

Brisbane business faces court for allegedly underpaying staff \$18,000

20 October 2011

Note: Reference to prosecution in this media release is a general reference to the FWO commencing proceedings for the imposition of civil penalties and should not be taken to be a reference to criminal proceedings.

The Fair Work Ombudsman is prosecuting a Brisbane company for allegedly underpaying four workers more than \$18,000 when it terminated their employment.

Facing court is Humidifresh Industries Pty Ltd, which operates a refrigeration and cold-room design, installation and repair business at Acacia Ridge.

Also facing court is Humidifresh Industries part-owner Gary Martin North, of Brisbane, who managed the refrigeration business at the time of the alleged breaches.

Humidifresh Industries allegedly underpaid four employees a total of \$18,019 when their employment was terminated in 2009.

They included two apprentice refrigeration mechanics aged 20 and 21, a refrigeration mechanic aged 24 and a supervisor/project manager aged 48.

The company allegedly wrote to the employees to inform them that their services would no longer be required because of "slow economic times and a downturn in business".

Court documents allege the four employees did not receive severance pay entitlements and that two were also underpaid wages in lieu of notice.

Fair Work inspectors became aware of the issue when the employees lodged complaints.

Fair Work Ombudsman Nicholas Wilson says the decision to prosecute was made because of the significant amount involved and the employer's failure to rectify the matter.

"Alleged underpayments of young apprentice workers is an issue we treat seriously," Mr Wilson said.

Mr North faces maximum penalties of up to \$6600 per breach and Humidifresh \$33,000 per contravention.

The case will be heard in the Federal Magistrates Court in Brisbane. A first directions hearing is listed for November 30.

Employers or employees seeking assistance should contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 or visit www.fairwork.gov.au A free interpreter service is available on 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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