

## Employers urged to pay greater attention to wage rates after 200 Alice Springs workers underpaid

15 May 2015

More than 200 Alice Springs workers have been underpaid tens of thousands of dollars, spot checks by the Fair Work Ombudsman have revealed.

Twenty-two local business houses were found to have short-changed a total of 216 employees more than \$70,000.

The underpayments were identified after a flying squad of six Fair Work inspectors flew into Alice Springs last year to randomly audit local employers.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says 67 businesses were scrutinised, mainly retail and hospitality premises in and around the CBD.

Ms James says it was disappointing to find that only 40 per cent were fully compliant with federal workplace laws.

She announced that one employer would face legal action.

The Alice Springs campaign found that 24 of the 67 businesses audited (36 per cent) were paying incorrect rates of pay to their staff.

Another 16 employers were found to have both monetary and record-keeping or payslip contraventions.

“One business has had to reimburse its employees over \$15,000,” Ms James revealed.

“Almost 40 per cent of those businesses not paying correctly were underpaying the minimum hourly rate applicable to their workplace.”

Ms James says the result shows a need for Alice Springs employers to pay greater attention to their obligations under workplace laws, particularly wage rates.

The Fair Work Ombudsman plans to monitor a number of non-compliant businesses over the next 12 months to ensure they have heeded the advice and information provided to them.

Ms James said the Agency was committed to helping local employers to understand and comply with workplace laws, but small business operators needed to make an effort to get the basics right in the first place.

“We know workplace laws can be complicated for the uninitiated, and for those who are not industrial relations experts, the margin for error is high,” she said.

Ms James urged Alice Springs employers to use the online tools and resources available to them free of charge at [www.fairwork.gov.au](http://www.fairwork.gov.au).

“We can provide practical advice that is easy to access, understand and apply and I urge employers in Alice Springs to avail themselves of our assistance rather than second guess what they should be doing,” Ms James said.

Online tools include PayCheck Plus to determine the correct award and minimum wages for employees, templates for pay slips and time-and-wages records and a range of fact sheets on workplace entitlements.

Employers and employees seeking advice can also call the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. A free interpreter services is also available on 13 14 50.

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