

Thursday 8 November 2018

## **FWO report barely scratches the surface of wage theft**

A report released today by the office of the Fair Work Ombudsman reveals the very limited extent to which FWO and the Morrison government are dealing with wage theft as a business model in Australia.

More than one in three business previously caught breaking laws, including stealing wages, were still doing so when the FWO audited them through a desktop process of emails and phone calls.

Despite 184 businesses being found to be breaking the law a second time, only two were prosecuted, with the FWO preferring the softer options of cautions and notices for 92% of these second breaches.

One of the prosecutions commenced six years after FWO first became aware of the employer's behaviour, in 2012.

The net amount recovered by the FWO from the 184 multiple-offending employers was just \$244 246, or \$1300 per repeat-offending business.

The peak body for working people has repeatedly called for changes to workplace laws to simplify investigation and enforcement processes so that unions can tackle wage theft head-on.

Proposed changes include simpler avenues to recover wages and superannuation for the thousands of workers in Australia who are being regularly and systematically underpaid.

### **Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:**

"People should go to work confident of getting paid what they're owed, including super.

"But for a huge number of working people in Australia, that confidence is betrayed, and their wages are stolen by corporations.

"The Fair Work Ombudsman can't meaningfully address this issue and the Morrison government doesn't care.

"There are around 200 FWO inspectors charged with enforcing our workplace laws for more than 12 million workers.

"Meanwhile thousands of workers' representatives are sitting on the sidelines unable to stop wage theft because our broken laws prevent them from effectively doing so.

"Putting workers reps back on the wage theft beat would significantly increase the number of people stopping wage theft at no cost to the taxpayer."

"We need to change the rules so that working people who are underpaid can have fast, efficient access to justice and get their money back."

**ENDS**

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