

High marks for CBD employers on pay rates

10 July 2014

Ninety-five per cent of businesses in the Melbourne CBD are correctly paying their employees, random audits by the Fair Work Ombudsman have revealed.

Fair Work inspectors made site visits to 217 businesses in the City to assess compliance with record-keeping and pay-slip requirements of the Fair Work Act.

The face-to-face visits to employers were undertaken in recognition of the high concentration of retail businesses in the CBD and potentially high numbers of casual workers.

Inspectors visited businesses from 50 different industry sub-sectors, including clothing, supermarket and grocery, footwear, sports and camping stores.

They found 88 per cent of employers (192) were complying with their pay-slip and record-keeping responsibilities and 84 per cent (183) were compliant with all their obligations.

Ten businesses were found to have made pay rate errors, and more than \$20,600 was recouped for 23 employees who had been underpaid. The underpayments ranged from less than \$70 to more than \$10,000.

Inspectors determined that the pay errors were inadvertent mistakes based on a lack of understanding by the employers of their obligations, and they were immediately rectified.

During the consultations, inspectors educated retailers about the range of free tools and resources at the Fair Work Ombudsman's website - www.fairwork.gov.au - that have been designed to assist them meet their obligations.

Facebook and Twitter are also used to communicate with employees and employers in the retail sector about their rights and obligations.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says the preference is always to work with businesses to help them put effective policies and procedures in place to achieve compliance.

"A big part of the role of the Fair Work Ombudsman is to work with businesses to ensure they have the knowledge they need to meet their obligations and where they wish, to operate at best practice," she said.

"We are serious about our job of building knowledgeable and fairer workplaces and don't insist there is only one way to achieve compliance - education is equally as important as deterrents."

Further visits to retail stores across the country have started to assess compliance across the industry and ensure employers understand their obligations.

Each year, the Fair Work Ombudsman runs national, state and regional pro-active compliance and education campaigns focused on various industry sectors.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has also developed an online learning centre with self-paced interactive courses that provide employers and employees with skills and strategies they can utilise at work.

A Difficult conversations in the workplace course has practical tips to help employers develop the skills and confidence to have a difficult conversation in the workplace, minimise disputes and achieve productive results.

A Hiring new employees course includes an interactive tool to assist employers build a profile of the employee they want to hire and a video activity to help them practice their interview skills.

Ms James says the Fair Work Ombudsman has a particular focus on assisting small businesses to understand and meet their obligations to employees.

"Small businesses often don't have the benefit of in-house human resources and payroll staff, so we place a high priority on assisting them and developing tools and resources to make it easier for them to comply with workplace law," she said.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has established a dedicated webpage for small business employers at www.fairwork.gov.au/smallbusi-

ness (www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/small-business/default) .

The webpage includes a Fair Work handbook for employers and a range of resources on topics such as employing staff, resolving workplace disputes and managing employees.

Employers and employees seeking further information and advice can visit the website or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter service is also available on 13 14 50.

Small business employers calling the Fair Work Infoline can opt to be put through to the Small Business Helpline to receive priority service.

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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

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