

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

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 Sales Assistant, currently earning around 17.20 per hour.

I am married with one child, a 9 year old son. I work permanent part time in retail, and only earn around \$17000/annum.

I have to balance the hours that I work, as I have to be home to get my son to and from school, and manage household duties whilst my husband is at work fulltime.

We have a mortgage, but are having trouble meeting our financial commitments due to the continually rising costs of essential necessities, such as electricity, food and fuel.

These items are rising at a rate much higher than our wages are increasing.

If penalty rates were abolished it would impact on our incomes, and I would have to

increase my hours to make up the difference.

This would greatly affect my family life, as I wouldn't be there for my son, and would have to pay for after school care till my husband could pick him up after work on the days that he can. This would put even more pressure on our financial commitments. We are lucky our son has one grandparent left, who is able to help us by picking him up from school 2 days a week when I work till 5:30pm, but she is elderly, so can only continue to do this whilst her health prevails.

Now, starting from October, they are extending finishing time for our stores till 6:00pm, which means that by the time I pick up our son from his nanny's and get home, it won't be till 7:30pm, way too late on a weeknight, and at no financial benefit for me, and the other staff.

Although we don't like working weekends, or my husband nights and other odd hours as he has to in his job, at times there is no choice, so the penalty rates at least make up for the lost time that we get as a family.

Penalty rates were bought in originally to compensate people who had to work odd hours and weekends, because they were missing out on valuable family time, time where most other people were at home relaxing.

Why should people be penalised for having to work hours and week days that are outside the norm?

By receiving penalty rates, it gives us that little bit of extra income to spend on luxuries, which we wouldn't normally be able to afford.

My weekends are important to me because it is the only time where we are all together as a family, without being tired from early starts during the week, either for work, or getting our son off to school.

This is when we get to spend quality time together, and have a chance to relax. Our son plays various sports on weekends and we enjoy watching him play, and he enjoys our support.

He is still only young, but is growing so fast.

When I was young, there was minimal retail work on weekends, as this was always deemed time for rest and family, whilst Monday to Friday were work days.

Unfortunately, for a time, my husband was in a job where he had to work every second weekend, and was rostered off during the week, when we weren't home during the day. This was a bad time for us, as we hardly got to see him, and when we did, he was always tired from the long hours.

He was the manager of our son's soccer team, but had to relinquish this task, as he wasn't available consistently to be able to carry out this volunteer duty properly, and had to miss a lot of weekends watching our son having fun, and improving his sporting skills.

Even with penalty rates, my husband's income didn't increase substantially due to being rostered off on the weekdays, but at least this was some compensation for the hard work and long hours he was doing.

Without penalty rates, it wouldn't have been worth him in continuing in this job.

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I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. This is the only way to compensate people for the time that they are losing with family, and relaxing.

I have heard of a system, possibly to be implemented, whereby you will only get penalty rates once you have worked at least 5 straight shifts, but anyone would know that management would be instructed to manipulate the rosters so that either minimal, or no staff member would qualify for these benefits.

Submitted by

Kim McIntyre

Tuesday 25th of September 2012