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## **Back pay win for Grand Prix workers**

Potentially more than 20 people who worked for nothing on the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne in March this year have won back pay following intervention by the Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance.

Following a Fair Work Ombudsman investigation, global labour hire giant Adecco has paid five workers \$3500 for their labour during the four-day event.

Additionally, Adecco has undertaken not to repeat the practice of bringing in unpaid “volunteers” to work in customer service roles at the taxpayer-subsidised event.

Another 18 people, directly recruited by the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, may also be in line for payments after the Grand Prix Corporation agreed to pay them, despite initially claiming they were “volunteers” or “interns.”

The back pay comes after MEAA alerted the FWO to potential breaches of Australian workplace laws by Adecco on the eve of the event.

MEAA members had told the union how Adecco sent SMS messages to casual workers on its local database offering a “volunteer opportunity” at this year’s race. The “opportunity” involved pre-event training and three full days’ work in “customer service”, all unpaid.

The text message was sent to hundreds of workers.

MEAA’s Victoria and Tasmania regional director, Adam Portelli, said while it was pleasing that the workers would now be paid, the union was concerned that the behaviour uncovered at the Grand Prix was part of a much more widespread and systemic issue of exploitation of unpaid workers at major events.

He said labour hire companies also supplied workers to events like the Australian Open tennis tournament.

“We’re concerned that these revelations just scratch the surface,” Mr Portelli said.

“It’s alarming that a multinational labour hire company thought it could get away with such blatant behaviour.

“If not for the courage of an MEAA whistleblower this rip off wouldn’t have seen the light of day.

“This demonstrates some of the serious gaps in our existing laws – around interns, volunteers and labour hire.

“Australia’s workplace laws need to be changed to better protect workers from this type of exploitation.”

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**The Media, Entertainment & Arts Alliance - the people who inform and entertain**

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