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 casual employee, working as a shop assistant, currently earning around $21.50 per hour.

I am single, no children, but am the main carer for my two parents who are elderly and disabled. My mother is going blind. I am also disabled. I work as a shop assistant on Saturdays, as well as working full time during the week.

The work I do during the week is not secure, and I was subjected to bullying for a period of nearly five years, because of my disability. Eventually the bullying was so bad that I became sick and could not work there at all for four months. The weekend work, with its Saturday rates, was the only income I had coming in during that time. Losing the weekend work and its Saturday rates would mean losing about $10K from our family's income.

My weekends are important to me because I work six days a week. My Sunday is the only time I get to spend with my family and doing my creative artworks.

I've already stated the impact their loss would have on me personally, but where I work, weekend work is dominated by students who work on weekends and study during the week. Penalty rates are an incentive to attract mature adults to those unpopular shifts too. This benefits the employer too, because mature adult workers can share their knowledge and experience with the younger workers, and provide them with support and guidance.

It also benefits customers too. For many of our customers, especially the elderly, shopping is also about meeting their social needs. Mature sales assistants can talk to these customers and empathise with them in a way that younger workers cannot. Again, this is good for business because it generates customer loyalty.

For all of these reasons, I urge the committee to keep penalty rates.

Submitted by
Ellen Richardson
Wednesday 19th of September 2012