

Fair Work Ombudsman focuses on Atherton Tablelands farms

9 December 2013

Inspectors from the Fair Work Ombudsman will visit up to 10 fruit and vegetable farms in the Atherton Tablelands region in Queensland this week to check employers are paying workers correctly.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James said the audits were prompted by the region generating a number of complaints from pickers, including young and foreign workers such as backpackers.

Ms James said Fair Work Inspectors will check employers are paying workers their full entitlements, keeping proper employment records and issuing employees with pay slips.

Inspectors will also encourage pickers to come forward with any queries they have.

“We are conscious that many pickers are young and foreign workers who may be vulnerable if they’re not fully aware of their rights or reluctant to complain, so it’s important we’re proactive about ensuring they are being paid correctly,” Ms James said.

In cases of non-compliance, the preference of Fair Work Inspectors will be to assist growers to voluntarily rectify issues and educate them about the range of free resources available at www.fairwork.gov.au they can use to ensure ongoing compliance.

If serious, deliberate or repeated contraventions are identified, or if growers are not willing to co-operate, Inspectors may consider taking further compliance action.

Ms James said common non-compliance issues for fruit and vegetable growers include:

- Underpayment of minimum hourly rates under the Horticulture Award 2010,
- Failure to keep time-and-wages records, particularly for casual employees,
- Failure to provide the Fair Work Information Statement to new employees,
- Detailed pay slips not being provided within one day of pay day, and
- Unlawful deductions from employees’ wages for travel and accommodation.

The audits follow Fair Work Inspectors making educational visits to Atherton Tablelands farms last month to provide employers with information packs, which included a copy of the Horticulture Award 2010, fact sheets, copies of the Fair Work Information Statement and Fair Work Handbook, and details about the information on pay, conditions and other industry-specific issues available at www.fairwork.gov.au/horticulture (www.fairwork.gov.au/pay/minimum-wages/piece-rates-and-commission-payments) .

Employers and employees seeking advice and assistance should visit the website or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter service is available on 13 14 50.

Media inquiries:

Tom McPherson, Media & Stakeholder Relations
0439 835 855
tom.mcpherson@fwo.gov.au

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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