

Court action over alleged \$87,000 underpayment of Newcastle call centre workers

20 May 2010

The Fair Work Ombudsman has launched a prosecution against the operators of a Newcastle call centre for allegedly underpaying 64 of its employees more than \$87,000.

Facing court is Country Hospitality Pty Ltd, which operates an outbound call centre on Hunter St selling holiday packages.

The Agency is also prosecuting the company's sole owner-director Andre Praglowski, who manages the call centre.

Documents lodged in the Federal Magistrates Court in Sydney allege the 64 casual telemarketers were underpaid a total of \$87,174 between 2006 and 2009.

Many of the employees were allegedly paid as little as \$10 an hour when the company did not think they had made sufficient sales.

The workers were allegedly entitled to a minimum casual hourly rate of between \$15.30 and \$17.17 at the time.

The largest alleged underpayment of an individual worker is \$28,423.

Fair Work inspectors discovered the issue when they investigated complaints from the workers last year.

Fair Work Ombudsman NSW Director Mark Davidson says the decision to prosecute was made because of the significant amount involved, workers were low-paid and the employer failed to rectify the matter.

Country Hospitality and Mr Praglowski have allegedly committed several breaches of workplace relations laws.

The maximum penalty per breach is \$33,000 for the company and \$6600 for Mr Praglowski. The Agency is also seeking a Court Order for the company to back-pay the workers the money allegedly owed.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has a range of user-friendly resources on its website - www.fwo.gov.au - to assist employees and employers check minimum rates of pay.

Small to medium-sized businesses without human resources staff can also ensure they are following best practice when hiring, managing and dismissing employees by using free template employment documentation with step-by-step instructions or accessing a series of Best Practice Guides.

Online resources also include payslip and record-keeping templates, a self-audit checklist and fact sheets.

Employers or employees seeking assistance can also contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 from 8am-6pm weekdays. For translations call 13 14 50.

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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

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