



Speech by

**Hon. GORDON NUTTALL**

**MEMBER FOR SANDGATE**

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Hansard 19 September 2002

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**Time and Wages Audit**

**Hon. G. R. NUTTALL** (Sandgate—ALP) (Minister for Industrial Relations) (10.17 a.m.), by leave: I warmly congratulate the class of '92 on its 10th anniversary today.

**An opposition member** interjected.

**Mr NUTTALL:** There are plenty on this side; there is only one left on the other side.

The largest number of complaints to inspectors in my department concerns workers being underpaid, particularly our young people, casual employees and women workers. This morning I have the results of a four-month time and wages audit my inspectors carried out on various industries around the state to examine the records of wage payments to our casual, young and women workers. The audit, from March to June of this year, covered 2,400 workers in some 216 businesses, including chemist shops, newsagencies, hotels, motels, hairdressers, bread and pastry shops, cleaning contractors and clerical staff. Disappointingly, almost 20 per cent of the workers involved—462 employees in total—had been underpaid. In fact, inspectors recovered almost \$120,000 on behalf of those employees.

A total of 44 per cent of employers—or 94 of the 216 who were audited—were not complying with the obligations to correctly pay workers or keep proper time and wages records and payslips. The proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 who were being underpaid in the Brisbane and Gold Coast regions was double that of regional areas of Queensland.

Within that group of young workers, women were more than 50 per cent more likely to be underpaid than their male counterparts. The number of casual workers being underpaid was slightly higher in regional Queensland than in the south-east corner. The majority of those employers who were not making or recording correct payments have since rectified those payments, but 11 employers will be prosecuted for their failure to follow the law. The problem in a majority of cases was that employers had failed to pay the latest increase in wage rates for casual employees, or they were not paying correct weekend penalty rates. Other employers had failed to keep proper records of payments, sufficient enough to enable an inspector to verify that an employee was being paid properly. Still other businesses were not including details of workers' superannuation on their pay slips.

The Industrial Relations Act clearly states the minimum level of detail that must be recorded in time and wages records. Employees should know them, and workers should also be aware of their correct entitlements by phoning WageLine in my department, the government's new youth advisory service, or their union. Most of these problems are due to an ignorance of the law, but I want to be very clear that deliberate attempts by a minority of employers to flout the law will not be tolerated. My inspectors will be conducting more education programs for employers on this issue, and I have asked for further audits of time and wages records. I hope that we will see a real improvement on these results when I next report to the members of the House.