

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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Australia

Submission to the Inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment (Small Business-Penalty Rates Exemption) Bill 2012

I am a permanent employee, working as a postal worker, currently earning around 50,000 per year.

I am a married woman with one child who has been working for the same company for 28 years. I choose to work so I could give our son a good start in life and keep a comfortable roof over our heads. We bought our home in the 80's when interest rates crippled many home buyers. There was no first home buyers scheme, no hand out from the government to make our lives easier because we didn't want to pay dead money in rent. We kept our heads above water without going bankrupt and kept our home. We still have our mortgage. But at the rate things are going will be lucky to pay it off. My husband is approaching 60 years of age and I am not far behind we have worked shift work all our married life, we both contribute to super which at today's rates may allow us to retire at the ripe old age of 75 if we are frugal. We do not take

overseas holidays to say we have taken two holidays in our married life is not an exaggeration. We are careful with our money, we don't live on creditcards, we pay our way .

We pay our taxes we have had no government assistance eg baby bonus, child endowment,school bonus. These schemes were for those less fortunate or those who preferred to stay at home to raise their children, or stay on the dole. For those of us who were brought up to believe that you have to work for what you have the government has raised our taxes, car insurance, health insurance, house rates, utilities payments petrol prices and basic food prices. When will it stop, I know that most of the taxes paid are paid by middle income Australians, but as our standard of living continues to drop we will no longer be middle income Australians we will be driven to be low income Australians who are working for minimum wages whilst propping up the economy. If the Senate listens to the voices of people like Senator Xenophon and god forbid Gina Rienhart who recently wanted to reduce the minimum wage a proposal to bring back the concept of slavery can't be far behind.

If penalty rates were abolished... The company I work for would use it as a precedent to remove penalty rates from all their staff, at the moment any new staff employed by our company are having their shift manipulated so they are paid only the minimum allowance possible this causes staff who have been there for some time to work alongside staff employed under continually worsening conditions. Removal of these penalty rates will open a pandoras box that will degrade the working conditions millions of people have fought for over decades.

My weekends are important to me because...being a shift worker when I do get a weekend to spend with my family or to catch up with friends who work normal hours it makes me feel normal. It keeps me connected to the community in which I live, gives me the quality time to unwind and see the world as it should be seen, in the daylight

with the sun in my face. Instead of sleeping those daylight hours away while the rest of my social circle live. I understand that life is different now the world is a smaller place and to be competitive we need shift workers.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. Most of us that work shift work do this for the extra money it brings in. Uni students because it pays the rent while they get an education. For some it's a second job, as part time work is the fastest growing job opportunity for those looking for work, and they need to pay a mortgage. Part time penalty shifts are the first jobs our kids get while they are in school, it allows them to see how hard work pays off and teaches the next generation the value of our time and of the dollar. Do not penalise them for keeping the economy going while the rest of Australia sleeps.

Submitted by

Maria Riet

Thursday 13th of September 2012