

NT child care centres to be audited in October

26 September 2013

Up to a dozen Northern Territory child care centres will be included in a national campaign by the Fair Work Ombudsman to improve compliance with workplace laws, particularly around wages and record-keeping.

Nationally, the Fair Work Ombudsman will audit up to 350 child care centres, including businesses in Darwin and Alice Springs.

The campaign follows the high number of complaints to the Fair Work Ombudsman from child care workers over recent years.

In 2012-13, there were almost 400 complaints from child care workers, leading to 123 workers being repaid about \$255,000 in wages.

Fair Work Ombudsman, Natalie James, said Fair Work Inspectors will work with businesses to ensure they are familiar with the tools and resources available to help them comply with their obligations.

"A key part of the role of the Fair Work Ombudsman is to educate and help businesses, particularly those small businesses which don't have the benefit of in-house HR staff, about how to comply with workplace laws, and that's what we'll be doing when we visit these child care centres next month - we'll be helping them get it right," Ms James said.

"As part of the campaign we have written to 14,000 child care businesses across Australia to advise them of the tools and resources available from the Fair Work Ombudsman's website at www.fairwork.gov.au/childcare, and we have provided them with materials specifically tailored for the industry that will support self-compliance into the future.

"We're encouraging all employers in the industry to conduct their own self-audit of compliance with workplace law, particularly payment of wages, using the resources and information we have provided," Ms James said.

Ms James said the child care sector was a major employer in Australia, with about 140,000 employees, 96 percent of whom are female and about a quarter of them are young workers, aged up to 24.

"We are mindful that this is an industry which employs large numbers of young people who can be considered vulnerable in the workplace because they may not be fully aware of their entitlements or where to go for information and advice," Ms James said.

The campaign will focus on Long Day Care Centres, which represents about half the industry. It will also include audits of Preschools, Out-of-School Hours Care/Vacation Care and Occasional Care Centres. It does not include centres operated by local government, as this is outside the Fair Work Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

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Information about the child care campaign is available at: www.fairwork.gov.au/childcare

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