Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union

MEDIA RELEASE

Saturday 14 February

No love for Darrell Lea workers this Valentines Day

Six former employees of iconic Australian confectionary company, Darrell Lea, have been dudded of half a million dollars ordered to be paid to them by the Fair Work Commission (FWC).

The workers, with between 12 and 36 years of service, were awarded redundancy by the FWC after it was found that their personal circumstances meant they were unable to relocate to a new premises. Rather than follow the order of the FWC, DL Employment Pty Ltd, the company that employed the workers, placed itself into voluntary administration.

"This is unprecedented. A fully solvent company engaging in an eleventh-hour corporate restructure to avoid an order by the independent umpire is the lowest of acts" said Tim Ayres, Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union NSW Secretary.

In 2012, Darrell Lea was bought by the Quinn family, estimated by BRW to be worth $370 million. A Quinn family member was the sole shareholder in DL Employment and moved to place the company into voluntary administration just days after the ruling by the FWC.

"The Quinn family ought to be ashamed of themselves. They are engaging in legal trickery in an attempt to rob six workers of their retirement savings" said Mr Ayres.

"Some workers that have been ripped off are relying on this money to care for their families, some of whom are elderly or disabled. Others had hoped to use it to be able to enjoy a comfortable retirement.

"In 2012, workers and the public rallied behind the company in its' time of crisis. For those people, this just feels like a kick in the guts" said Mr Ayres.

The AMWU can reveal that just two days prior to the placing of DL Employment Pty Ltd into voluntary administration, Darrell Lea had signed a lucrative V8 Supercar sponsorship deal. In late 2014, the Quinn family had also been on a PR offensive, reporting to several media outlets that the financial circumstances at Darrell Lea had been turned around since 2012.

"Darrell Lea can't be allowed to get away with this. If they do, it sends a clear signal to the corporate sector in this country that they can flout the rulings of our courts and commissions using sneaky midnight restructures" said Mr Ayres.

The workers and their union are currently considering their legal options.

"We're going to fight to make sure that these six workers get every last dollar they are owed.

"The Quinn family ought to do the right thing and pay up".

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