

Almost \$28,000 back-pay for High School students

13 November 2015

A group of teenage high school students in Queensland has been short-changed thousands of dollars for work they undertook as part of school-based traineeships.

The Year 11 and 12 students, aged between 15 and 18, were placed with local employers by a Gold Coast-based group training organisation.

The placements assist students attain a nationally-recognised Vocational Education and Training (VET) qualification, as well as their Higher School Certificate (HSC).

The 20 students, from schools in Brisbane and from both the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast, were collectively underpaid almost \$28,000.

Twelve students in Brisbane have been back-paid \$16,000, five students on the Gold Coast have been reimbursed \$6300 and three students on the Sunshine Coast have been returned \$5500.

The Fair Work Ombudsman discovered the underpayments after being approached by students, their parents and the State Department of Education and Training.

The group training organisation administered vocational courses for students at their schools, including traineeships in a range of disciplines.

A component of the traineeships involved the students working one day a week over several months last year at sporting organisations, schools, retail outlets and childcare centres.

The businesses were "hosts" only, and the training organisation, as the employer, was responsible for ensuring the students, as part-time employees, received their minimum wages and entitlements for work they performed.

However, the organisation, which received public funding to administer the training, failed to pay the students any wages at all for many of the hours they worked.

The organisation also failed to pay the students the small amounts of annual leave entitlements they accrued or penalty rates when they were applicable.

Fair Work Ombudsman Natalie James says the organisation has now been educated about its obligations under federal workplace laws.

While it agreed to promptly reimburse the students all outstanding entitlements, it has received a Letter of Caution and is on notice to ensure its future compliance.

Ms James urged Queensland employers uncertain about their workplace obligations to contact the Agency for assistance and advice they can rely on with confidence.

Employers and employees can visit www.fairwork.gov.au or phone the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94. An interpreter service is available by calling 13 14 50.

Small business can opt to be put through to a small business helpline, which has now assisted more than 250,000 callers since it was established.

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

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Page reference No: 5617

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

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