

## New campaign focuses on apprentices/trainees

18 May 2015

Hundreds of businesses which employ apprentices and trainees will come under scrutiny as part of a new national campaign by the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Up to 700 businesses in every capital city and selected regional areas have been earmarked for auditing over the next three months.

Fair Work inspectors will focus on employers of first-year apprentices in the automotive, electrical services, manufacturing, butchery and bakery trades.

While most requests for assistance from apprentices and trainees come from the construction and hospitality industries, these have been excluded given they have already been targeted by separate campaigns.

Deputy Fair Work Ombudsman (Operations) Michael Campbell says there are almost 400,000 apprentices and trainees working across Australia, according to the most recent data.

In the 10 months to the end of May last year, 1400 apprentices and trainees – more than half of them aged under 24 - sought help from the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Mr Campbell says the Agency has noted that almost half of apprenticeship contracts in trades are never completed, with a third of apprentices leaving their employer because of “poor working conditions, low wages or because they were unhappy with on-the-job training”.

“Given that we receive a consistent stream of requests for assistance from apprentices and the high drop-out rates, we believe an education and compliance campaign for employers of apprentices and trainees is warranted,” he said.

“Our objective is to provide advice and assistance to businesses at the earliest point in the employment relationship to ensure we give the apprentice the best chance of successfully completing his or her trade.”

Fair Work inspectors will check that employers understand their obligations with respect to record-keeping and payslips and monitor payment of minimum hourly rates, penalty rates, overtime, allowances and loadings.

Employers will also be educated about appropriate payments for off-the-job training for apprentices, competency-based progression and reimbursement of applicable course fees.

Mr Campbell hopes the pro-active campaign will help improve compliance and drive behavioural change where necessary. “Where we find problems, we will endeavour to identify the cause. This will help to inform our compliance and education efforts in the future,” he said.

Fair Work inspectors will work to assist any employers found to have workplace contraventions.

Employers and employees seeking assistance can visit the website at [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au) or contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94.

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Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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