

Friday 28 May 2021

Workers rally outside Harvey Norman stores across the country to support minimum wage increase

Workers are protesting outside Harvey Norman stores around the country¹ today in support of a much-needed pay increase for 2.2 million workers who rely on increases to award rates of pay. Harvey Norman doubled the company profits in the last 6 months, but their big business lobbyists continue to argue for real wage cuts for working people.

Last year Harvey Norman company chairman Gerry Harvey called coronavirus “an opportunity” in which his company saw profits increase by 116%.

Harvey Norman’s profits doubled to \$462 million at a time when retail workers were required to wait an extra seven months for the 2020 1.75% wage rise to flow through to their award. The company also refused to pay back \$22 million in JobKeeper that was designed to subsidise workers’ wages for companies impacted by COVID.

In the June quarter of 2020 profits rose 14.9 per cent across the economy and the ACTU is calling for the minimum wage to be increased by 3.5 per cent. This would impact 1 in 4 workers who are on minimum wage or award rates and rely on the annual wage review for a pay increase.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

“Harvey Norman saw the global pandemic as an ‘opportunity’, doubled its profits, benefited from a delay in the last increase in wages and then refused to pay back JobKeeper.

“It’s now time for Harvey Norman to step up and support a 69 cent an hour pay rise. Prime Minister Morrison must also stop supporting big business’ calls for real wage cuts – what the economy needs now is people with money to spend.

“For many workers, a 3.5 per cent increase would make a significant difference after nearly a decade of low wage growth.

“An increase to minimum wage would help those who need it most with about half of award wage workers engaged in insecure casual jobs. At 61 per cent of the award workforce, women would be disproportionately affected by this decision.

“Increasing minimum wage would impact over 2.2 million award dependant workers and beyond reducing financial stress on low wage workers, would generate local spending and economic growth.”

Media contact: Isabella Tilley 0414 894 040

¹ Consistent with health advice and Vic Govt restrictions connected to the latest COVID outbreaks in Victoria, there are no actions planned in Victoria