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## Domino's Pizza workers kept in the dark about underpayment for almost two years

By Adele Ferguson and Mario Christodoulou

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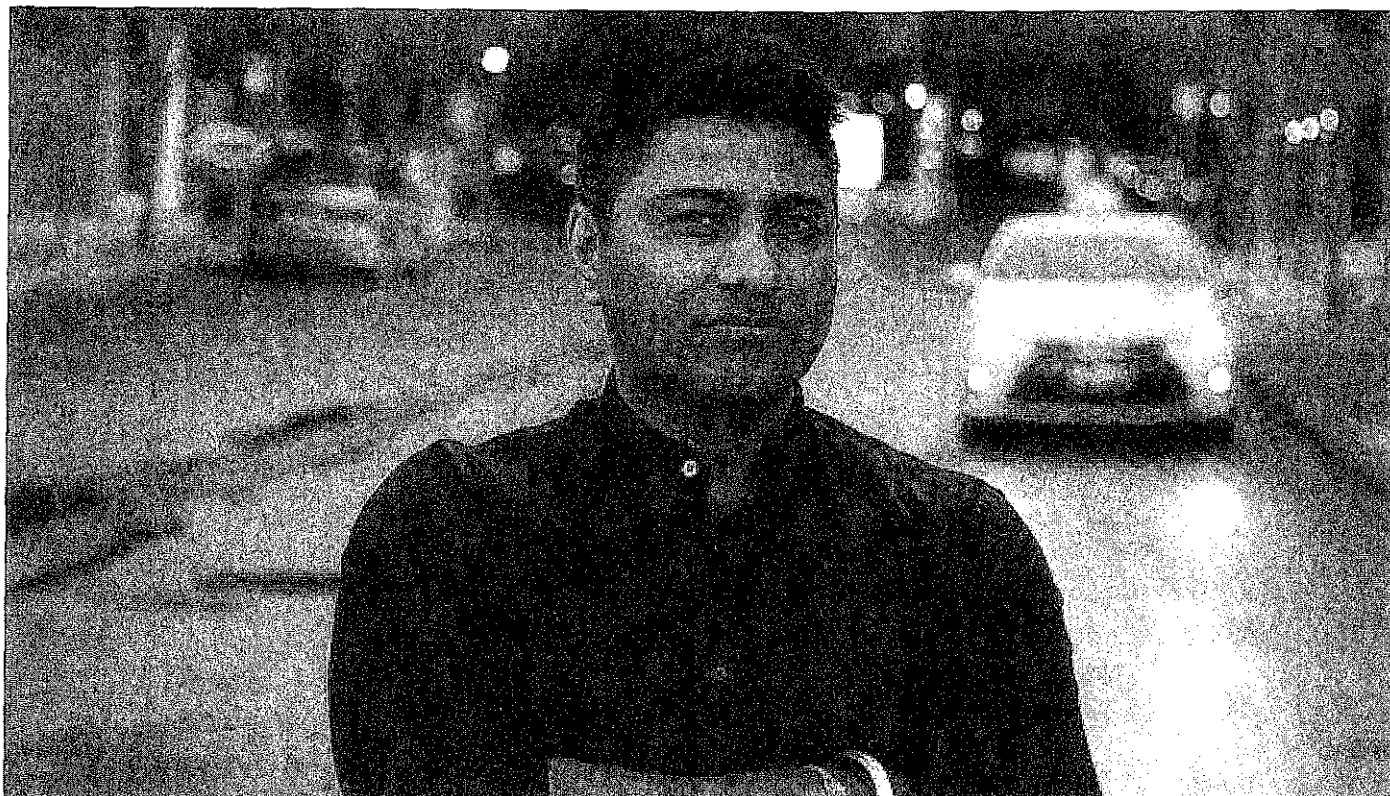
Ripped off workers, owed hundreds of thousands of dollars from embattled fast-food giant Domino's Pizza, are still waiting to be repaid almost two years after the underpayment was discovered.

Since allegations of rampant underpayment were exposed by Fairfax Media, Domino's has insisted it has "zero tolerance" for underpayment and that its top priority was to ensure workers got their entitlements.

But Fairfax Media can reveal one store, which was found to be underpaying workers \$200,000, still hasn't contacted all workers or repaid them, according to the franchisee.

A July 2015 audit of the store – now 20 months ago – commissioned by Domino's and conducted by human resources firm Allan Hall, found multiple breaches of workplace regulations including overtime not paid and unauthorised deductions from employees' wages.

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Former Domino's Pizza franchisee Rohit Malhotra admits to not paying employees correctly but says the practice is widespread. MICHAEL FRASER

Two more audits in late 2015 of stores run by the same franchisee found more than 70 staff had likely been underpaid.

The stores were sold in 2016, the last changing hands in November and Domino's held back the money from the sale proceeds to cover the repayments, but the workers are yet to receive anything.

The franchisee, Rohit Malhotra, admitted to Fairfax Media he didn't always pay employees by the book, and said he recovered rent and tuition fees he had paid from his employees' wages.

He said underpayment is common among Domino's franchisees.

"It is not just one-off people, they can't make money without it," he said.

"I had my own arrangement with the staff. Some were students and I was paying their fees ... Sometimes I'd help with their rent. One guy was living with me, he was paying rent out of his wages," he said.

Mr Malhotra said he was not terminated by Domino's but he said after the audits he was told to pay more than \$200,000 to his workers. He eventually sold his stores.

In an email 18 months after the initial discovery of underpayments a Domino's paralegal admitted that head office still had not "yet contacted any employees".

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## *No one has been repaid... I am a 100 per cent sure.*

Rohit Malhotra

The email said Domino's was waiting to recoup costs from the sale of the store.

A Domino's spokesman declined to comment on the hold up to wage repayments to exploited workers, citing the half-year results announcement on Wednesday.

Mr Malhotra said Domino's recouped money from the sale of his stores in November but still hadn't paid employees.

"No one has been repaid. I am in touch with a couple of [former employees]. I am a 100 per cent sure," he said.

Domino's has declined to say how many employees have been short-changed, how many instances of underpayment it has uncovered or how many complaints it has received.

The company said many "suspected" cases of underpayment are ultimately found to be simple misunderstandings by an employee of their entitlements. In cases where underpayment is discovered the company said it repays employees "as quickly as possible".

The chairman of the Migration Workers Taskforce, Professor Allan Fels, said when there is "significant" underpayment going on in a franchise arrangement public trust and confidence in the restoration measures were high. "Unless the process is independent, transparent and quick, it can result in public trust issues," he said. "These workers need the money as quickly as possible."

On Monday Professor Fels called for Domino's to take the lead and set up a compensation scheme for exploited workers.

**Do you know more? [adele.ferguson@fairfaxmedia.com.au](mailto:adele.ferguson@fairfaxmedia.com.au),  
[mario.christodoulou@fairfaxmedia.com.au](mailto:mario.christodoulou@fairfaxmedia.com.au)**



**Mario Christodoulou**



Mario is an Investigations Reporter with The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age



**Adele Ferguson**



Adele Ferguson is a Gold Walkley Award winning investigative journalist. She reports and comments on companies, markets and the economy.