



Media statement | 19 June 2020

Unfair and unjust – retail workers frontline efforts rewarded with a pay freeze

Statement on the Fair Work Commission’s Minimum Wage Decision – Gerard Dwyer, National Secretary the SDA

A wage freeze for the next seven months is no way to thank those brave retail workers who continued to serve the Australian community during the height of the COVID crisis, risking their health and safety to ensure families had food on their tables, medicines to keep them healthy and fuel to fill their vehicles.

Retail workers who stepped up and faced the emotional abuse of panic buying are now thanked by the Fair Work Commission with a wage freeze and a Sunday penalty rate cut on July 1st.

(The FWC’s Minimum Wage increase of 1.75% will not apply to retail workers until next February)

Frontline workers in healthcare deservedly get an increase on July 1st, not frontline retail workers. This is not the Australian way. It is not fair and the Australian community will see it as unfair.

The SDA is immediately applying to the FWC to delay the scheduled cut in Sunday penalty rates for retail and pharmacy employees due to hit on July 1st.

This cut, if it goes ahead, would be inconsistent with the FWC’s Penalty Rates Decision in 2017 where the Commission stated that:

*“The phased reductions in Sunday penalty rates that we intend to make will be implemented at the same time as the implementation of any increases arising from the Annual Wage Review decision. **This will usually mean that the affected employees will receive an increase in their base hourly rate of pay at the same time as they are affected by a reduction in Sunday penalty rates.**”*

Delaying the minimum wage increase for retail workers, a sector dominated by women and young people, who have been disproportionately disadvantaged during the height of the pandemic, while other “essential service” workers receive a pay rise from July 1st is not only unfair it is an insult.

The efforts of these workers, who risked their health and safety during the lockdown, were sufficient for some major retailers to recognise the SDA’s call for an Emergency Services Payment, but now the FWC has decided what they deserve is what amounts to a pay cut and another reduction in their penalty rates.

This is an unfair decision for those who bravely continued to serve in our supermarkets, our pharmacies and other retail essentials during the height of the pandemic.

It is unfair, unjust and not the fair go Australians expect.

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