

Hunter and Central Coast play centre results

30 July 2014

Child play centres in the Hunter and Central Coast regions of NSW need to pay greater attention to their wage rates, according to the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Random audits of six centres have found that all but one were underpaying their staff.

Fair Work inspectors assessed their employment records after receiving information about the potential underpayment of minimum entitlements.

They subsequently determined that 32 staff across five of the six centres had been underpaid a total of almost \$10,000.

The largest underpayment was \$2726 for three workers at a Newcastle centre who had been underpaid their minimum hourly rate and overtime.

Inspectors found a number of other issues across the five centres, including underpayment of weekend penalty rates, failure to develop written hours-of-work agreements for part-time employees and record-keeping and pay slip errors.

The audits focused on centres providing out-of-school-hours and short-term child care.

Most underpaid workers were employed in child care, play centre attendant and café positions.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James, who is visiting Newcastle today, says the results suggest that some employers are not paying enough attention to their obligations under workplace laws.

“A lack of awareness of workplace laws can easily result in inadvertent underpayment of wages or other workplace entitlements, as has occurred here,” she said.

However, Ms James says it is pleasing that all centres have agreed to rectify the underpayments and have accepted assistance from inspectors to put processes in place to ensure ongoing compliance.

“It was also reassuring that the one business found to be fully compliant had previously been assisted by our inspectors to address non-compliance issues, which reinforces that most employers achieve compliance after interacting with us,” she said.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has a particular focus on protecting the rights of young workers, some of whom may be unaware of their workplace rights or reluctant to complain.

“Young workers can be vulnerable at work, so it’s important we are proactive about conducting audits in industries which tend to employ significant numbers of young people,” Ms James said.

The Fair Work Ombudsman’s website – www.fairwork.gov.au – contains a range of tools and resources to assist employers and employees.

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

The Fair Work Ombudsman is currently finalising audits of up to 100 child care businesses across NSW as part of a national campaign and the results will be announced later this year.

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Fair Work Online: www.fairwork.gov.au

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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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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