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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 $35 per hour.

I am a Registered Nurse who has a family and a mortgage. My family relies heavily upon my pay, which includes penalty rates and this is why I have chosen to work weekends, evening shifts and public holidays. I am now the sole earner in the family.

If penalty rates were abolished I would loose approximately half of my pay and this would impact significantly upon my family's quality of life. I have opted to forgo many family gatherings over the years to work Christmas Day and other public holidays because of the penalty rates and because others did not want to work. This is a typical example of the commitment that nurses make in this profession. Nurses often put people they care for before their family commitments. Nursing is not just a job, it is a

profession, a lifetime commitment and a way of life. However, if there were no penalty rates, I would have to reconsider whether I would put my profession first, as I would feel as though my lifelong commitment has been devalued. Without the penalty rates, the care of the elderly, frail people who I look after would be severely impacted upon.

My weekends are important to me because for years I have juggled work with family commitments on the weekends. My children needed to get to sporting events and I couldn't always take them. I couldn't always watch them kick that winning goal, or win that race. I work evening shifts because of the penalty rates. This means I do not get to have the evening meal with my family and spend quality time with them in the evenings and talk about the day's events. I did not get to tuck them in at night and say goodnight. I work public holidays and miss out on family get- togethers and parties. Why should I get the same rate of pay as those who do not miss out on these precious moments with their growing family?

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. Penalty rates are important for employees to be able to put a justification as to why they are away from their families at some of the most important times of their lives. Every year, for several years, I have tried to juggle Christmas Day dinner with my family, as well as work, so that the elderly people in my care enjoy a quality day as well. If there were no penalty rates for weekends, evening shifts and public holidays, then I would have reconsider the effort that I would put into all this, because although I love my profession and the residents whom I care for, the effort and the juggling that is involved may not be worth it. The whole time that I sacrificed for my profession would have been devalued.

Submitted by
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