



# Fair Work OMBUDSMAN

## North Queensland Employer Education Visit Program 2011

### Final Report

#### Summary

The Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO), having identified a need to educate Northern Queensland employers on their obligations, conducted the North Queensland Employer Education Visit Program (the program).

The program was designed to provide information and assistance in relation to the changes associated with the introduction of the *Fair Work Act 2009 (the Act)* and how the changes would affect employers. It was also an opportunity to ensure local workplace participants were aware of the FWO's role, services and presence in the region.

The program which was conducted between March and June 2011, involved visiting businesses within a 250km radius of the FWO's Townsville and Cairns offices. Fair Work Inspectors (FWIs) visited a total of 134 businesses in the regions of Innisfail, Port Douglas, Kuranda, Ayr, Ingham, Cardwell and Home Hill.

Further information regarding the program is detailed below.

#### Background

Since the introduction of the *Act*, Fair Work Inspectors in the FWO's Townsville and Cairns offices had noted an increase in the number of employers attending their offices to seek information regarding their obligations. It became evident therefore that a substantial number of employers in the region were not sure of how the changes in legislation applied to them and that a targeted educational program would usefully address this.

#### Campaign aim & objectives

To promote the role and services of the FWO to employers in North Queensland and educate them on record keeping and transitional legislative provisions.

#### Methodology

During this program much of Northern Queensland was recovering from the recent flood disasters. Recognising the significant impact of the floods on many businesses we decided not to write to employers to advise them of the FWO's visits but to visit the selected regions throughout March and June 2011 and randomly select businesses

which were still trading. On arrival at each business premise we firstly identified ourselves and asked to speak with the owner of the business. We then explained to the employer the role of the FWO and Fair Work Inspectors and the location of our local office.

We also provided each employer with an education pack containing

- The business card of the FWO Senior Fair Work Inspector in the area
- *Small business and the Fair Work Act* best practice guide
- *About the Fair Work Ombudsman* fact sheet
- *Introduction to National Employment Standards* fact sheet
- *Modern Awards* fact sheets
- *Employer obligations in relation to employee records and pay slips* fact sheet
- *Self-audit checklist for employers*
- Copy of the *Fair Work Information Statement* for employees
- CD ROM containing *additional resources for employers*

As the program was designed as an educative exercise, no compliance work was undertaken however, where we suspected a contravention we offered a follow up visit or an office appointment to discuss their obligations further. These offers were well accepted by employers.

## Results

At the conclusion of the program our Fair Work Inspectors had completed 134 educational visits.

The table below outlines the number of visits that were undertaken in each area. The different areas all lie within two particular regions of Northern Queensland, with 68 being in the Far North region, while 66 fall within the greater Townsville region.

Suburbs Visited	
Ayr	37
Craiglee	1
Giru	1
Home Hill	17
Idalia	4
Ingham	15
Innisfail	29
Kirwan	1
Kuranda	15
Mount Pleasant	1
Ooonooba	6
Port Douglas	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>

We revisited 7 employers who we believed to require further information regarding transitional provisions and revisited a further 12 employers on their request to discuss other issues not covered in the initial visit.

## **Conclusion**

This program has proven to be successful in educating employers in regional areas. We found that our visits were well received and as a consequence we were able to provide information and assistance to a number of employers in relation to their obligations and to direct them to tools and resources on the FWO website. Further the visits were successful in raising the profile of the FWO in regional North Queensland.

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