Australian Government

Fair Work OMBUDSMAN

Fair Work Information Statement and the National Employment Standards

Australia's new workplace relations system

From 1 July 2009, most Australian workplaces are governed by a new system created by the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

The Fair Work Ombudsman helps employees, employers, contractors and the community to understand and comply with the new system. We provide education, information and advice, help to resolve workplace complaints, conduct investigations, and enforce relevant Commonwealth workplace laws.

The provision of the Fair Work Information Statement (the Statement) forms part of the National Employment Standards (NES). As of 1 January 2010, the NES apply to all employees covered by the national workplace relations system, regardless of the applicable industrial instrument or contract of employment.

Terms in awards, agreements and employment contracts cannot exclude or provide for an entitlement less than the NES, and those that do have no effect. An employer must not contravene a provision of the NES. A contravention of a provision of the NES may result in penalties of up to $10,200 for an individual and $51,000 for a corporation.

Overview

The Statement must be given to each new employee commencing employment from 1 January 2010.

The Statement is published by the Fair Work Ombudsman and must be published in the *Commonwealth Government Notices Gazette* (the *Gazette*). If the Fair Work Ombudsman changes the Statement in any way, they must publish the new version in the *Gazette*.

What information must be contained in the Statement?

The Statement contains information about the following:

- the NES
- modern awards
- agreement-making under the *Fair Work Act 2009*
- the right to freedom of association
- the role of the Fair Work Commission and the Fair Work Ombudsman
- termination of employment
- individual flexibility arrangements
- right of entry (including the protection of personal information by privacy laws)
- an explanation of the effect on an employee's entitlements under the NES if both of the following occur:
  - a transfer of a business occurs as described in the *Fair Work Act 2009*
  - the employee becomes a transferring employee.

Who must receive the Statement?

An employer must give each new employee the Statement before (or as soon as practicable after) the employee starts his or her employment. The employer is not required to give the employee the Statement more than once in 12 months.

Employers must give the Statement to an employee.

This may occur by any means, for example:

- the employer gives it to the employee personally
- the employer sends it by pre-paid post to:
  - the employee's residential address or
  - a postal address nominated by the employee
- the employer sends it to:
  - the employee's work email address or
  - another email address nominated by the employee

- the employer sends to the employee's work email address (or to another email address nominated by the employee):
  - an electronic link to the Fair Work Ombudsman website on which the Statement is located or
  - an electronic link that takes the employee directly to a copy of the Statement on the employer's intranet
- the employer faxes it to:
  - the employee's work fax number or
  - the employee's home fax number or
  - another fax number nominated by the employee.

Further Information

The Fair Work Ombudsman has published a fact sheet on each NES entitlement. For further information on a specific NES entitlement, please see the relevant fact sheets at **www.fairwork.gov.au**.

The requirement to provide new employees with a Fair Work Information Statement is provided for by sections 124 & 125 of the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

You can access a copy of the Fair Work Information Statement at **www.fairwork.gov.au/fwis**.

For further information, visit **www.fairwork.gov.au** or contact Fair Work Infoline **13 13 94**.

Related Publications

Introduction to the NES

Maximum working hours and the NES

Requests for flexible working arrangements and the NES

Parental leave and related entitlements and the NES

Annual leave and the NES

Personal/carer's leave and compassionate leave and the NES

Community service leave and the NES

Long service leave and the NES

Public holidays and the NES

Notice of termination and redundancy pay and the NES

Contact us

Fair Work Online: **www.fairwork.gov.au**

Fair Work Infoline: **13 13 94**

Need language help?
Contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50

Hearing & speech assistance
Call through the National Relay Service (NRS):

- For TTY: 13 36 77. Ask for the Fair Work Infoline 13 13 94
- Speak & Listen: 1300 555 727. Ask for the Fair Work Infoline 13 13 94

Fair Work Ombudsman is committed to providing useful, reliable information to help you understand your rights and obligations under workplace laws. It is your responsibility to comply with workplace laws that apply to you. The information contained in this publication is: general in nature and may not deal with all aspects of the law that are relevant to your specific situation; and not legal advice. Therefore, you may wish to seek independent professional advice to ensure all the factors relevant to your circumstances have been properly considered.

