

## \$33,000 recovered for underpaid Geelong workers

18 December 2013

Two underpaid Geelong workers have been back-paid \$33,500 in wages and entitlements following recent intervention by the Fair Work Ombudsman.

The biggest back-payment was \$19,700 for a young worker who was paid apprentice rates over a 12-month period in 2010-2011, despite his employer not officially registering him for an apprenticeship.

The worker, aged 19 to 20 at the time, had accepted his position on the basis he would be registered as an apprentice tradesman - but his employer never lodged the official paperwork.

Acting Fair Work Ombudsman Michael Campbell says it is important employers do not delay registering apprenticeship agreements for workers.

"Only workers who are officially registered as apprentices with the appropriate State authority can be classified and paid as apprentices," Mr Campbell said.

"When employers have been mistakenly paying a worker apprentice rates for some time, a significant inadvertent underpayment can occur - and no business wants to be hit with a bill for back-payment of wages they weren't budgeting for."

In another case, a health industry professional was back-paid \$13,800 after not receiving his final wages for time worked, wages in lieu of notice and annual leave entitlements upon termination of employment in September this year.

In both cases, Fair Work Inspectors discovered the underpayments when they investigated complaints lodged by the workers.

Mr Campbell said after inspectors educated the employers on their responsibilities under workplace laws, both workers were back-paid in full without the need for further action.

"We are confident the underpayments were the result of the employers' lack of awareness of their obligations, rather than an attempt to avoid their responsibilities," Mr Campbell said.

"When we identify a problem and contact a business, we find that most employers check their records, realise they have made a mistake, and promptly rectify it."

The Fair Work Ombudsman's website - [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au) - contains a range of tools and resources, including PayCheck Plus and an Award Finder, to help employers calculate minimum pay rates and entitlements for employees.

The website also includes information on employing apprentices and trainees and a 'Termination' section to help employers establish the entitlements payable in a worker's final pay.

In the last financial year the Fair Work Ombudsman recovered more than \$5.8 million in back-pay for over 7,300 underpaid Victorian workers.

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

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## Contact us

Fair Work Online: [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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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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