

Background Details of Dunnes Stores Workers Claims as Outlined in a Letter to Sandra Buckley, Head of HR – 1 May 2014

1. Introduction of Sufficient Weekly Hours Threshold

Employment in the Retail Sector in the last number of decades has become more and more precarious. By that we mean that more and more jobs have become part-time, temporary and short hour contracts. This rapid decline in the standard and quality of retail employment has had many negative impacts on retail employees such as;

- a) Workers do not earn a “living wage”, their total weekly hours are so low and so volatile that workers are unable to say from week to week what their earnings will be. This has major impacts on workers’ ability to be able to financially plan, pay standing bills and causes untold stress, etc.
- b) Short hour, variable contracts also force many retail workers to rely on State secondary welfare payments such as Family Income Supplement and back to school allowances, etc. Again, this under employment and irregular nature of employment is transferring the onus to provide a “Living Wage” from Multi National Retailers to the State (tax payers).
- c) Because of the total flexibility demanded from these short hours contracts many retail workers cannot plan their personal or social lives. This is a particular problem for workers with child minding responsibilities. It also prevents workers seeking a second job as they cannot commit to availability with another employer. Put briefly, they are trapped.
- d) The Retail Sector including Dunnes Stores can support decent jobs, decent contracts and a living wage but it chooses not to. Mandate over the last twenty-four months has engaged with many retail employers about this precarious employment problem and we have by agreement moved some way (not all) towards reducing the problem by the introduction of “Banded Hours Contracts”. Such contracts provide some certainty for workers as to their weekly earnings and their rosters. For example, in one such agreement the weekly guaranteed banded hours are as follows;

15 Hours	to	25 Hours	Per Week
25 Hours	to	35 Hours	Per Week
35 Hours	Plus		Per Week

While still providing flexibility for the employer it delivers some certainty for employees on earnings/rosters.

2. Review of the Number of Pay Scales/Pay Rate

It is Mandate’s and our members’ belief that Dunnes Stores have introduced a number of new pay rates and pay scales unilaterally and in so doing is paying employees different rates of pay for doing exactly the same job. Mandate is seeking a standard national pay scale for all retail sales assistants employed by Dunnes Stores.

3. Review of the Use of Temporary Contracts

This issue reverts back to the prevalence of precarious employment. It is our understanding that Dunnes Stores uses significant numbers of Temporary Contracts of Employment rolling them over on an ongoing basis and there by not committing to decent jobs and a decent ongoing retail future for retail workers. Please note we are not referring here to the traditional temporary contracts for Christmas, Maternity Leave or Long Term Illness, etc. We refer to systemic abuse of temporary contracts as a mechanism to avoid permanent employment.

4. 3% Wage Increase

This matter has been resolved for this year, in that Dunnes Stores has conceded the Union's claim in full.

5. Representation Rights for Our Members

Dunnes Stores refuses to allow the right of trade union members to be represented by elected Shop Stewards or Union Officials in their day to day industrial relations issues. A large percentage of Dunnes Stores employees have freely chosen to be a member of Mandate Trade Union and it is not unreasonable that the company should facilitate their chosen union representing them on issues of concern with their employer as is the case with the vast majority of major retailers in Ireland. Workers not only have the right to join/form a trade union but they also have the right for that union to be heard for the protection of their interests. Dunnes Stores workers are seeking no more or less than what is rightfully and legally theirs. Dunnes Stores' continued denial of these rights is in breach of Article 11 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and Various ILO Conventions.