Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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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 $30 per hour.

I am a 52 nurse with 30 years experience in Mental Health Service. I am married with 2 adult children, one of which is still at home at age 28! Its ok - we like his company. I have a mortgage still & my wife & I are saving for our self funded retirement.

If penalty rates were abolished... firstly I would loose a substantial amount of my income, I estimate at least 1/3 or 30%. In a field where finding qualified staff willing to work rosters which cover every day & night of any week all year long including Christmas etc is hard enough, areyou really contemplating reducing or removing penalty rates???. Penalty rates are the equaliser for people like me who have to work to provide services for others 24 hrs a day. Why would anyone want to start a shift at

9pm, 11pm 3pm 7am every or any weekend Public holiday, or religious holidays or Christmas day when you get paid no more for it than a normal Monday? Who do you think is going to do the work? My children hold jobs working for construction companies & safety equipment (PPE) & inspection providers. They work Monday to Friday, with weekends off for family & recreational time. When they have children, they will go to school & learn the ABC's and have weekends, public holidays & longschool holidays off. If you take away penalty rates, employers will have NO PENALTY when requireing workers to work all hours or days when it suits the employer, without consideration for the employee. Penalty rates ensure that the Employer will only consider requiring workers to work outside the traditional hours when necessary &/or with economic benifit to the employer. Employees will work outside these "normal times" becuse they have economic benifit to them - an obvious Win : Win situation

My weekends are important to me because... when I get them, I spend the time with my family and friends who are mostly Monday - Friday workers. My wife works and the few weekends we get are precious. I also like to have Saturdays arvo for sports (bowls) where I can . As far as special events in my family and friends etc lives, I cannot count the number of these I have forgone due to work commitments over the 30 years I have worked shift work. I am sure that folk would be much less reticent to take time off for these occasions if there were no income loss. They would simply make themselves unavailable for the event. Imagine the rostering nightmare then???

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. Penalty rates are a part of our society. They are part of the fabric of the Australian workplace and a integral part of allowing us all to try and attain a work life balance. Take away penalties & we put ourselves at the mercy of employers only interested in profits or cost cutting. At the moment we have it about right. My kids can work if they want on weekends etc, with the knowledge that they will recieve an extra incentive to foregoing their time off or they can chose not to.

Without penalties, there will quickly become a situation where there is no choice if they want any income at all. Dont let our system of fair work for fair and equitable pay we fought long and hard for devolve into the 51st state of tips, low pay & conditions

Submitted by
Grahame Auston
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