

WANTED – workers to claim \$2.7 million back-pay

12 June 2014

Workers who believe they may have been underpaid in a previous job are being encouraged to check whether they are entitled to a share of unclaimed wages totalling \$2.7 million.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has recovered the money for 9500 people who cannot be located.

Many may not even know they were underpaid and left the job before the shortfall in their wages was identified.

The largest amount being held on behalf of an individual is \$21,000 for the estate of deceased employee who worked at an Adelaide retirement village.

Other significant amounts being held in trust include \$14,100 for a former employee of a Darwin fishing company, \$11,500 for a former employee of labour-hire company in Sydney and \$10,300 for a former employee of a restaurant in Melbourne.

Money has been held for some employees for more than 10 years.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has set up a facility on its website which allows people to check whether or not they may be owed outstanding entitlements.

Go to www.fairwork.gov.au (www.fairwork.gov.au/), click on the 'Resources' tab and select the 'search for unpaid wages' option. Users need to enter their family name, as well as the business/entity name or Australian Business Number (ABN) of a former employer.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says the Agency and its predecessors have recovered more than \$200 million for over 100,000 people since March, 2006.

"When we audit a business with non-compliance issues, we often identify underpayments of current as well as former employees," she said.

"We make extensive efforts to locate the underpaid former employees to facilitate back-payment but when they can't be located, the business pays the outstanding wages to the Commonwealth to be held in trust."

Fair Work Ombudsman staff use phone directories, the internet, social media and other measures to try to locate those who are owed money.

An Adelaide man in his 60s was recently located and received a cheque for \$32,000. He was underpaid at work more than six years ago.

And in a separate case, \$4000 was returned to each of two former Sydney service technicians who were also underpaid in 2008.

Employers and workers seeking assistance can visit the website or contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter service is available by calling 13 14 50.

Please note, since this Media Release was issued, the Fair Work Ombudsman has launched a new website. To find unclaimed money, please go to How We Will Help, click on Helping the Community and then the "search for unpaid wages option", or visit www.fairwork.gov.au/searchforunpaidwages (www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/helping-the-community/search-for-unpaid-wages/default).

Media inquiries:

Tom McPherson, Media Adviser

Mobile: 0439 835 855

tom.mcpherson@fwo.gov.au (<mailto:tom.mcpherson@fwo.gov.au>)

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.