

Ballarat campaign recoups \$130,000 back-pay for 147 employees

12 October 2011

Thirty-one Ballarat businesses have back-paid more than \$130,000 to their staff after random audits found the employees were being underpaid.

A total of 147 employees have been reimbursed an average of \$888 each, the Fair Work Ombudsman revealed today.

Fair Work inspectors recently finished checking the books of 114 Ballarat employers as part of a rolling campaign across Victoria focussing on different industries and locations.

With 112 audits completed, 72 employers (64 per cent) were found to be compliant, while 40 (36 per cent) recorded contraventions.

The breaches related mainly to the underpayment of wages, shift loadings and penalty rates, but inspectors also found non-compliance with time and wages records and pay slip content.

Two businesses remain under investigation.

Fair Work Ombudsman Nicholas Wilson says Ballarat was selected for pro-active auditing following intelligence received by inspectors about potential non-compliance in the city.

“Victoria’s rolling campaigns give us an opportunity to reach different industries and communities to educate and assess compliance,” he said.

Fair Work inspectors conducted an information session, hosted by the Eureka Business Enterprise Centre, to assist employers understand their responsibilities.

When visiting businesses, inspectors also provided advice on record and pay slip obligations, Modern Awards and the free tools and resources available from the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Mr Wilson says when inspectors identified contraventions, employers co-operated with the Fair Work Ombudsman to correct the mistakes voluntarily.

“They have also now put processes in place to ensure these errors are not repeated in the future,” he said.

Mr Wilson says inspectors believed the breaches were the result of a lack of awareness by employers of their obligations, rather than a deliberate attempt to avoid them.

“It’s a fact that some businesses inadvertently breach workplace laws. When we find mistakes, we’re here to assist and give practical advice to employers on how to voluntarily fix them,” he said.

“Of some concern to inspectors in the field was the lack of knowledge of payroll professionals, bookkeepers and accountants about the workplace obligations of the employers engaging their services.”

Mr Wilson says the Ballarat campaign provided an opportunity to publicise the role and function of the Fair Work Ombudsman to employees, as well as employers.

“It is important that regional workers understand there is an Agency they can turn to if they have concerns about their entitlements or discrimination in the workplace,” he said.

Workers or employers seeking support should get in touch with the Fair Work Ombudsman via the website - www.fairwork.gov.au - or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94.

The website has a number of tools and resources, including PayCheck Plus and an Award Finder, to assist business-owners calculate the correct pay for their employees.

PayCheck Plus calculates minimum rates of pay per hour, per shift or per week and can take into account overtime, penalty rates and allowances.

Free documentation is also available Online for employers to use when hiring, managing and dismissing staff, including letters of

engagement and probation, timesheet and pay slip templates, leave application forms, a self-audit checklist and workplace complaint form.

A free interpreter service is available on 13 14 50, and information on the website is translated into 27 different languages.

Campaign Results: [Victorian Rolling Monthly Campaign Ballarat 2010-2011 \(PDF 466.1KB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/Victorian-Rolling-Monthly-Campaign-Ballarat-2010-2011.pdf.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/Victorian-Rolling-Monthly-Campaign-Ballarat-2010-2011.pdf.aspx)

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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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