

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 casual employee, working as a Registered Nurse, currently earning around \$38.41 per hour.

I'm 52 years old with two dependent teenage children. I choose to work casual in order to avoid working weekends which are taken up with kids' sport & family activities. I spent many years working rotating shifts which impacted heavily & negatively on our family life. Our boys were small and I was needed as a team leader at work since the Nursing Unit Manager worked Monday to Friday. This meant I often wasn't able to participate in sport or family life on weekends, leaving it all up to my husband. I now choose only to work morning shifts for a better family/work balance. Without penalty rates to compensate somewhat for our fractured weekends, I would have gone casual much earlier and our hospital would have been a senior nurse down on the weekend.

If penalty rates were abolished there would be no reason for me to work nights, evenings or weekends. It's imperative to be compensated for unsociable hours. People who work evenings, nights & weekends tend to be lower income earners. The penalty rates they rely on are used for essentials, not luxuries. Taking away penalty rates would be significantly detrimental to people needing to afford childcare (for young children who should not be left alone on weekends/evenings/nights), pay off mortgages and other bills.

My weekends are important to me because I score for both my boys' baseball teams, I exercise with my husband, and I spend time with family and friends. I realise exactly how important weekends are having missed so many through shift work. I've missed many occasions that were important to me because of shift work - family Christmases, engagement parties, Christenings, gatherings - you name it, I've missed it because I worked weekends. I need weekends for my physical, mental and emotional health - that's why I stopped doing shift work when I felt I could afford to stop.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. I'm financially secure enough now to have opted out of shift work by working casual, but I well remember how heavily I used to rely on penalty rates as a nurse to manage the expenses of our young family. I'm so lucky because I have a supportive husband who works days Monday to Friday. Heaven help the single parent trying to bring up a young family and pay off the mortgage or pay rent while working weekends, particularly if that single parent were to lose the one single compensation for weekend work, i.e. that little bit of necessary money embodied by the penalty rate. Losing penalty rates will put extra stress on people who are already just getting by. It would mean children could be left unsupervised as childcare would become more unaffordable. It would also put pressure on relationships between people who aren't spending time together and who have less money to manage on. It's outrageous to penalise people who are not in high

income brackets anyway by getting rid of penalty rates. When one considers the repeated massive wasting of public money by politicians through inept planning and decision making, it would be more to the point for those politicians to stop thinking of ways to extort yet more money out of Australians who can least afford it, and start thinking about how politicians can make better use of the money they already have. Heaven knows Australians are comparatively overly taxed and yet we see very little bang for our hard earned bucks.

Submitted by

Jill Fisher

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