

## Harvest workers repaid \$7,500 after Fair Work Ombudsman intervention

5 September 2013

The Fair Work Ombudsman has recovered \$7,500 for 100 mostly foreign workers from three strawberry farms near Caboolture.

The money has been re-paid to the workers following surprise visits to farms over the past month by Fair Work Inspectors.

In addition, two businesses have been handed on the spot fines; two fines of \$170 for failing to provide all required information on payslips and another of \$340 for failing to keep records of hours worked by casual workers.

Fair Work Ombudsman, Natalie James, said Inspectors visited nine farms in the area this week after last month visiting a number of businesses to educate strawberry farmers about their obligations under workplace law.

"It was appropriate that we re-visit businesses to ensure the message we delivered last month had got through," Ms James said.

"While generally Inspectors have been pleased with what appears to be an increasing awareness of obligations under workplace law, there are still issues of concern.

"Inspectors spoke directly with more than 100 foreign workers who sought clarification of entitlements and also raised specific concerns about underpayments of wages.

"As a result, we've been able to determine that on three farms there were underpayments and \$7,500 has now been re-paid to 100 workers from three separate farms.

"While this level of underpayment is concerning, we are pleased that the employers have recognised the problem and voluntarily rectified the underpayments without the need for further action."

As a result of information gathered during this week's visits, further investigation is continuing into possible underpayments of about \$16,000 to five farm workers.

Ms James said it appeared the Fair Work Ombudsman's concerted effort in the area was helping ensure workers receive their correct entitlements.

"It's important that any business in the strawberry or other harvest industries is aware of their obligations under workplace law and meets them," Ms James said.

"The Fair Work Ombudsman will be maintaining a close eye on the sector over the remainder of the season and will take action to ensure workers receive their full entitlements."

Employers and employees seeking information about their obligations or rights under workplace law can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman on 13 13 94 or, if a translator is required, on 13 14 50 or visit [fairwork.gov.au/horticulture](http://fairwork.gov.au/horticulture) ([www.fairwork.gov.au/pay/minimum-wages/piece-rates-and-commission-payments](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/pay/minimum-wages/piece-rates-and-commission-payments)) where there is information specifically on seasonal harvest work.

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Page reference No: 3197

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Fair Work Online: [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au)

Fair Work Infoline: 13 13 94

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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

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