

Senate Select Committee on Job Security

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Fair Work Ombudsman

Department/Agency: Fair Work Ombudsman

Topic: University underpayments

Senator: Faruqi

Question reference number: N/A

Type of question: Transcript

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 7 May 2021

Number of pages: 1

Question:

Do you now know the amount of the unpaid super for staff at James Cook University?

Answer:

The self-reported matter from James Cook University was referred to the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) as it related solely to superannuation payments.

The FWO has contacted the ATO seeking this information, noting the ATO's ability to disclose information is subject to statutory information disclosure restrictions.

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Question:

You gave us a list of universities that you were investigating. I'm basically asking if there's any update on amounts of unpaid wages. You revealed one, the University of New England, which I think was \$1.1 million. I'm just wondering if you could provide us with any amounts of unpaid wages that you now know from that list of universities?

Answer:

The FWO's investigation into the University of New England's non-compliance with the Fair Work Act 2009 is currently ongoing.

In respect of the matters raised in Senate Question Number 3017, there is no further update to provide at this time.

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Question:

How many [universities] are you investigating...?

Answer:

The FWO has publicly confirmed ongoing investigations into six universities.

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ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Fair Work Ombudsman

Department/Agency: Fair Work Ombudsman

Topic: Wage theft underpayments

Senator: Canavan

Question reference number: N/A

Type of question: Transcript

Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 7 May 2021

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Question:

How prevalent is underpayment of a legal wage...?

Answer:

In 2019, following the recommendations of the Migrant Workers Taskforce report, and an internal review, the FWO has revised its compliance and enforcement approach, and significantly increased its use of available statutory enforcement tools.

This approach has contributed to a large increase in wages underpayments recovered. Additionally, FWO's investigations of large corporate entities has led to an increase in the amount of monies recovered for employees in 2019/2020.

In 2019/20, the FWO recovered \$123.5 million for over 25,000 workers. This is three times the amount recovered in 2018/2019 and four times the amount recovered in 2017-18.