

\$438,000 back-pay for child-care workers

22 May 2015

Almost 600 child care workers throughout Australia have been underpaid hundreds of thousands of dollars, spot checks by the Fair Work Ombudsman have revealed.

Ninety-eight employers were found to have short-changed a total of 584 employees more than \$438,600.

Just under \$200,000 was owed to 341 workers in Western Australia alone.

The underpayments were identified as part of the Fair Work Ombudsman's National Children's Services Campaign during 2013-14.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says 420 businesses were scrutinised, mainly those offering long day care and outside school-hours' care.

Despite the underpayment findings, Ms James says 71 per cent of all businesses were fully compliant with federal workplace laws.

And it was pleasing that those with errors worked with Fair Work inspectors to correct their mistakes by agreement.

One business was issued with a formal Letter of Caution.

Other state-based recoveries include:

- \$170,100 for 164 employees in NSW,
- \$46,575 for 49 employees in Victoria,
- \$11,667 for 11 employees in Tasmania,
- \$9536 for 13 employees in Queensland,
- \$698 for five employees in the NT, and
- \$76 for one employee in the ACT.
- No money was recovered in South Australia.

Ms James says the child-care sector was targeted for attention in response to an increase in requests for assistance from employees.

Requests for help rose from 341 to 498 between 2010 and 2012 and almost 10,000 phone inquiries were logged between January, 2012 and April, 2013.

The Fair Work Ombudsman also placed three matters involving child care centres before the courts in 2011-12.

Recent data shows that 96 per cent of child-care workers are female, almost a third are aged 24 or less and about a quarter were born overseas.

Ms James said the Fair Work Ombudsman was committed to helping employers to understand and comply with workplace laws, but operators also needed to make an effort to get the basics right in the first place.

She urged child-care businesses to use the online tools and resources available to them free of charge at www.fairwork.gov.au.

These include calculators to determine the correct award and minimum wages for employees, templates for pay slips and time-and-wages records and a range of fact sheets on workplace entitlements.

Employers and employees seeking advice can also call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter services is also available on 13 14 50.

Small business operators can opt to be put through to a Small Business Helpline for priority service.

Follow Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James on Twitter [@NatJamesFWO](https://twitter.com/NatJamesFWO) (<http://twitter.com/NatJamesFWO>), the Fair Work Ombudsman [@fairwork_gov_au](https://twitter.com/fairwork_gov_au) (http://twitter.com/fairwork_gov_au) or find us on Facebook www.facebook.com/fairwork.gov.au (<http://www.facebook.com/fairwork.gov.au>).

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Media inquiries:

Nicci de Ryk, Senior Media Adviser

Mobile: 0466 522 004

nicci.deryk@fwo.gov.au (<mailto:nicci.deryk@fwo.gov.au>)

Page reference No: 5341

Contact us

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