

Lucy's Speech to Senate Inquiry into Fair Work Bill

My name is Lucy Fu. I am a member of Asian Women at Work, and I am part of the Asian Women Workers Action Group.

For 13 years I worked as an outworker in the clothing industry. When the job was easy I could sometimes earn up to \$10 an hour, but when the job was difficult I only got \$5 an hour.

The boss did not always give clear instructions about how to make the garment. So every time I gave back an order I was very stressed to know if it was OK or not. If the boss was not happy he would give me back the work and I would have to fix it for no extra pay.

Every time I handed in an order I would be given a new one to take home and sew. To complete all these garments I had to work 7 days a week, and to finish the order on time I would often work overnight.

In 2002, I started studying English with Asian Women at Work and had a chance to retrain to work in the aged care industry. After I started working in a nursing home in December 2003 I discovered for the first time that workers in Australia should all receive superannuation, overtime pay, annual leave, sick leave and many other entitlements.

In the nursing home it was a great work environment. There was good team work and we helped each other. My English was not good when I started, but they were always helping me and teaching me. We regularly rotated our jobs so that no-one was stuck with the most heavy work.

But when we got new management in our nursing home, things became very difficult. They don't like to see workers looking happy. If we are happy and relaxed they give us more work to do.

We are over-worked. If someone on staff has a sick day, they are often not replaced. That means everyone else has to do a heavier workload. Before, sick staff were always replaced so the workload is not too heavy for workers. Now staff get stressed, and sometimes they blame the person for taking the day off and making their work more difficult. So relationships between staff are getting bad.

Everyone has a long face these days. Not like before when we always helped each other, laughing and enjoying our work. We miss the old management!!!!

Under new management, the everybody is scared of the supervisor. If she sees you she is always accusing you of doing something wrong. She is never happy with what we do. She often speaks very fast, but when I ask her to repeat what she said so I can understand she ignores me as if my knowing the information is not important.

I am now always very stressed at work, and often very upset. I don't want to keep working in this atmosphere.

This is my story. Many other migrant women workers have similar stories, and some have had much worse experiences than me.