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

I am a permanent employee, working as a nurse, currently earning around $38.00 per hour.

I am married, have a mortgage. My wife works in the same industry as me. We are both registered nurses working in mental health & drug & alcohol sector of health. We are
currently supporting our adult son who is studying & trying to find work. I have to commute 124 kilometres each day for work. My wife commutes 80 kilometres each day she works. We are both very worried that with possibilty of Senator Xenophon's bill passing, that it will be us who will become the next target for a BIG wage cut by having our penalty rates excised from our income.

If penalty rates were abolished... my income would be reduced in excess of $400.00

per week. Because my annual leave is linked to working evenings, weekends & public holidays, I will lose substantial amount of annual leave, giving me less time away from the very stressful workplace. In my work as a nurse for over 35 years I have always been required to work a rotating roster, subject to working morning, afternoon & night shifts which does take a toll on physical health; missing out on many of my children's school activities not to mention untold number of social events because of my chosen career. What would be the thing that keeps nurses in the industry if penalty rates are abolished. I can't afford Senator Xenophon's bill to be passed. He clearly does not comprehend the effect this will have on the working people of Australia, who will be added to the growing pile of the working poor of Australia.

My weekends are important to me because...even though we all supposedly live in a 24/7 world. it gives a certain normalcy to one's life. I am one of the few people who don't have a mobile phone by choice -
I don't particularly like the 24/7 world. Weekends ARE STILL a normal part of our society. When I have a weekend rostered off duty, it means being able to catch up with friends who don't work weird shifts, the chance to attend all sorts of events in the community, go to that show at night, etc.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. Once the retail industry loses penalty rates, it won't be long before the government takes them away from nurses. There have been several attempts to introduce this over the past 25 years. Why would anyone want to become a nurse, studying for three years at university to earn a pitiful wage, compared to the income other university graduates would earn. There is no way the government can ever compensate me for the loss of penalty rates I would need a pay rise of somewhere around $30.00 an hour to make up the difference. Am I to finish my dedicated work as a nurse, putting up with all manner of abuse over the years, and retire without sufficient income to pay off my mortgage or support myself & family. I

hope that the Senate committee will grasp the terrible effect the passing of this bill will have on the service industries in Australia.

Submitted by

Peter Stein

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