

How to respond to the claims made by brands

You are asking for commitment to pay living wages:

A strong, credible commitment includes:

- A statement that the company will work towards the payment of living wages in their supply chain;
- A timeframe that shows by when they aim to achieve the full payment of living wages in their supply chain (we recommend 3-6 years).
- A commitment that the company will develop a public roadmap that outlines how they will achieve living wages in their supply chain, which they will publish within twelve months; and
- A clear and correct definition of what living wages are, so that they are not limiting what workers will earn based on their commitment.

No company in our tracker has yet made a full, clear public commitment like this. So if a company responds to you saying that they do have a commitment to living wages, the truth is that in reality something is missing. H&M's commitment is the closest, but it only outlines what the company will achieve over the next two years, not when the company plans to achieve full payment of living wages in their supply chain.

Remember, earning a living wage is a human right – and companies are profiting right now by paying poverty wages. It is beyond time for them to make a credible commitment and set out a timeframe to ensure that #whatshemakes is a living wage!

Brands say: "We are already committed to paying a living wage"

You Say:

A real commitment requires a timeline and a plan to develop and publish a roadmap, showing how you will achieve living wages in your supply chain. It is great to know you care about ethical sourcing, but promises are empty, without real timelines and plans in place we cannot hold you accountable. I care about #whatshemakes and however you define/explain, current wages are keeping the women making our clothes in poverty. Will you make a credible, public, time-bound commitment right now to paying a living wage and tell us how you will reach that goal by publishing a roadmap within a year, with clear milestones?

Brands Say: "We support paying a fair living wages and expect our suppliers to pay living wages"

You Say:

A real commitment means action from companies, not just expecting action from your suppliers. A general statement on living wage and ensuring suppliers are paying a minimum wage is clearly not making a difference. Will you make a credible, public, time-bound commitment right now to paying a living wage and tell us how you will reach that goal by publishing a roadmap within a year, with clear milestones?

**WHAT SHE
MAKES**

STUFF COMPANIES SAY

Brands Say: “We take ethical sourcing seriously and conduct regular audits. We require payment of the legal minimum wage or industry benchmark, or collective bargaining agreement (whichever is higher). In any event wages should always be enough to meet basic needs and to provide some discretionary income.”

You Say:

It is reassuring to know that you take ethical sourcing seriously. But I care about #whatshemakes. Minimum wages are three times below the living wage level in some Asian countries, and nowhere near a living wage in any major sourcing country for Australian retailers. This vague statement will not help the women who make our clothes lift themselves out of poverty. I am demanding you make a credible, public, time-bound commitment right now to paying a living wage and tell us how you will reach that goal by publishing a roadmap within a year, with clear milestones.

Brands Say: “We recognise a difference between a living wage and a fair living wage and we are committed in closing the gap” or “We take social responsibility very seriously and working on a roadmap for future to pay living wages”

You Say:

That’s great! Why don’t you solidify that plan by making a clear, public commitment right now that outlines your time frame? I care about #whatshemakes and right now, the women making our clothes earn poverty wages. I want to see you stand up and make a clear commitment today.

Brands Say: “We only work with suppliers that honour duty of care with their workforce, including offering a living wage”

You say:

Right now, minimum wages across the key countries that supply clothing to Australia are well below living wages. Requiring suppliers to pay living wages is an approach that is simply not working. Ensuring living wages are paid takes action, including worker consultation and representation. Will you make a commitment to living wages today, with a clear timeframe on when you will get there – and agree to publish your approach and milestones? I’m also keen to understand your definition of a living wage, and make sure it includes all of the essentials for the workers who make our clothes.

Brands Say: “We are in the ‘Nice List’ of Oxfam’s ‘Naughty and Nice List’

You Say: It’s great that you are transparent enough to make it into the 2016 ‘naught and nice’ list by Oxfam! But now, we are asking you to take the next step. Paying living wages is about more than transparency – it’s about a fair go for the women who make our clothes. Will you make a credible, public, time-bound commitment right now to paying a living wage and tell us how you will reach that goal by publishing a roadmap within a year, with clear milestones?

Brands Say: There is no universally agreed methodology for calculating living wages so we benchmark against the legal minimum wage. We work with stakeholders to adopt a living wage benchmark.

Your response:

I know well established living wage calculation methodologies are already in place – you can find them in Oxfam’s handbook for companies on living wages. This is no excuse for continuing the practice of allowing poverty wages. Will you now make a credible, public, time-bound commitment right now to paying a living wage and tell us how you will reach that goal by publishing a roadmap within a year, with clear milestones?

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We are also asking all those brands who still hide their factory lists to go transparent! Here’s a response if they say they won’t:

Brands Say: “We have not published the factory list but we have full traceability of those factories and work with them closely to improve working conditions.”

You Say:

It’s great that you know who your suppliers are – but you need to publish your factory list now. Most major Australian brands have already done this – and you are lagging behind. Not publishing the factory list can put workers in danger and means you are not taking public responsibility for the conditions in the factories you use to make a profit. It is high time to publish the list now to allow workers and others to alert you of any abuses in these factories.

**WHAT SHE
MAKES**