

\$180k back-paid to NSW and ACT retail workers

30 October 2013

Retail workers at specialist food and liquor businesses in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory have been back-paid more than \$180,000 in wages.

This follows a campaign by the Fair Work Ombudsman focusing on meat, fish, poultry, fruit and vegetable, liquor and other specialist food stores.

269 businesses were audited throughout the campaign and 114 were found to be in breach of workplace laws.

Of those in breach, 71 had underpaid staff, 26 had record-keeping breaches only and 17 had both. As a result 77 businesses have back-paid 247 employees \$180,441.

Businesses in Canberra, Sydney, Albury, Batemans Bay, Griffith, Merimbula, Newcastle and Wollongong were found to have underpaid workers with underpayments at individual businesses ranging from under \$16 to more than \$13,000 for five workers at a Sydney fishmonger.

Fair Work Ombudsman, Natalie James, said that while it was disappointing that so many breaches related to underpayments, it was good to see employers willing to fix their mistakes, back-pay their employees and put processes in place to ensure compliance in the future.

"A key part of the role of the Fair Work Ombudsman is to educate and help businesses, particularly those small businesses which don't have the benefit of in-house specialist HR staff, about how to comply with workplace laws, and that's what we did throughout this campaign - we worked with these employers to help them get it right," she said.

Throughout the campaign Fair Work Inspectors advised employers about the range of free resources available at www.fairwork.gov.au to help them comply with workplace laws. Online resources include record-keeping and pay slip templates and tools for determining correct rates of pay and entitlements for employees, such as PayCheck Plus and Award Finder.

Ms James said the campaign provided a great opportunity for employers in the sector to improve their understanding of workplace laws, and learn about the tools and resources on the website that have been designed to help them comply.

"The Fair Work Ombudsman's website has a range of resources and templates employers can use to ensure they are equipped with the knowledge they need to manage staff, keep appropriate records and pay their staff correct wages and entitlements. If employers have further questions they can also call the Infoline on 13 13 94 and speak to an advisor," she said.

The sector was selected for proactive auditing after the Fair Work Ombudsman received more than 120 complaints from NSW workers in the 2011/2012 financial year, with underpayments identified in 67 percent of cases.

Workers or employers seeking information and advice can contact 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.

Media inquiries:

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Contact us

Fair Work Online: www.fairwork.gov.au

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

Need language help?

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

Hearing & speech assistance

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

The Fair Work Ombudsman is committed to providing advice that you can rely on. The information contained on this website is general in nature. If you are unsure about how it applies to your situation you can call our Infoline on 13 13 94 or speak with a union, industry association or workplace relations professional. Visitors are warned that this site may inadvertently contain names or pictures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have recently died.