

Workers across regional NSW back-paid \$63,000

6 January 2014

Underpaid workers throughout regional New South Wales have been back-paid \$63,100 following recent intervention by the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James said a common cause of many of the underpayments was employers' lack of awareness of the minimum pay rates and entitlements that applied.

The biggest back-payment was \$9,800 for a worker at a Goulburn construction industry business who was underpaid the minimum hourly rate and overtime entitlements between 2010 and 2012.

Ms James says employers who aren't fully aware of the workplace laws that apply to their workplace are at much greater risk of inadvertently underpaying their employees.

"Running a business is a demanding job but it's really important business owners are aware of which award or agreement applies to their staff, and that their staff are properly classified for the work they do and receive their full entitlements," Ms James said.

Other recent recoveries include:

- \$9,700 for a Bomaderry retail worker underpaid wages in lieu of notice, personal and long service leave entitlements, public holiday pay and wages for his final weeks of work on termination of employment last year,
- \$8,700 for a Tumbarumba worker underpaid the minimum hourly rate, vehicle allowances, annual leave and other entitlements in 2009-2010,
- \$7,300 for an adult apprentice tradesman at Port Macquarie underpaid the minimum hourly rate as a result of being paid junior pay rates between 2011 and 2013,
- \$6,300 for a Broken Hill automotive industry worker not paid redundancy pay in 2010,
- \$5,800 for a truck driver at an Orange transport business underpaid the minimum hourly rate, overtime rates and annual leave entitlements between July 2012 and August 2013,
- \$5,300 for a Katoomba tradesman not paid his annual leave entitlements upon termination of employment in 2012,
- \$5,200 for a young Oberon shop assistant underpaid the minimum hourly rate over a nine-month period in 2012-2013, and
- \$5,000 for an administration officer at an Armidale manufacturing business underpaid the minimum hourly rate between October 2007 and March 2012.

Ms James said all employees were back-paid in full without the need for further action after Fair Work Inspectors contacted the employers and explained their obligations.

"We also assisted the employers to put processes in place to ensure they comply with workplace laws in the future," Ms James said.

"Our focus is on educating business owners by helping them understand their workplace obligations, and that's what we did in these cases."

The Fair Work Ombudsman's website - www.fairwork.gov.au - contains a range of free tools and resources designed to help employers easily comply with workplace laws.

The tools include PayCheck Plus, which can be used to calculate the correct hourly rates, overtime and penalty rates for employees, Award Finder, Leave Calculator, Best Practice Guides and templates for pay slips and time-and-wages records.

An 'Industries' section on the website provides specialised information for employers and employees in a range of industries, including retail, horticulture, road transport, accommodation and hospitality, cleaning, clerical, vehicle, electrical, fast food, building and construction, hair and beauty, joinery, metal manufacturing, social and community services, plumbing and security.

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

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