

17 April 2014

## Easter break no excuse to rip off young and casual workers

Australian Unions are warning employers to pay workers penalty rates over the Easter break amid fears casual workers and young people could be pressured to accept time in lieu or non-monetary payment such as food.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said, "Unions often receive complaints from workers particularly casual workers who fear non-compliance with employer wishes could cost them their job and young people who may not understand their rights."

Worker complaints to unions include:

- A 17-year-old casual fast food worker rostered on a public holiday was told instead of penalty rates he could have a day off, without pay, during the week.
- Workers rostered on New Year's Day were told by the manager not to clock on until it got busy.
- A single mum who was rostered on during the Christmas holiday period was told afterwards that she wouldn't be paid for 16 hours as it was 'training'.
- A waitress whose employer flatly refused to pay her penalty rates on Good Friday and Easter Monday.
- A 22-year-old casual fast food worker who was told to write a letter saying she was happy not be paid penalty rates over Easter Saturday and Easter Monday.

"Unions hear too many examples about employers who shamelessly try to rip off their workers," Ms Kearney said.

"No matter how they spin it the reality is that employers wouldn't want to open their doors during the Easter break if it wasn't a good time to do business. They also often don't want to give up their own time with family and friends to work these shifts themselves."

"Workers, no matter their age or employment status, who will be rostered on this weekend deserve to be paid appropriately for their time and that means penalty rates.

"Workers should check their pay slips and make sure they have been paid penalty rates. If they haven't then we urge them to call the hotline\*.

"Casual and insecure workers are at risk of being ripped off this weekend because they may feel saying no to their bosses terms, no matter how unfair, could cost them their job.

Ms Kearney said, "This is part of a broader co-ordinated attack on penalty rates by employers who want to reduce or remove weekend penalty rates in Awards and cut the take home pay of over 500,000 low-paid workers.

"Unfortunately employers have been emboldened by the Abbott Government's support.

"There is clearly a concerted push from employers, backed by the Government, to reduce penalty rates, despite the fact there is no evidence this will create new jobs, and plenty of evidence it will hurt low-paid workers," Ms Kearney said.

*\*Call **1300 486 466** during working hours*

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