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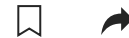
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# ABC apologises for underpaying 2500 casual staff

By **Max Mason**



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**T**he ABC underpaid 2500 casual staff over the last six years, moving the public broadcaster to commence an immediate review into how it calculated the pay.

The Community and Public Sector Union brought the issue to the ABC's attention and the broadcaster intends to work with it as well as the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance and affected staff.

"This error should not have occurred, and the ABC apologises to any casual employee who has been underpaid," ABC chief people officer Rebekah Donaldson wrote in an internal staff email.





The ABC underpaid a casual employee by \$19,000. **Christopher Pearce**

"The ABC is actively working to remedy this for affected employees as soon as possible."

Last month, the ABC admitted that it underpaid a [casual employee](#) \$19,000 since 2016 after a complaint was made by the CPSU. This notification kicked off an internal review that has led to Thursday's announcement.

"A detailed review is under way to confirm how penalties, allowances and loadings should have been calculated and applied over the past six years to about 2500 'flat-rate' casual staff," Ms Donaldson said.

"Current and former casual employees who might be affected are being notified and the ABC is reviewing its processes to address the issue for the future. The Fair Work Ombudsman has been notified and the ABC is liaising with them in relation to this situation."

## Huge back-payments possible

It is unclear how much the ABC owes staff because of the error. The review will determine a dollar amount. The ABC could be liable for huge back-payments due to the underpayments. In September, [Caltex acknowledged it had paid out more than](#)



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In August 2017, Super Retail group admitted to underpaying its workers by nearly \$8 million.

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"Clearly the total bill for underpaid wages is going to be substantial and comes at a time when the ABC can ill afford it. The scale of this mistake over so many years would be unacceptable in any workplace, let alone at our national broadcaster," CPSU ABC section secretary Sinddy Ealy said.

"We've had concerns about the ABC's over-reliance on and payment of casual workers for years. As recently as 2016 the CPSU was assured by the ABC that it was paying casual employers in accordance with the terms and conditions of the ABC staff agreement – clearly that is not the case."

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The Australian Council of Trade Unions condemned the ABC, labelling the error "systemic wage theft".

"The work that union members at the ABC have done to expose this shows the power of working people standing together and fighting back. There is nothing more important for protecting your rights at work than joining your union," ACTU president Michele O'Neil said.

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