

## \$50,000 back-pay for workers in Queensland's clothing manufacturing industry

6 May 2013

More than 80 workers have been back-paid a total of \$50,500 after the Fair Work Ombudsman audited 171 clothing manufacturers across Queensland.

The workplace regulator today released the findings of an audit program targeting the industry which saw Fair Work inspectors check the books of businesses across the state.

The results reveal 121 employers (71 per cent) were compliant with workplace laws and paying staff correctly, while 50 (29 per cent) had a combination of record-keeping, pay slip and underpayment breaches.

Businesses at Maryborough, Darra, North Rockhampton, Emerald, Fortitude Valley, Inala, Mackay, Underwood, Aitkenvale, Brendale, Buddina, Bundall, Burleigh BC, Camira, Capalaba, Cooroy, Currumbin Waters, Ellen Grove, Eumundi, Goodna, Gympie, Helensvale, Hervey Bay, Manunda, Maroochydore, Mudgeeraba, Nerang, Newstead, Redbank Plains, Shailer Park, South Brisbane, South Mackay, Springwood, Toowong and Wynnum were included in the audits.

The audits were prompted by a number of complaints from within the industry, raising concerns at FWO that many workers might be unaware of their rights or reluctant to complain.

Acting Fair Work Ombudsman, Michael Campbell, said clothing outworkers who make garments from their home or another location, instead of working from business premises, were a particular focus of the campaign.

"Complex supply chain structures can mean outworkers don't know who their actual employer is, or they may be reluctant to complain for fear of losing orders, and so these workers can be more vulnerable to exploitation," Mr Campbell said.

Surprisingly, only 11 of the businesses audited (six per cent) employed outworkers. Seven of those (64 per cent) had been found to have contravened record-keeping obligations and the conditions specific to outworkers in the relevant award.

Mr Campbell said while the compliance rate for businesses engaging outworkers was disappointing, a common cause of the errors was employers being unaware of their obligations, rather than a deliberate attempt to avoid them.

He said Fair Work inspectors educated employers on their obligations and the businesses have now put processes in place to ensure they comply in the future.

"The audits also provided valuable insight into the clothing manufacturing industry which we will draw upon when planning future campaigns," he said.

Employers and employees seeking information and advice should consult the free tools and resources available at [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au) or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter service is available on 13 14 50.

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### Find out more:

- [Clothing Manufacturers Audit Program 2011 report \(PDF 357.5KB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/QLD-Clothing-Manufacturers-Audit-Program-2011-report.pdf.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/QLD-Clothing-Manufacturers-Audit-Program-2011-report.pdf.aspx)
- [Clothing Manufacturers Audit Program 2011 report \(DOCX 1MB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/QLD-Clothing-Manufacturers-Audit-Program-2011-report.docx.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/QLD-Clothing-Manufacturers-Audit-Program-2011-report.docx.aspx)

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