

Michelle Higelin
Executive Director, ActionAid Australia

Mark McInnes
CEO, Just Group

cc: Greg Cookson
Group General Manager, Supply Chain & Logistics, Just Group

Delivered via email

12 April 2021

Re: COVID-19 pandemic and garment workers' rights

Dear Mr McInnes,

On behalf of ActionAid Australia, I am writing to express concern about the devastating impacts that COVID-19 is having on garment workers in Bangladesh and other developing countries, and the action required by the Just Group to protect workers in their supply chains.

ActionAid is a global women's rights organisation working to advance women's rights and end poverty and injustice in more than 45 countries. ActionAid works directly and through partners with women garment workers across Southeast Asia to stand up and claim their rights. More than 67,000 people in Australia support our campaigns to promote human rights and corporate accountability.

ActionAid is concerned by persistent labour rights challenges across the industry, including low wages, insecure employment and poor working conditions, which have had detrimental impacts on women workers and the realisation of gender equality. In this regard, we are working as a part of the global [#PayYourWorkers campaign](#), a coalition of over 200 partners, to advocate for immediate relief for garment workers in response to COVID-19 and for apparel industry reform to redress entrenched labour rights concerns.

COVID-19 has worsened the situation for women workers, who are being left to bear the brunt of the significant disruptions to global garment industry that have emerged in the wake of the pandemic. A recent survey by the Worker Rights Consortium across 158 factories and nine countries including Bangladesh¹ found that hunger has increased during the pandemic. 77% of garment workers reported that they, or a member of their household, have gone hungry since the beginning of the pandemic. 80% of garment workers with dependent children said they were forced to skip meals or reduce the amount or quality of food they eat in order to feed their children.²

It is critical that International brands such as the Just Group step up and support workers in their supply chains through this crisis. ActionAid is concerned that the Just Group's brands, including Just Jeans, Dotti, and Jay Jays, which we understand are producing in Bangladesh,³ are not assuming this responsibility.

¹ Just Group Ethical Sourcing commitments, <https://www.justgroup.com.au/asp/ethical.asp>.

² *Hunger in the Apparel Supply Chain*, Worker Rights Consortium, November 2020. See <https://www.workersrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Hunger-in-the-Apparel-Supply-Chain.pdf>.

³ Just Group Ethical Sourcing commitments, <https://www.justgroup.com.au/asp/ethical.asp>.

In order to ensure that garment workers producing for the Just Group brands are not saddled with the financial costs of the pandemic and pushed further into poverty and insecurity, it is critical that all Just Group brands commit to pay for all in-production and completed orders during the pandemic, and do not cancel orders, delay payments, or request discounts from suppliers. ActionAid has been unable to find publicly available information confirming that the Just Group is committed to upholding these standards.

Additionally, we are concerned that the Just Group is yet to publicly release the supplier lists for your brands and has made no commitment on the payment of living wages, both of which are critical for the realisation of garment worker rights.

ActionAid Australia is launching its #PayYourWorkers campaign on 24 April 2021. In advance of this launch we are requesting that the Just Group commits to:

- Publish the supplier list for at least the first tier of your supply chains;
- Pay the workers who make your clothes their full wages for the duration of the pandemic by committing to pay for all in-production and completed orders, and not cancelling orders, delaying payments, or requesting discounts from suppliers;
- Ensure that workers are not left without a safety net when factories close by signing onto a negotiated severance guarantee fund; and
- Ensure workers' rights to organise and bargain collectively are upheld by all suppliers producing for the Just Group brands.

Garment workers are currently facing the devastating impacts of this pandemic alone. We ask the Just Group to step up to support the workers making your clothes through this crisis.

ActionAid would appreciate an urgent update on the steps that the Just Group is taking to ensure workers' rights are upheld in its brands' supply chains, and that workers are paid their full wages during the pandemic and have access to a severance guarantee fund.

Yours sincerely,



Michelle Higelin
Executive Director, ActionAid Australia