

January 10, 2012

Retail gets a good report card from Fair Work Ombudsman

The Fair Work Ombudsman's report on Australian retail has revealed that despite very challenging trading conditions and declining sales, retailers are treating their staff right.

The National Retail Industry Campaign 2010–11 Report was based on audits of 1866 retailers, excluding food retail, and revealed that 74 per cent of employers were compliant with the Fair Work System introduced in 2009.

Gary Black, executive director of the National Retail Association (NRA), echoed the Ombudsman's conclusions that the campaign results are positive.

"The key finding is that of the sample of close to 2000 Australian retailers, nearly three quarters were totally compliant," Mr Black said.

"As the Fair Work Ombudsman recognised in its report, when the audits commenced, retailers in each state were undergoing a period of significant change in adjusting to the national Modern Retail Award under the Fair Work system.

"Yet despite the difficulty and complexities of transitional provisions, most retailers are getting it right.

"In terms of non-compliance, 36.5 per cent of the issues were technical or minor breaches related to time and wage records or pay slip requirements," Mr Black said.

Further, only half of non-compliance cases involved employees being underpaid.

"This means that the vast majority of all retailers audited were paying staff correctly and were in substantive compliance with the terms and conditions of the Modern Retail Award.

"This confirms that not only is retail a great place to work, but that an overwhelming number of retailers do the right thing in terms of payments to employees and observing the correct entitlements."

The report did highlight the need for employer education on how the Modern Retail Award works, including information on transitioning from the state award, calculating junior rates, casual and penalty rates, as well as rostering and meal breaks. NRA is the retail organisation with extensive expertise in these areas.

The Fair Work Ombudsman encouraged employers to access the valuable resources developed by NRA through their Shared Industry Assistance Projects (SIAP) grant at <http://www.nra.net.au/>.

Gary Black is available for interviews.

Contact CBC Group – Media and Public Affairs on (07) 3112 5250.