

Riverland workers back-paid after Fair Work Ombudsman intervention

24 May 2013

Thirty five fruit pickers in the Riverland have been back-paid \$8,000 after a recent visit to the area found that some workers were being underpaid.

Fair Work Inspectors visited businesses in Berri, Waikerie and Loxton in March to talk to employees and employers about their entitlements and obligations during the picking season.

Of the seven businesses that were visited in the area, only one business was found to be in contravention of workplace laws.

Fair Work Inspectors found that the business had underpaid 35 fruit pickers varying amounts between \$100 to more than \$1,000. These underpayments have now been rectified by the employer without the need for further action.

The other six businesses visited were found to be compliant with their workplace obligations and were paying staff correctly.

The visit was scheduled after the Fair Work Ombudsman received a number of complaints from fruit pickers in the region.

Director of the Fair Work Ombudsman's Overseas Workers Team, Aaron Rilstone, said that foreign workers who were working as fruit pickers were a particular focus of the visit.

"Many fruit pickers in the Riverland are on visas, as international students or as working holiday makers. The Fair Work Ombudsman pays considerable attention to vulnerable workers, which can include young workers and foreign workers, because they may not be fully aware of their workplace rights." Mr Rilstone said.

"It's important that anyone working in Australia receives their full entitlements and that was the focus during our visit to the Riverland."

During the visit Fair Work Inspectors spoke to employees in the region about the wages and conditions that apply to them and worked with employers by providing information about the entitlements of their employees to ensure compliance in the future.

"Our focus was to give information to employees and employers to avoid problems leading to complaints in the first place," Mr Rilstone said.

"This campaign was a great opportunity for employers in the region to improve their understanding of workplace laws and learn about the range of resources available on the Fair Work Ombudsman's website to help them ensure they are getting things right in the future."

Any foreign worker who is concerned they have been treated unfairly or is seeking information about their entitlements under workplace laws should contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 for free advice and assistance. Complaints can be made confidentially and a free interpreter service is available on 13 14 50.

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Fair Work Online: www.fairwork.gov.au

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Contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 13 14 50

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Call through the National Relay Service (NRS):

For TTY: 13 36 77. Ask for the Fair Work Infoline 13 13 94

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