

Fair Work Ombudsman to audit 200 businesses in Gippsland region

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

Fair Work Inspectors will audit approximately 200 businesses in the region over the next three months in towns including Bairnsdale, Leongatha, Morwell, Warragul, Sale and Foster.

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 Gippsland region over the past few years alleging they have been underpaid.

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

Ms James also revealed that the Fair Work Ombudsman recovered a total of \$196,000 for 51 workers throughout the Gippsland 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, construction, retail, cafes, restaurants and take-away operations.

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.

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.

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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Fair Work Online: www.fairwork.gov.au

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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