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Statewide fruit and veg audit to reap workers wages

Queensland Government industrial inspectors are carrying out an audit of the Bundaberg and Childers fruit and vegetable growing industry to ensure workers are being paid correctly.

The campaign is part of a major commitment to enforcing the state's industrial laws. It follows the release of a report and recommendations made by the Queensland Workplace Rights Ombudsman earlier this year.

The report of the Ombudsman's investigation into the fruit and vegetable industry revealed evidence of underpayment of wages and non-payment of superannuation to employees, including backpackers, engaged in the industry.

Specifically, inspectors are auditing employers for compliance, and ensuring employees rights and employer obligations under the *Fruit and Vegetable Growing Industry Award – State 2002* are being met.

Time and wages record keeping and the issuing of pay slips will also be examined to ensure compliance in accordance with the relevant legislation.

In a related investigation, inspectors are also auditing backpacker hostels in fruit and vegetable growing areas which may be functioning as private employment agents to ensure they met the requirements of the Act.

Workers who have claims of being underpaid wages or missing out on superannuation contributions are encouraged to contact Wageline on 1300 369 945.



Queenslanders awarded minimum wage rise

Queensland workers on the minimum wage and award wages have received a boost to their earnings of \$23.60 per week in the latest wage case ruling by the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission.

The Government argued the rise was a decent increase to the state's lowest paid workers while remaining economically responsible and affordable.

The full bench awarded an increase of \$23.60 per week to the state minimum wage and award rates, and an increase of 3.8 per cent to allowances contained in awards.

The decision brings the Queensland minimum wage to \$552.00 – a 4.47 per cent increase affecting about 100,000 workers.

The news was welcomed particularly for its impact on women workers because they are over represented among award-only employees.

The increase ensures that workers get to share in the benefits of a strong state economy while ensuring a negligible effect on inflation and the unemployment rate.

The increase took effect from 1 September.



Nearly \$5 million recovered for Queensland workers

Queensland Government inspectors recovered \$4.8 million in wages for workers in the year to June 30.

Nearly 3000 wage complaints were investigated and finalised during 2007–08 and 64 prosecutions were carried out by Department of Employment and Industrial Relations inspectors.

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