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11 million more reasons to be a member of MEAA

The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance distributed more than \$11 million to its members in 2014-15 as recovered wages, financial claims and performers' residuals.

Claims made by MEAA's industrial and organising teams on behalf of members resulted in \$2.014 million being returned in 2014-15, twice as much as 2013-14.

Meanwhile, residual payments to performers – also known as royalties – totalled \$9.3 million, also an increase of more than twice the previous year.

Claims recovered by MEAA included \$1.1 million for members of the Media section, and \$488,542 for members of the Entertainment, Crew & Sport section. MEAA also recovered \$271,100 for its Musician members, and \$143,747 for members of Equity.

The monies were usually recovered following legal or collective action by MEAA.

In addition to recovering money for members, MEAA also collected and distributed \$9.3 million in residual fees and superannuation from television and film producers for members of Equity in 2014-15. This was also a significant increase on the previous year's \$4.3 million.

Residuals – also known as “royalties” – are payments to performers for additional repeat viewings or other programming sales and distributions.

MEAA chief executive officer Paul Murphy said the amount of monies claimed and distributed by MEAA to its members each year showed the value of being in the union.

“A core role of our union is to provide industrial services to financial members, by improving, renewing and extending their collective agreements or contracts, and enforcing their rights at work,” he said. “Sadly, the transient natures of the media and entertainment industries mean workers are sometimes not paid what they are entitled to.

“When our members have been ripped off, MEAA is there to take action on their behalf, including in the courts if necessary. “The fact that we recovered more than \$2 million of our members' money last year shows why they need a union.”

In one case last year, MEAA won a significant payment, plus interests and legal costs, for a long-term actor and stage producer who was not paid his share of the takings of a 17-performance show at a venue in Sydney.

In several other cases, action was taken by MEAA against the Australian Tax Office after members were subjected to audits which resulted in them owing significant tax debts, penalties and interest charges. MEAA was also involved in pursuing media companies after members complained that they had not received their full entitlements to redundancy payments.

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