

\$67,000 back-paid to building apprentices and trainees in WA and SA

3 October 2013

Underpaid building apprentices and trainees in Western Australia and South Australia have been back-paid \$67,000 in wages.

This follows a campaign by the Fair Work Ombudsman focussing on Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory, in which 142 randomly selected employers were audited and more than half were found to be in breach of workplace laws.

64 businesses (45 per cent) were meeting their obligations under workplace laws, while 78 (55 per cent) had contraventions.

The campaign targeted employers of apprentices and trainees in trades including bricklaying, carpentry, electrical work, painting, plastering, plumbing and roof-tiling.

The Northern Territory was the best performer, with 71 per cent of employers found to be compliant, followed by Western Australia (45 per cent) and South Australia (37 per cent).

Of the businesses in breach, 35 employers were found to have underpaid 76 apprentices and trainees a total of \$67,180, while many others, including all businesses audited in the Northern Territory, had only record-keeping and technical breaches with no underpayments identified.

Businesses found to have underpaid workers were at locations including Broome, Bunbury, Busselton, Denmark, Perth, Pinjarra and Rockingham in Western Australia and Adelaide, Port Augusta, Whyalla and Williamstown in South Australia.

Underpayments at individual businesses ranged from \$50 up to \$9,200 for three young apprentices at a Bunbury electrical business.

Fair Work Ombudsman, Natalie James, said the majority of breaches related to employers underpaying employees or issuing incomplete pay slips.

"We found examples of employers underpaying minimum hourly rates, overtime and penalty rates and failing to include superannuation details on pay slips," Ms James said.

"Fair Work Inspectors worked with individual employers to voluntarily rectify these issues and helped them to put processes in place to ensure the breaches were not repeated.

"While the overall contravention rate was disappointing, it is pleasing that all employers were willing to back-pay their staff and rectify other breaches without the need for further action."

The campaign focused on the residential building industry because it has been a persistent source of complaints to the Fair Work Ombudsman.

"We are also conscious that this industry employs a significant number of young workers who can be vulnerable as they're often not fully aware of their entitlements and can be reluctant to raise issues with their employer," Ms James said.

Workers or employers seeking support can get in touch with the Fair Work Ombudsman via the website www.fairwork.gov.au, or by calling the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter service is available on 13 14 50.

Download the report:

- [WA/SA/NT - Residential building industry apprentices & trainees campaign \(PDF 321.8KB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/WA-SA-NT-Residential-building-industry-apprentices-and-trainees-campaign-report-2013.pdf.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/WA-SA-NT-Residential-building-industry-apprentices-and-trainees-campaign-report-2013.pdf.aspx)
- [WA/SA/NT - Residential building industry apprentices & trainees campaign \(DOCX 6.4MB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/WA-SA-NT-Residential-building-industry-apprentices-and-trainees-campaign-report-2013.docx.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/WA-SA-NT-Residential-building-industry-apprentices-and-trainees-campaign-report-2013.docx.aspx)

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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

Speak & Listen: 1300 555 727. Ask for the Fair Work Infoline 13 13 94

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