

\$472,000 owed to 123 former Sports Bar and Hungry Jacks employees at Newcastle airport

16 June 2015

More than 120 former employees at the Newcastle airport are to be back-paid more than \$472,000 after it was found they were being short-changed.

They worked at the Sports Bar and Bistro and Hungry Jacks before the businesses closed in March.

One employee was underpaid more than \$28,000.

Wage errors were uncovered after one of the workers approached the Fair Work Ombudsman for assistance.

The former owner-operator of the two businesses, Marriott Airport Concessions Pty Ltd, was mistakenly paying its casual staff a flat hourly rate.

Staff should have been paid according to the terms of the Restaurant Industry Award and the Fast Food Industry Award.

The employee who first complained was short-changed \$15,596 over three years to November, 2013.

Follow-up calculations revealed that 123 employees engaged between July 1, 2010 and January 10, 2014 had been underpaid a total of \$472,258.

Marriott has so far back-paid \$74,671 and has committed to reimbursing all outstanding entitlements over two years.

The company has also entered into an Enforceable Undertaking (EU) with the Fair Work Ombudsman to revamp its workplace practices.

This includes an independent audit of the wages of at least 30 per cent of its casual employees once a year for the next three years.

Managers will be required to undergo training on workplace obligations.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says the issue highlights how a mistake left over time can result in a hefty bill for back-payment of wages.

"This matter demonstrates how lack of awareness or ignorance of minimum wages and conditions can potentially have a negative financial impact on the business.

"It should also show how our intervention can assist employers to become compliant and minimise potential negative effects on business if workplace laws are not observed."

Employers uncertain about whether their workplace practices are appropriate should visit www.fairwork.gov.au or call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94 for advice.

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