

## Fair Work Ombudsman to audit 200 businesses in Shepparton region

22 November 2016

Persistent underpayment allegations from workers are among the prompts for a new Fair Work Ombudsman campaign in Victoria's Shepparton region.

Fair Work Inspectors will audit approximately 200 businesses in the region over the next three months in towns including the major areas of Shepparton, Cobram and Yarrawonga.

Inspectors will check employers are paying the correct minimum hourly rates, penalty rates, allowances and loadings and providing appropriate meal breaks.

Compliance with record-keeping and pay-slip obligations will also be monitored.

All businesses will be randomly selected.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says her Agency has been contacted by hundreds of workers in the Shepparton region over the past few years alleging they have been underpaid.

This includes a number of underpayment allegations from apprentices and trainees.

Ms James said the Fair Work Ombudsman recovered a total of \$147,000 for 108 workers throughout the Shepparton region during the 2015-16 financial year.

"It is important that we are proactive about checking employees are receiving their full lawful entitlements and improving compliance in the region," Ms James said.

The campaign will focus on a range of industries, including agriculture, forestry and fishing, manufacturing, retail, accommodation and food services, and construction.

Dairy farming operations, where there have been high rates of requests for assistance from apprentices and trainees, will also be looked at in the campaign.

Ms James says her Agency has a particular focus on assisting the most vulnerable workers, especially people who face significant barriers to taking their own action.

"Being new to the workplace, young workers can be vulnerable if they don't fully understand their rights or are reluctant to complain," she said.

Ms James says one of the aims of the campaign is to ensure employers are aware of their workplace responsibilities and how the Agency can assist them to access, understand and apply information to build a culture of compliance in their workplaces.

Key local employer groups, including councils and business associations have been enlisted to help the Agency promote the campaign.

Inspectors will inform employers about the range of free tools and resources available to them on the Fair Work Ombudsman's website at [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au) (<http://www.fairwork.gov.au/>). Online tools include calculators to determine correct wages and templates for time-and-wages records and pay slips. Employers and employees seeking assistance can visit the website or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. An interpreter service is available on 13 14 50.

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Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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