Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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Australia

Submission to the Inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment (Small Business-Penalty Rates Exemption) Bill 2012

I am a registered nurse who has worked shift work for the past 40 years which is practically all my working life. Without penalty rates my wage would be between $8-10,000 less and some years more. I would like to point out that this extra money I earn from penalty rates is also taxed!

Working 'after hours' is hard work. Few of the support services which are available in 'normal' working hours are available 'after hours' which ultimately leads to an increased workload for each individual working 'after hours'.

Those who have not worked for long periods of time as a 'shift worker' have no idea the impact this has on the quality of life. Evidence is readily available to show the increased health risks for those individuals who work these unhealthy hours. The extent of the effects this type of work has on the individuals family and social life is

enormous. These effects also extend to the extended family members and friends of those who work shift work. Family and friends are always taking into consideration the work patterns of shift working family members when they are arranging social events and other even more important events.

Shift workers find it difficult because of the nature of their work to participate in sporting, club and volunteer activities compounding the restrictions enforced upon these workers. Missing out on special events such as Christmas and Easter celebrations is a burden that is not easy to carry. Please put yourself in my position for just a moment and imagine your little children under the Christmas tree opening their presents and squealing in delight and you are not there to witness these precious moments which are short in life! I get around one Christmas every 8 years at home with my family. Should I, my family and all families who work abnormal hours not be rewarded for these sacrifices we make year after year? If you are thinking no then that is just 'unfair' and doesn't reflect the Aussie spirit of a fair go for everyone!

I accept these work conditions because they are necessary to care for my patients. I try to even out the higher risks associated with shift work by leading and active and healthy life but it is really difficult to get out of bed at 1500hrs after a night shift, go for a run and then complete all the tasks which keep a home running and then head to work again for a 10 hour shift overnight. Many times I have to force myself through the constant underlying tiredness which I live with as a result of shift work, to achieve many of the activities I pursue.

Do you think my weekends and evenings more unimportant to me than people who work 'normal' hours?? They are not!

There is a huge deficit forecast in nurse availabilities for future years. Nurses will not

work the hours required without reward.

To abolish penalty rates is to the detriment of patient care in Australia therefore I urge the committee to understand and associate with all the above issues and keep penalty rates.

Jan Robinson

Submitted by
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