

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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Canberra ACT 2600

Australia

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

I am a employee, working as a Maritime Communications Officer, currently earning around \$24.00 per hour.

I work in an area attached to the Rescue Coordination Centre Australia (RCC Australia). The hours are long and frequently tiring. But the work is important. Together, RCC Australia co-ordinates all search and rescue operations in the Australian Region. My particular role is to provide a listing watch on Search and Rescue (SAR) radio frequencies and broadcast notices to mariners. We perform this important role every hour of every day in accordance with Australia's Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) responsibilities.

Penalty rates make up a significant proportion of my take home pay. Depending on the shift cycle and requirements to perform additional overtime shifts, penalty rates can

make up around half my fortnightly pay. If I were to lose my penalty rates, I doubt I would continue to perform shift work. The sacrifices: the long hours, working nights and weekends - without compensation - would simply not be worthwhile.

I have found shift work to have a major impact on my life style and community involvement. I have been an active member of the NSW State Emergency Service (SES) for many years. However, since I have commenced shift work I have found it increasingly difficult to make training nights to maintain skills. I have also found it very difficult to participate in emergency response. Similarly, I have found shift work to curtail involvement in sporting and social events. I think it only fair that penalty rates be applied as compensation.

I consider penalty rates key compensation for working long twelve hour shifts, often without rest breaks. While the hours are long, they are also anti social. I wake at 4:40am for a day shift and I don't get home till around 7.30pm. Night shifts are also twelve hours long. We sacrifice nights, weekends and public holidays including Christmas. The life style does have it's advantages, but can be tiring and socially isolating as well. Surely anyone can see that penalty rates are fair compensation for working nights and weekends "time off others take for granted. I think the application of penalty rates is fair compensation in the circumstances - don't you?

Submitted by

Steven Curren

Saturday 15th of September 2012