

One complaint triggers \$350,000 back-pay for almost 400 workers

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A single complaint from a service technician in South Australia has resulted in the discovery that almost 400 of the woman's co-workers had been underpaid more than \$354,000.

The employees worked for Pink Hygiene Solutions, owned by Sydney-based Rentokil Initial Pty Ltd, at locations in South Australia, NSW, Victoria, Western Australia, Queensland and the ACT.

With a workforce approaching 70,000 and operations in more than 50 countries, Rentokil Initial is one of the largest business services companies in the world.

It provides washroom hygiene and cleaning services, mats and floor care services, clinical waste and smokers' disposal units, pest eradication, office cleaning, indoor tropical plant care and office machinery maintenance.

In March, 2010, the Fair Work Ombudsman received a complaint in Adelaide from a former employee about under-payment and non-payment of overtime.

Deficiencies with Rentokil's record-keeping practices prevented Fair Work inspectors from accurately calculating outstanding entitlements for the worker.

While the complaint was subsequently settled between the parties, the Fair Work Ombudsman issued a contravention letter to the company requiring it to ensure its compliance with workplace laws.

In response, a self-audit by Rentokil revealed inadvertent errors in applying overtime provisions had resulted in 396 current and former employees being underpaid a total of \$354,494 between July 1, 2007 and December 31, 2009.

The underpayments ranged from as little as \$8 to as much as \$5200.

More than \$75,000 is still owing to 139 former staff who are yet to provide the company with their bank details to allow the outstanding entitlements to be paid.

Acting Fair Work Ombudsman Mark Scully says Rentokil has co-operated fully with the Agency and the matter is being dealt with by way of an Enforceable Undertaking as an alternative to litigation.

As part of the Enforceable Undertaking, Rentokil will make a \$40,000 donation to the Working Women's Centre in South Australia to assist it promote the need for employer compliance with national workplace laws.

Copy of undertaking: [Rentokil Initial Pty Ltd Enforceable Undertaking \(PDF 529KB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/721/Rentokil-Initial-Pty-Ltd-Enforceable-Undertaking.pdf.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/721/Rentokil-Initial-Pty-Ltd-Enforceable-Undertaking.pdf.aspx)

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