

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 Registered Nurse, currently earning around \$38.41 per hour.

I am married with three young children - one 7yrs (at school), one 5yrs and one 3yrs with special needs. We have a mortgage and numerous other bills to meet.

I have recently changed from a Nursing Unit Manager position with a higher hourly pay rate, to a Permanent Part Time RN position on a rotating roster. This change was in an attempt to decrease my work stress levels, which was having a negative effect on my health and family life. I had taken on this change to my career path to benefit my family, but had seen this financial burden offset by the opportunity to work occasional after hours shifts for penalty rates.

If penalty rates were abolished the incentive to work rotating shifts is greatly diminished. There would be no financial benefit in being away from my family for the occasional weekend day, public holidays, afternoon or night shift, which is the reason for accepting these shifts.

While this current proposal before the Senate is not directed at nursing initially, my concern is there is potential for this to flow over to the hospital system rather quickly. There is already a large push for whatever budget cuts can be made. It would also be difficult to staff the hospitals which are primarily run on rotating rosters for most nurses, radiographers, doctors, wardsmen, cleaners, allied health and other supporting personnel. Who would want to work a weekend (or other out of hours shift) when your friends and family are home if there is no financial incentive? Personally I would look to work elsewhere should this occur; as would a number of other staff I have spoken to. The impact on the health system would be huge at such a loss. What then happens to us or our families if they should get sick??

My weekends are important to me because it is a chance to relax with my family and friends, most of whom have weekends and public holidays off too. Kids are at school during the week not at the weekends.

We have to turn down invitations to birthdays and other celebrations if I am working. We especially miss out on going away for the whole weekend, even if only one shift is worked that weekend. So it can ruin plans for the family for a whole weekend, such as the long holiday weekend coming up. It is hard to explain to young children why they can't do or go where their friends are going.

Also in a country that has a background of Christian church culture in much of the

government structure, this should not be ignored because of the perception that "not many people attend any more". I am a Christian and Sunday is still a special day for me to meet with my church family. There is currently a financial benefit for me (along with the community need in the hospital) for the odd day I need to miss out on attending church. However should penalty rates be taken away I would want to insist not to work Sundays, or Christmas and Easter public holidays on religious grounds. Unfortunately some other cultures seem to have this option more than Christians do in the nursing profession in hospitals. Therefore it would be hard to then stay in my job as "rotating" on different shifts and days is part of my employment contract. So I would potentially then have to look to other work options.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. Weekends are still important to "ordinary people" and their families. Think about the impact this amendment may have on the wider community too (including yourselves especially if this proposal were to flow over onto the health system).

Submitted by

Sandra Monger

Tuesday 25th of September 2012