

Illawarra workers back-paid \$33,000

25 November 2013

Underpaid workers in the Illawarra region in NSW have been back-paid \$33,900 following recent intervention by the Fair Work Ombudsman.

The biggest back-payment was \$20,800 for a Wollongong manufacturing worker who was underpaid her minimum hourly rate and annual and long service leave entitlements from 2006 until earlier this year.

The underpayments were the result of the employee being classified incorrectly under the modern award that applied to her position.

In another case, four casual shop assistants at a Shellharbour retailer were back-paid \$13,100 after not being paid the casual loadings and Saturday penalty rates they were entitled to between 2012 and August this year.

The underpayments occurred after the employer did not apply the correct modern award when determining the employees' pay rates.

Fair Work Ombudsman, Natalie James, said the cases highlight the importance of employers classifying employees correctly and being fully aware of their workplace obligations.

"Even small errors in an employee's base rates of pay can result in large underpayments if they're left unchecked for a long period, as occurred in these cases," Ms James said.

"No business wants to face a big bill for back-payment of wages they weren't budgeting for."

In both cases, the employees were reimbursed all money owed without the need for further action after Fair Work Inspectors contacted the employers and explained their obligations.

Ms James says Fair Work Inspectors also helped the employers put processes in place to ensure they comply with workplace laws in the future.

"Our priority is always to assist employers to comply with workplace laws as easily as possible, particularly small business operators who don't have specialist payroll and human resources staff," Ms James said.

The Fair Work Ombudsman's website - www.fairwork.gov.au - contains a range of tools and resources, including PayCheck Plus and an Award Finder, to help business owners calculate the correct pay rates and entitlements for workers.

In the last financial year the Fair Work Ombudsman recovered more than \$6.3 million in back-pay for over 3,000 NSW workers through complaint investigations and proactive audits.

Employers and employees seeking information and advice should visit the website or call the 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

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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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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