

SA specialist food campaign results

28 February 2014

Specialist food shops across South Australia should double-check the wage rates for their employees, a report released today by the Fair Work Ombudsman suggests.

Many may be inadvertently paying flat rates of pay below the minimum, random audits of almost 200 employers have found.

The Fair Work Ombudsman checked the books of bakeries, poultry and smallgoods shops, butchers, greengrocers and fruit and vegetable stores in Adelaide and regional SA.

A report on the outcome of the targeted education and compliance campaign reveals that 109 businesses (57 per cent) were compliant, while 83 (43 per cent) collectively recorded a total of 90 contraventions.

Sixty-two businesses were found to have underpaid 285 of their employees a total of \$151,789, largely because they paid flat rates of pay below the Award rate.

Today's report says that while there is concern about a lack of awareness among specialist food retailers of their workplace obligations, the Fair Work Ombudsman is encouraged by the positive response from employers.

A key objective of the campaign was to inform employers about their obligations and promote the Fair Work Ombudsman's self-help tools and information and advisory services.

Employers randomly selected for auditing were assessed against the Fair Work Act 2009, the General Retail Award 2010, the Meat Industry Award 2010 and the Food, Beverage and Tobacco Manufacturing Award 2010.

Key stakeholders including Business SA, the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union and the South Australian branch of United Voice helped promote the campaign to their members.

Compliance rates across the metropolitan area varied, with 64 per cent of employers in the southern suburbs adhering to their workplace responsibilities, 63 per cent in the western suburbs, 59 per cent in the eastern suburbs, 50 per cent in the CBD and North Adelaide and 44 per cent in the Adelaide Hills.

In regional SA the highest compliance rate was 77 per cent for Yorke Peninsula and the Mid North, 67 per cent for the Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island, 50 per cent for the Limestone Coast, 38 per cent for the Eyre Peninsula and 34 per cent for the Murray-Mallee.

The largest recovery of underpaid entitlements was \$21,062 for seven employees at a bakery in Adelaide's eastern suburbs.

At the start of the campaign, the Fair Work Ombudsman held a number of information sessions for employers both in Adelaide and regional areas.

A breakdown of the regional results is as follows:

- Yorke Peninsula and Mid-North: 10 of 13 businesses (77 per cent) were compliant. One business was found to have underpaid two employees a total of \$451.
- Fleurieu Peninsula and Kangaroo Island: Six of nine businesses (67 per cent) were compliant. Two businesses - located at Goolwa and Victor Harbor - were found to have underpaid 42 employees a total of \$9746.
- Limestone Coast: Two of four businesses (50 per cent) were compliant. Two Mount Gambier businesses were found to have underpaid five employees a total of \$7593.
- Eyre Peninsula: Three of eight businesses (38 per cent) were compliant. Three businesses - at locations including Whyalla - were found to have underpaid nine employees a total of \$10,584.
- Murray-Mallee: One of three businesses (33 per cent) was compliant. A Murray Bridge business was found to have underpaid 14 employees a total of \$11,752.

Today's report stresses the importance of employers seeking correct advice about the pay rates and entitlements that apply to their employees.

"The results of the campaign clearly demonstrate the need for employers to correctly identify and meet the requirements of their

applicable Award," says Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James.

"However, we are confident that as a result of this campaign, employers in this sector are much more aware of their obligations and that they can turn to us for information and advice they can rely on," she said.

Throughout the campaign, Fair Work inspectors informed employers about the range of tools and resources available at www.fairwork.gov.au/retail (www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/helping-the-community/campaigns/state-and-territory-campaigns#sa-wa-nt-retail-campaigns) to help them understand and comply with workplace laws.

Online tools include PayCheck Plus and an Award Finder to assist business owners and employees determine the correct award and minimum wages for their industry, templates for pay slips and time-and-wages records and a range of fact sheets on workplace entitlements.

Each year, the Fair Work Ombudsman runs national, state and regional targeted campaigns focused on various industry sectors as part of its pro-active education and compliance program.

Ms James says the Fair Work Ombudsman has a particular focus on assisting small businesses to understand and meet their obligations to employees.

"Small businesses often don't have the benefit of in-house human resources and payroll staff, so we place a high priority on assisting them and developing tools and resources to make it easier for them to comply with workplace law," she said.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has established a dedicated webpage for small business employers at www.fairwork.gov.au/smallbusiness (www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/small-business/default). The webpage includes a Fair Work handbook for employers and a range of resources on topics such as employing staff, resolving workplace disputes and managing employees.

Employers and employees seeking further information and advice should visit the website or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter service is also available on 13 14 50.

Download the report:

- [SA Specialised food retailing audit program report \(PDF 349.3KB\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/586/SA-Specialised-food-retailing-audit-program.pdf.aspx) (www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/586/SA-Specialised-food-retailing-audit-program.pdf.aspx)
- [SA Specialised food retailing audit program report \(DOCX 5.7MB\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/586/SA-Specialised-food-retailing-audit-program.docx.aspx) (www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/586/SA-Specialised-food-retailing-audit-program.docx.aspx)

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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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