

\$18,000 in back-pay for workers along the Murray River

30 May 2013

Eighteen workers in the Murray River region in Victoria and New South Wales have been back-paid \$18,136 after Fair Work Inspectors audited businesses in the area earlier this year.

Inspectors conducted face-to-face audits with 91 randomly selected businesses in Cobram, Corowa, Echuca, Moama, Mulwala, Rutherglen, Tocumwal and Yarrawonga in February.

Of the 90 audits completed, 51 employers (57 per cent) were found to be meeting their obligations under workplace law, while 39 (43 per cent) had breaches. In addition, one audit remains ongoing.

Five (13 per cent) of the businesses found to be in contravention had monetary breaches, 30 (77 per cent) had record-keeping and pay slip breaches, and four (10 per cent) had a combination of monetary and record-keeping/pay slip breaches.

The amount recovered from individual businesses ranged from \$13 to about \$8,800.

Compliance with record-keeping and pay slips were a particular focus of the campaign, with Inspectors checking that employers were providing their staff with sufficiently detailed pay slips within one working day of pay day and keeping correct time-and-wages records.

Acting Fair Work Ombudsman, Michael Campbell, said the campaign provided a great opportunity for employers in the region to improve their understanding of workplace laws.

"It's a requirement under workplace law that all employers provide pay slips to staff within 24 hours of payment and that the pay slips contain critical information such as hourly rates, loadings and where superannuation is paid to. Record keeping is also an obligation on all employers," Mr Campbell said.

During the visits Fair Work Inspectors also checked that staff were classified and paid correctly under relevant awards.

"It's important that employers understand their obligations under an award - it's not enough to make a handshake agreement with an employee, even if they agree to the wages and terms that you shake on," he said.

"Agreements of this nature can often lead to employees being underpaid, which can result in large back-payments in the future."

Inspectors also took the opportunity to demonstrate to employers the range of resources available at www.fairwork.gov.au to help them comply with workplace laws.

Online resources include templates for pay slips and record-keeping and tools for determining correct rates of pay for employees, such as PayCheck Plus.

The Fair Work Ombudsman conducted an education and compliance campaign focusing on the accommodation industry in the Murray River region in 2010.

At that time, Fair Work Inspectors checked the books of 14 businesses and found that nine (64%) had breached workplace laws, including five businesses which had underpaid 10 employees a total of \$4,124.

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

Download the report:

- [Murray River audit program report \(PDF 561.6KB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/Murray-River-audit-program-report-May-2013.pdf.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/Murray-River-audit-program-report-May-2013.pdf.aspx)
(www.fairwork.gov.au/campaignresults/NSW-ACT/Murray-River-audit-program-report-May-2013.docx)
- [Murray River audit program report \(DOCX 295.7KB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/Murray-River-audit-program-report-May-2013.docx.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/Murray-River-audit-program-report-May-2013.docx.aspx)
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