

‘About right’ not good enough - Brisbane employers must back-pay staff \$118,000

13 January 2013

Operators of fast-food outlets in Brisbane have found out the hard way that paying staff what they ‘thought was about right’ isn’t good enough.

As a result of investigations by the Fair Work Ombudsman, more than 300 staff will receive back-dated wages of \$118,000.

“What’s particularly concerning is that many employers claimed to have limited knowledge of the basic entitlements of their staff,” Acting Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO), Bill Loizides, said.

The targeted education and compliance campaign was launched as a direct consequence of a large number of complaints to FWO from staff working in the sector.

Investigators audited 121 fast-food outlets operating in food courts of suburban Brisbane shopping centres and found the majority (67 employers or 55 per cent) were in breach of workplace laws, including underpayment of wages or breaches of record keeping requirements.

Sixty businesses had been underpaying workers and have now been hit with bills totalling \$118,000 for 328 staff. Seven employers face bills of between \$5,000 and \$10,000 and investigations affecting four employers are continuing.

Mr Loizides said that some employers told FWO investigators that they simply paid staff what they ‘thought was about right.’

“This simply isn’t good enough,” Mr Loizides said.

“Knowing the right classification for staff, which modern award or enterprise agreement applies and what workers should be paid is a fundamental responsibility of all employers. The FWO has a wealth of information available online to help employers get it right and for employees to check that they are receiving their correct entitlements.”

A similar campaign in 2010 in food courts in the Brisbane CBD and regional centres resulted in \$45,000 in unpaid wages being recouped for 180 workers.

A key part of the latest campaign was to work with employers to educate them about how to get it right in the future, particularly by accessing the resources available on the Fair Work Ombudsman’s website.

Late last year, the FWO started a new campaign targeting more than 200 pest control and gardening centres in Brisbane, Bundaberg, Cairns, Gladstone, Gold Coast, Goondiwindi, Hervey Bay, Ipswich, Mackay, Rockhampton, Sunshine Coast, Toowoomba, Townsville and Warwick.

Overall in Queensland last financial year, FWO investigations recouped more than \$10 million in underpaid wages for more than 5,000 workers.

Workers and employers seeking information can call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94.

Campaign results

- [Brisbane Food Court Audit 2011-2012 report \(PDF 442.7KB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/Brisbane-food-court-audit-2011-2012-report.pdf.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/Brisbane-food-court-audit-2011-2012-report.pdf.aspx)
- [Brisbane Food Court Audit 2011-2012 report \(DOCX 159.6KB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/Brisbane-food-court-audit-2011-2012-report.docx.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/Brisbane-food-court-audit-2011-2012-report.docx.aspx)

Media enquiries/interviews: 08 8225 8263 (all hours).

Radio Newsrooms note: An FWO spokesperson is available for interview between 6.40am and 7.15am (Queensland time) on Sunday 13 January via 08 8225 8263.

Contact us

Fair Work Online: www.fairwork.gov.au

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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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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