

## Cleaning industry compliance needs to improve

13 May 2016

The Fair Work Ombudsman has again called on cleaning contractors to pay greater attention to wage rates.

Another of the Agency's national campaigns has once more found cleaning businesses continuing to short-change their workers.

Fair Work inspectors have recovered another \$17,000 for 59 cleaners following auditing of 54 employers nationally.

The businesses were assessed to monitor compliance with minimum wage rates, penalty rates, allowances, overtime, pay-slip and record-keeping obligations.

The audits revealed that 33 per cent of cleaning businesses were paying their workers incorrectly.

Of concern was the finding that 18 businesses which had previously been found to be non-compliant were underpaying staff.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says all 18 were issued with formal Letters of Caution about their behaviour and two companies received on-the-spot fines.

Ms James says they all are now on notice that continuing breaches of workplace law may result in enforcement action.

Last financial year, the Fair Work Ombudsman received more than 7600 calls from cleaners concerned about their wages and entitlements.

The Agency also dealt with 500 requests for assistance from cleaners, recording an overall contravention rate of 40 per cent.

Previous campaigns have identified similar levels of non-compliance.

In 2010-11, a national campaign found 37 per cent of 366 cleaning businesses audited had workplace breaches, and a total of \$242,451 in underpaid wages and entitlements was recouped for 621 employees.

A follow-up campaign in 2012-13 showed an overall contravention rate of 38 per cent of 578 businesses audited and another \$762,766 being recovered for 1212 underpaid employees.

Ms James acknowledged that competitive tendering and tight profit margins may have compromised the ability of some cleaning businesses to meet their compliance obligations.

However, she warned that employers could not look to cut costs by under-cutting and ignoring minimum wage rates.

All cleaning businesses found to be non-compliant will be re-audited again as part of a National Compliance Monitoring Campaign.

Ms James says if further contraventions of workplace laws are identified, enforcement measures, including legal action, will be considered.

According to the last Census, almost two-third of cleaners are female and almost 40 per cent of employees were born overseas. Many are international students.

Ms James says the cleaning workforce is therefore considered to be a vulnerable cohort and open to exploitation by unscrupulous operators.

She says the Fair Work Ombudsman has been working with key industry participants as part of a Cleaning Accountability Framework to promote a culture of compliance with workplace laws.

Ms James encouraged employers with concerns about whether their workplace practices were appropriate to visit [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au) or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 for advice.

An interpreter service is available by calling 13 14 50, and information on the website is translated into 27 languages.

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- [National Cleaning Services Compliance Campaign Report 2014/15 \(DOCX 2.3MB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/national-cleaning-compliance-report-final.docx.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/national-cleaning-compliance-report-final.docx.aspx) (PDF 768.2KB) ([www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/national-cleaning-compliance-report-final.pdf.aspx](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/national-cleaning-compliance-report-final.pdf.aspx))

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Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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