

Top End retailers urged to check pay rates

13 January 2015

Just over half of retail businesses in the Northern Territory are fully compliant with payment laws, random checks by the Fair Work Ombudsman have revealed.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says the results highlight the need for employers to pay greater attention to their obligations under federal workplace laws.

Fair Work inspectors checked the books of Territory retailers as part of a campaign that also focussed on Western Australia and South Australia.

Auditing has now concluded and the results are revealed in a report released today.

Of the 45 audits completed in the NT, 13 employers - at locations including Alice Springs and Darwin - were required to back-pay 30 employees a total of \$12,849.

A further 10 employers had technical pay contraventions, but had not underpaid any staff.

In total, 51 per cent of NT retailers (23) were fully compliant with payment laws and 75 per cent (34) were compliant with record-keeping and pay slip laws.

Fair Work inspectors audited a total of 252 retailers throughout SA, WA and the NT.

They found 69 per cent (175) were fully compliant with pay-related laws and 79 per cent (199) were compliant with record-keeping and pay slip laws.

Overall, inspectors recovered a total of \$60,088 for 238 employees at 48 businesses.

WA had the highest compliance rate for payment laws at 80 per cent, followed by SA at 73 per cent.

Ms James says the underpayments indicate some employers need to pay more attention to the pay rates applicable to their workplace.

"However, it was pleasing to see all of the employers accept our assistance, voluntarily back-pay their workers and put processes in place to ensure ongoing compliance," she said.

Ms James says payment of flat hourly rates, resulting in non-payment of penalty rates, and employers failing to issue sufficiently detailed pay slips, were common non-compliance issues.

The retail sector was selected for attention because it employs a large number of workers and generates a significant number of requests for assistance to the Fair Work Ombudsman.

Ahead of the campaign, inspectors wrote to almost 3000 retailers throughout the NT, WA and SA to inform them of the campaign and the free tools and resources available at www.fairwork.gov.au to help them comply with workplace laws.

Online tools include PayCheck Plus for calculating the correct wages for employees, fact sheets, Best Practice Guides and templates for pay slips and time-and-wages records.

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," Ms James said.

A dedicated webpage with resources for small business employers, including a Fair Work handbook, is available at our [Small business page \(http://www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/small-business\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/find-help-for/small-business).

Employers or employees seeking assistance are encouraged to visit the website or contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter service is also available on 13 14 50.

Follow Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James on Twitter [@NatJamesFWO](https://twitter.com/NatJamesFWO), the Fair Work Ombudsman [@fairwork_gov_au](https://twitter.com/fairwork_gov_au) or find us on Facebook www.facebook.com/fairwork.gov.au

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Download:

- [SA/WA/NT retail campaign 2014 report \(DOCX 5.6MB\) \(www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/sawant-retail-campaign-2014-report.docx.aspx\)](http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/sawant-retail-campaign-2014-report.docx.aspx) (PDF 305KB) (www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/714/sawant-retail-campaign-2014-report.pdf.aspx)

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