

## **FWO helps create fairer workplaces in NT**

30 October 2012

More than 5000 Northern Territory employees and employers sought advice from the Fair Work Infoline in the last financial year.

Fair Work Ombudsman Nicholas Wilson said nationally, wages and conditions again topped the list of reasons why people called for advice and assistance.

“Of the 683,900 people who called the Fair Work Infoline in the last financial year across the country, 38 per cent asked about wages, 20 per cent asked about conditions and 13 per cent asked about termination of employment,” he says.

“Once again, Top End employers and employees were proactive in their efforts to find out more about their workplace rights and responsibilities.”

The Fair Work Ombudsman’s annual report also shows that the Agency finalised 280 workplace complaints in the NT last financial year.

Just over \$256,000 in back-pay was recovered for a total of 185 workers in the NT - with many employers voluntarily rectifying their workplace contraventions.

Of that, a total of \$96,440 in outstanding entitlements was recovered as a result of the Fair Work Ombudsman’s pro-active targeted campaign activity in the Top End.

Four national targeted wage campaign audits were conducted in the retail, security, clerical and vehicle repair and maintenance industries.

A further two campaigns were conducted in the NT in the hair and beauty industry and a joint takeaway/restaurant audit with SA and WA.

Fair Work inspectors finalised 110 targeted campaign audits throughout NT in the last financial year.

NT employers were keen to receive information about their responsibilities.

“We selected specific employers and regions that we know employ migrants, young people and other vulnerable workers,” Mr Wilson says.

“For the first time, every targeted wage audit campaign began with an education phase to help employers understand their obligations under workplace laws.

“We also successfully trialled the use of ‘webinars’ in campaigns, with inspectors directly answering questions without employers having to leave their businesses at busy times of the day.

“We find some workplace contraventions are the result of a lack of information or employers make mistakes interpreting the information they have.

“However, some are either unaware or ignore their responsibilities and our proactive campaign work helps them resolve issues and avoid repeating their breaches in future.”

Nationally, the Fair Work Ombudsman finalised 28,412 complaints and conducted 6547 audits, recovering \$39 million for almost 18,500 underpaid workers.

Mr Wilson said: “Our aim is to change long-term behaviour by providing tailored information about what people need to pay, or should be paid.

“For example, around three-quarters of the 392 completed audits in this financial year’s National Security Industry Follow-Up Campaign showed employers were meeting their obligations.

“In contrast, in 2009 we found less than half - 47 per cent - of employers in this industry were meeting their obligations.

“This is a significant turnaround that shows industries will change behaviours with sufficient information and assistance.”

“In the past year, the Fair Work Ombudsman has been working to reframe its services in a way that helps more people, more

significantly," Mr Wilson says.

"We will continue to work in partnership with employers and employees in the coming months and years to promote harmonious, productive and cooperative workplaces right across the country."

A copy of the Fair Work Ombudsman's 2011-12 Annual Report is available at [www.fairwork.gov.au/annualreport](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/annualreport) ([www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/access-accountability-and-reporting/annual-reports](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/access-accountability-and-reporting/annual-reports))

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