

Fair Work Ombudsman response to United Voice allegations on exploitation of cleaners

27 November 2012

The Fair Work Ombudsman this morning commenced immediate inquiries into fresh allegations by United Voice that international students working as cleaners are being exploited at major shopping centres.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has recovered hundreds of thousands of dollars for underpaid cleaners, many of them foreign workers, in the past two years.

Cleaning services is a regular focus of the Fair Work Ombudsman's education and compliance activities.

The Fair Work Ombudsman is today making contact with relevant parties, including United Voice, to seek details about the latest claims.

The Agency encourages key stakeholders with intelligence about non-compliance with workplace laws to come forward with any relevant information.

It is also encouraging any employee who is concerned they have been treated unfairly to contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. People requiring interpreter services can call 13 14 50.

The Fair Work Ombudsman is also concerned by statements attributed to the Shopping Centre Council of Australia that the allegations are a matter for cleaning contractors, not the centres themselves.

It says business operators must be aware that they risk breaching workplace laws if their contracting practices result in the employees of the contractors they engage later being underpaid their minimum entitlements.

Business operators also risk breaching workplace laws if they have actual or inferred knowledge - or are wilfully blind - to such underpayments occurring.

In October this year, the Fair Work Ombudsman announced that it had recovered almost \$70,000 for 53 cleaners employed by CleanDomain Pty Ltd at Sydney's Westfield shopping complex.

In July, 2011, the Fair Work Ombudsman released the results of a national cleaning campaign which recovered almost a quarter of a million dollars for 600 cleaners nationally after auditing 315 employers in all States and Territories.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has an industry page on its website with information specifically tailored to the cleaning industry.

An overseas worker's team was recently formed within the Agency to investigate serious issues relating to visa holders in Australia, recognising that foreign workers in particular can be vulnerable in the workplace because they are often not fully aware of their workplace rights under Australian laws.

Media inquiries:

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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.