Last updated: March 2013
© Copyright Fair Work Ombudsman
FWOFS24.02

Australian Government

Fair Work OMBUDSMAN

Fair Work Information Statement

From 1 January 2010, this Fair Work Information Statement is to be provided to all new employees by their employer as soon as possible after the commencement of employment. The Statement provides basic information on matters that will affect your employment. If you require further information, you can contact the **Fair Work Infoline** on **13 13 94** or visit **www.fairwork.gov.au**.

The National Employment Standards

The *Fair Work Act 2009* provides you with a safety net of minimum terms and conditions of employment through the National Employment Standards (NES).

There are 10 minimum workplace entitlements in the NES:

1. A maximum standard working week of 38 hours for full-time employees, plus 'reasonable' additional hours.
2. A right to request flexible working arrangements.
3. Parental and adoption leave of 12 months (unpaid), with a right to request an additional 12 months.
4. Four weeks paid annual leave each year (pro rata).
5. Ten days paid personal/carer's leave each year (pro rata), two days paid compassionate leave for each permissible occasion, and two days unpaid carer's leave for each permissible occasion.
6. Community service leave for jury service or activities dealing with certain emergencies or natural disasters. This leave is unpaid except for jury service.
7. Long service leave.
8. Public holidays and the entitlement to be paid for ordinary hours on those days.
9. Notice of termination and redundancy pay.
10. The right for new employees to receive the Fair Work Information Statement.

A complete copy of the NES can be accessed at **www.fairwork.gov.au**. Please note that some conditions or limitations may apply to your entitlement to the NES. For instance, there are some exclusions for casual employees.

If you work for an employer who sells or transfers their business to a new owner, some of your NES entitlements may carry over to the new employer. Some NES entitlements which may carry over include personal/carer's leave, parental leave, and your right to request flexible working arrangements.

Right to request flexible working arrangements

Requests for flexible working arrangements form part of the NES. You may request a change in your working arrangements, including changes in hours, patterns or location of work from your employer if you require flexibility because you:

- are the parent, or have responsibility for the care, of a child who is of school age or younger
- are a carer (within the meaning of the *Carer Recognition Act 2010*)
- have a disability
- are 55 or older
- are experiencing violence from a member of your family or
- provide care or support to a member of your immediate family or household, who requires care or support because they are experiencing violence from their family.

If you are a parent of a child or have responsibility for the care of a child and are returning to work after taking parental or adoption leave you may request to return to work on a part-time basis to help you care for the child.

Modern awards

In addition to the NES, you may be covered by a modern award. These awards cover an industry or occupation and provide additional enforceable minimum employment standards. There is also a Miscellaneous Award that may cover employees who are not covered by any other modern award.

Modern awards may contain terms about minimum wages, penalty rates, types of employment, flexible working arrangements, hours of work, rest breaks, classifications, allowances, leave and leave loading, superannuation, and procedures for consultation, representation, and dispute settlement. They may also contain terms about industry specific redundancy entitlements.

If you are a manager or a high income employee, the modern award that covers your industry or occupation may not apply to you. For example, where your employer guarantees in writing that you will earn more than the high income threshold, currently set at $129,300 per annum and indexed annually, a modern award will not apply, but the NES will.

Transitional arrangements to introduce the modern award system may affect your coverage or entitlements under a modern award.

Agreement making

You may be involved in an enterprise bargaining process where your employer, you or your representative (such as a union or other bargaining representative) negotiate for an enterprise agreement. Once approved by the Fair Work Commission, an enterprise agreement is enforceable and provides for changes in the terms and conditions of employment that apply at your workplace.

