

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 union advocate, currently earning around \$30 per hour.

I am a mother of one 13 year old son living with my husband, son and two dogs in NSW. Prior to working for the FSU where I currently work, I worked for Westpac. I have also worked on the Committee at our local Soccer club

If penalty rates were abolished...

I believe that one reason we had penalty rates was to deter employers from forcing employees to work weekends and excessive overtime. The extra money paid on weekends and for overtime are called "Penalty Rates" as they are actually a penalty to employers for not staffing their workplaces adequately to get the work done

and to prevent employers expecting staff to work unreasonable and unsociable hours.

Sure things have changed since then and people expect the world to be open for business 24/7, but this is a downward spiral for the conditions of workers and it is not something that I believe is acceptable. I cannot believe that any politician elected by the people would want the people who vote for them to lose the ability to pay their bills, spend time with their families and volunteer for social/sporting and other committees on weekends. This will not win votes. WORKCHOICES - all over again!

Abolition of penalty rates for weekend work will mean that all sorts of employers who currently close or do not operate on weekends will suddenly have no deterrent and will change their employee's hours to include weekends. After all what is the use spending all that money on plant and equipment if it is idle on the weekend?

Please think about this and what it will mean for society as a whole. Committees that run sporting clubs and other social or religious organisations and things like Scouts that have events on weekends for children rely on volunteers who are available on weekends to run them. These will no longer operate as the committee members will no longer have the guarantee that they will not be required to work on the weekend. In order to make a commitment to join a committee to run such an organisation it is necessary to be available regularly.

Over time the abolition of penalty rates on weekends will break down the weekend as we know it. The weekend will cease to exist. More and more people will be required to work weekends. And for what - GREED? So employers can make more money!

This will destroy sporting clubs and the like and destroy the social and sporting development of our children. Parents will be at work, so they won't be able to take them

to sport and the like either.

Additionally, most families have trouble making ends meet and need overtime to stretch the budget to pay their mortgage and bills, they also need to pay for education, food, clothing and other incidentals. This is not possible on the wage most retailers and blue collar jobs pay. Many people rely on their overtime to get by.

The fact that retailers are using the penalty rate argument for the decrease in their trade is ridiculous. They are not in competition with shop front retailers in other countries where there are no penalty rates. I can't just get on a plane and go to India and do my weeks trolley bashing and come home and pack it in my freezer.

Australian retailers are noticing a big decline in their business because they are not keeping up with the times. On line shopping is here to stay, get used to it. We get rid of penalty rates and it solves nothing. People can still shop cheaper on line as there are less overheads - no retail shop space to let and fewer wages to pay. When getting rid of penalty rates doesn't work to increase their trade, what next? This is a race to the bottom.

And we don't help people in Third world countries get better conditions for themselves by racing them to worse conditions. We must maintain our conditions and organise workers in those countries to strive to improve their conditions in the same manner we did over the last 2 centuries.

Save our weekends - do not vote to abolish penalty rates

My weekends are important to me because...

I spend time with my family

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates.

Submitted by

Jennifer McNiven

Wednesday 19th of September 2012