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 mental health worker, currently earning around 35 per hour.

I am a mature age full-time student, who lives alone, with a mortgage. I am lucky enough to have been granted an APA scholarship, but need some casual work to pay my mortgage. Which also means I am not entitled to a health care card or any of the associated benefits. Which in turn means I need to be paid well for my weekend work. Weekends are important family and friend catching up time, so to give up my social time I feel people should be recompenced. We have little social structure left in the west. The less social structure we have the greater our disassociation from others, the more unhappy we are - the more suicides we have. Weekends are perhaps the last bastion of social structure - a time to catch up with others, I cannot tell you how important I think it is.

If penalty rates were abolished... I would have to work more hours for the same pay - I already work full-time on my thesis and work casually most Sundays - therefore without penalty rates I would probably have to give up my studies and I certainly would not give up my precious weekends for no additional pay.

My weekends are important to me because... That is when all the social events take place. For years I worked weekends to support myself and children as I studied for my undergraduate degree - it was wearing to miss so many social events. But at least I was compensated which in turn enabled me to be able to be there for my children after school.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. Without them we will no longer have sacred time. Everyday would be the same - no special family time - no demarkation between week days and weekend, which I truely believe would devalue life in Australia. We may not have churches where families come together anymore, but we do have weekends. It is vitally important that when we give them up we are compensated. That way they remain a special/sacred time that we can catch up with significant others. All mental health research tells us that the single most important thing we can do to protect our mental health is to connect with others. If weekends are not significant in our busy lives anymore it will add to the slow degradation of all our social lives. I urge you to preserve the sanctity of our weekends.

Submitted by
Gillian Joiner
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