

## More than \$140,000 recovered for local workers in Far North Queensland campaign

13 July 2017

The Fair Work Ombudsman has released the findings of its recent campaign targeting businesses in Cairns, Innisfail, Mission Beach and surrounding areas.

Fair Work Inspectors audited a total of 266 businesses across a range of industries including accommodation and food services; healthcare and social assistance; and hair and beauty.

The campaign found relatively high compliance rates in the region, including:

- 85 per cent of businesses compliant with record keeping and payslip requirements
- 79 per cent of businesses paying their employees correctly
- 67 per cent of businesses meeting all of their workplace obligations.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James said that while it was encouraging that the majority of businesses in the region were meeting their obligations, any instance of non-compliance is cause for concern.

"This campaign identified 117 separate workplace contraventions, the majority of which related to underpayment of wages and failure to meet payslip requirements," Ms James said.

"We have been working with non-compliant businesses to assist them to rectify these issues and put in place processes to prevent them from happening again in the future.

"As a result of the campaign, we've successfully recovered \$142,953 in back-pay for 136 employees from 38 businesses."

Outcomes include entering an Enforceable Undertaking (EU) with AJ & S Pty Ltd, trading as Sushi Train Cairns, and sole director Mr Junji Tomehata.

Mr Tomehata failed to check applicable pay rates for his workers after purchasing the business in 2014, which led to underpayments totalling more than \$54,000 to 28 workers.

The company cooperated fully with the Fair Work Ombudsman and back-paid \$53,993.58 in owed wages to 24 workers.

The outstanding \$2997.26 owed to the remaining four workers, who have since returned to their country of origin, will be rectified under the terms of the EU.

Ms James said her agency has also taken enforcement action against 12 other non-compliant businesses.

In one case, the Fair Work Ombudsman recovered more than \$1,100 for a working holiday visa-holder who was underpaid while working as a casual at a local restaurant. The employer was issued with an Infringement Notice.

Another audit found that two retail employees had not been paid applicable penalty rates and overtime due to the employer paying the workers under an old workplace agreement. The Fair Work Ombudsman recovered more than \$9,000 in back-pay for the two workers and issued the employer with a letter of caution.

Ms James said that while she recognised the challenges that may be faced by small businesses in understanding their workplace obligations, it was vital that employers remained informed.

"My agency is always here to provide information and advice to employers so that they can ensure that they are doing the right thing," Ms James said.

"The best way to remain informed and receive tailored information for your business is to register a free My Account with the Fair Work Ombudsman."

Three further campaigns have been commenced by the Fair Work Ombudsman in Queensland this year, targeting the Wide Bay and Ipswich regions, as well as Fortitude Valley in Brisbane.

Final reports for these campaigns will be published at the conclusion of each respective activity.

Ms James said that her agency would continue to educate employers in the Far North Queensland region on their obligations and encourage them to contact the agency for advice.

“The results of our recent National Compliance Monitoring Campaign showed vastly improved rates of compliance amongst businesses following interaction with my agency,” Ms James said.

“This shows that most employers are genuinely trying to do the right thing, and that the work that we are undertaking to educate employers about their workplace obligations is having a positive impact.”

Employers and employees seeking assistance can visit [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au) or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. An interpreter service is available on 13 14 50. Small business operators can opt to receive priority service from the Small Business Helpline.

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Read the [Far North Queensland Campaign Report \(www.fairwork.gov.au/reports/far-north-queensland-regional-campaign-report/default\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/reports/far-north-queensland-regional-campaign-report/default) (PDF 11.1MB) ([www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/fnq-regional-campaign-report.pdf.aspx](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/fnq-regional-campaign-report.pdf.aspx))

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