

FWO helps create fairer workplaces in Qld

30 October 2012

More than 148,000 Queensland 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, Queensland employers and employers 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 6824 workplace complaints in Queensland last financial year.

Just over \$8.6 million in back-pay was recovered for a total of 4906 workers in Queensland - with many employers voluntarily rectifying their workplace contraventions.

Of that, a total of \$2.2 million in outstanding entitlements was recovered as a result of the Fair Work Ombudsman’s pro-active targeted campaign activity.

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

A further seven campaigns were conducted in Queensland industries including accommodation, EKKA transient workers, aged care, real estate, Brisbane food courts and clothing manufacturers.

Fair Work inspectors finalised 1969 targeted campaign audits throughout Queensland in the last financial year.

Queensland 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 2011-12, the Fair Work Ombudsman also conducted over 12,000 educational visits to Australian workplaces, providing information

to employers in NSW, Queensland, SA and Tasmania.

“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 (www.fairwork.gov.au/about-us/access-accountability-and-reporting/annual-reports)

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