

START STRONG



Supporting apprentices: How the Fair Work Ombudsman can help

As the national workplace relations regulator, the Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) provides information, education and advice on pay rates and workplace rights and obligations. The FWO also enforces compliance with the Fair Work Act, related legislation, awards and registered agreements.

Checking your pay and industry entitlements

All employees (including apprentices) are covered by the [National Employment Standards \(NES\)](#). [Awards](#) and [enterprise agreements](#) (which you might hear referred to as an 'EBA' or 'EA') can also apply to apprentices, which set out further rules and entitlements for specific industries and occupations. This can include [breaks](#), [rosters](#), and [overtime](#). These are your minimum employment entitlements and cannot be excluded or undercut by a contract. If you're not sure which award covers your apprenticeship, you can use the interactive [Find my award](#) tool.

You must be paid at least the [minimum apprentice pay rate](#) in your award or enterprise agreement, including any penalty rates (for example, working late) and allowances (for example, using your own vehicle for work purposes) that apply. You can only be paid apprentice rates if you have a formal training contract with your employer.

If your award or enterprise agreement doesn't have apprentice rates, they should be paid the [minimum rates for the job](#).

Your minimum pay rate will usually [increase on 1 July](#), and when you progress through your apprenticeship. Progression can depend on your award and your training plan. It is commonly time-based (for example, after 12 months) or competency-based (for example, when you've met certain requirements of the apprenticeship).

You can use the FWO's free [Pay Calculator](#) to find the minimum pay rates, penalty rates and allowances that apply to you under your award.

Payment for training

Apprentices are expected to complete structured off-the-job training delivered by a Registered Training Organisation. This is commonly referred to as 'trade school'.

You must get paid for time at trade school as it counts as part of your normal work hours. If you're completing a [school-based apprenticeship](#), the rules may be different.

Some awards include additional entitlements to cover training costs, such as reimbursement from your employer on textbooks or trade school fees (provided you demonstrate satisfactory progress).

Leave entitlements

Apprentices are entitled to 4 weeks of paid [annual leave](#) per year if they're employed full-time (this is calculated pro rata for part-time employees) and 10 days of paid [sick and carer's leave](#) (which you might also hear referred to as personal leave). Other leave entitlements also apply, such as [parental leave](#), [family and domestic violence leave](#), and [compassionate leave](#).

Protections at work

Everyone has the right to enjoy a workplace safe and free from [discrimination, harassment and bullying](#) in all forms.

It's unlawful for an employee (including a prospective employee) to have any adverse action taken against them for a discriminatory reason. The FWO has a list of [protected attributes](#), plus examples of [adverse action](#) and [discrimination on their website](#).

The FWO can also help with [workplace sexual harassment](#) issues, including investigating non-compliance with the prohibition of workplace sexual harassment under the Fair Work Act and take action when someone doesn't comply with a Fair Work Commission stop sexual harassment order. Additionally, the FWO can commence civil court proceedings for alleged breaches of workplace sexual harassment laws.

FWO resources

The FWO's [Guide to starting an apprenticeship](#) explains what you can expect from an apprenticeship along with practical tips and checklists to make sure you're well informed about your workplace rights and entitlements.

The FWO offers regular webinars covering topics for all workplace participants, these are free and recorded if you can't attend live. Information and registration can be found at [Webinars - Fair Work Ombudsman](#).

Follow the FWO

The FWO has practical tools and resources to ensure you understand your rights, obligations and entitlements at work. For more information, visit fairwork.gov.au/apprentices.

You can also [subscribe to email updates](#) and follow FWO on social media at:

- [Facebook](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Instagram](#)
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