There are specific rules relating to the enterprise bargaining process. These rules are about negotiation, voting, matters that can and cannot be included in an enterprise agreement, and how the agreement can be approved by the Fair Work Commission.

You and your employer have the right to be represented by a bargaining representative and must bargain in good faith when negotiating an enterprise agreement. There are also strict rules for taking industrial action. For information about making, varying, or terminating enterprise agreements visit the Fair Work Commission website, **www.fwc.gov.au**.

Individual flexibility arrangements

Your modern award or enterprise agreement must include a flexibility term. This term allows you and your employer to agree to an Individual Flexibility Arrangement (IFA), which varies the effect of certain terms of your modern award or enterprise agreement. IFAs are designed to meet the needs of both you and your employer. You cannot be forced to make an IFA, however, if you choose to make an IFA, you must be better off overall. IFAs are to be in writing, and if you are under 18 years of age, your IFA must also be signed by your parent or guardian.

Freedom of association and workplace rights (general protections)

The law not only provides you with rights, it ensures you can enforce them. It is unlawful for your employer to take adverse action against you because you have a workplace right. Adverse action could include dismissing you, refusing to employ you, negatively altering your position, or treating you differently for discriminatory reasons. Some of your workplace rights include the right to freedom of association (including the right to become or not to become a member of a union), and the right to be free from unlawful discrimination, undue influence and pressure.

If you have experienced adverse action by your employer, you can seek assistance from the Fair Work Ombudsman or the Fair Work Commission (applications relating to general protections where you have been dismissed must be lodged with the Fair Work Commission within 21 days).

Termination of employment

Termination of employment can occur for a number of reasons, including redundancy, resignation and dismissal. When your employment relationship ends, you are entitled to receive any outstanding employment entitlements. This may include outstanding wages, payment in lieu of notice, payment for accrued annual leave and long service leave, and any applicable redundancy payments.

Your employer should not dismiss you in a manner that is 'harsh, unjust or unreasonable'. If this occurs, this may constitute unfair dismissal and you may be eligible to make an application to the Fair Work Commission for assistance. It is important to note that applications must be lodged within 21 days of dismissal. Special provisions apply to small businesses, including the Small Business Fair Dismissal Code. For further information on this code, please visit **www.fairwork.gov.au**.

Right of entry

Right of entry refers to the rights and obligations of permit holders (generally a union official) to enter work premises. A permit holder must have a valid and current entry permit from the Fair Work Commission and, generally, must provide 24 hours notice of their intention to enter the premises. Entry may be for discussion purposes, or to investigate suspected contraventions of workplace laws that affect a member of the permit holder's organisation or occupational health and safety matters. A permit holder can inspect or copy certain documents, however, strict privacy restrictions apply to the permit holder, their organisation, and your employer.

The Fair Work Ombudsman and the Fair Work Commission

The **Fair Work Ombudsman** is an independent statutory agency created under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, and is responsible for promoting harmonious, productive and cooperative Australian workplaces. The Fair Work Ombudsman educates employers and employees about workplace rights and obligations to ensure compliance with workplace laws. Where appropriate, the Fair Work Ombudsman will commence proceedings against employers, employees, and/or their representatives who breach workplace laws.

If you require further information from the Fair Work Ombudsman, you can contact the **Fair Work Infoline** on **13 13 94** or visit **www.fairwork.gov.au**.

The Fair Work Commission is the national workplace relations tribunal established under the *Fair Work Act 2009*. The Fair Work Commission is an independent body with the authority to carry out a range of functions relating to the safety net of minimum wages and employment conditions, enterprise bargaining, industrial action, dispute resolution, termination of employment, and other workplace matters.

If you require further information, you can visit the Fair Work Commission website, **www.fwc.gov.au**.

The Fair Work Information Statement is prepared and published by the Fair Work Ombudsman in accordance with section 124 of the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

© Copyright Fair Work Ombudsman. Last updated: July 2013.

www.fairwork.gov.au
Fair Work Infoline **13 13 94**

Australian Government

Fair Work OMBUDSMAN