employers are complying with workplace laws.

Fair Work inspectors will also provide information and advice to employers, particularly in relation to recent changes to Australia's workplace laws.

Fair Work Ombudsman Executive Director Michael Campbell says the audits follow issues of concern being discovered in the hair and beauty industry last year.

An audit of 364 employers nationally found that 56 had underpaid 260 employees a total of \$176,000 and 90 employers had contravened record-keeping or pay slip requirements. Employers in Victoria underpaid 39 workers a total of \$50,500.

And in a separate local campaign in Gippsland, audits revealed that of 43 employers scrutinised, eight had underpaid 13 staff a total of \$7284 and a further six were not keeping proper records or issuing correct pay slips.

"We are very serious about our job of ensuring all employers in the community understand their rights and obligations in the workplace," Mr Campbell said.

"Many workers in the hairdressing industry, such as young people and trainees, are vulnerable, so it's important we make sure they are being treated fairly."

In cases where records are not up to scratch or indicate workers are being underpaid, inspectors may launch a wider investigation.

"Where we find records are not adequate or identify other non-compliance issues, we will provide information and assistance to employers and request they voluntarily rectify any problems," Mr Campbell said.

"In cases where they don't, or where we suspect deliberate underpayments or other serious breaches have occurred, we may launch a full audit which could lead to court proceedings."

The maximum penalty for a breach of workplace law is \$33,000.

Mr Campbell says the campaign aims to ensure more country employers understand their obligations to their employees and to raise awareness of the Fair Work Ombudsman's role.

"In regional areas, workers are often reluctant to complain about their terms and conditions of employment for fear they may put their job at risk," he said.

"Similarly, they worry that if they make a complaint, it could impact on their personal life, particularly in small communities.

"It is important regional workers along with their city counterparts understand there is an Agency they can turn to if they have workplace concerns. Complaints can be made confidentially."

Mr Campbell says the Fair Work Ombudsman has a range of user-friendly resources on their website that can assist employers to comply with workplace laws and operate their workplace at best practice.

"Resources for small business at [www.fwo.gov.au](http://www.fwo.gov.au) include payslip and record-keeping templates, a self-audit checklist, template

letters and fact sheets on dozens of topics including leave, industrial action, public holidays, enterprise bargaining, gender pay equality and family-friendly workplaces,” he said.

As well as online resources, the Fair Work Ombudsman has more than 200 highly-skilled advisers available to speak with employers and workers with questions on its Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 from 8am - 6pm weekdays.

The Fair Work Ombudsman also has Best Practice Guides which have been developed to assist employers make better use of the provisions of the Fair Work Act and better understand other aspects of workplace laws.

Mr Campbell says the guides cover work and family, consultation and co-operation, individual flexibility arrangements, employing young workers, gender pay equity, small business, workplace privacy, managing underperformance, effective dispute resolution and improving workplace productivity.

The Fair Work Ombudsman promotes harmonious, productive and co-operative workplaces. It also monitors compliance and investigates breaches of national workplace laws.

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## Contact us

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