

Northern Queensland worker back-paid \$52,000

9 January 2014

An underpaid truck driver in Northern Queensland has been back-paid \$52,000 following recent intervention by the Fair Work Ombudsman.

The worker - who is aged in his 60s and was employed at a transport business near Cairns - was underpaid the minimum hourly rate and travel allowance entitlements between January 2010 and September last year.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James said the underpayment occurred because of a lack of awareness by the employer of its payment obligations under workplace laws.

"The underpayment was inadvertent and the employer has co-operated fully and promptly with Fair Work Inspectors, so no further compliance action has been necessary," Ms James said.

"This case illustrates that a small inadvertent underpayment per hour, left unchecked over time, can result in a business having to make a big back-payment it was not budgeting for, so it's important employers make sure they are aware of the pay rates that apply to their staff."

Other recent recoveries include:

- \$19,100 for a foreign worker at a Cairns bakery who was underpaid wages and personal leave entitlements over a 12-month period in 2011-2012, and
- \$5600 for a tradesman at a Cairns construction business who was not paid his final wages upon termination of employment last year.

Ms James said the employees were back-paid all money owed without the need for further action after Fair Work Inspectors contacted the businesses and explained their responsibilities.

"When we identify an error and contact a business, our focus is on educating the employer about their obligations and helping them to put processes in place to ensure future compliance, and that's what we did in these cases," Ms James said.

Ms James said employers should take advantage of the free help available from the Fair Work Ombudsman if they are unsure of their payment obligations.

Employers and employees seeking information and advice should visit www.fairwork.gov.au or call the Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter service is available on 13 14 50.

The website contains a range of tools and resources, including PayCheck Plus and an Award Finder, to help employers determine the minimum pay rates and entitlements for employees.

Other website tools include fact sheets and templates for time-and-wages sheets and pay slips.

An "Industries" section on the website provides extra, specialised information for employers and employees in a range of industries, including road transport.

Last financial year, the Fair Work Ombudsman recovered \$3.9 million for more than 2600 Queensland workers who had been underpaid.

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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.