

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 assistant nurse, currently earning around 21 dollars per hour.

I am a nursing student and support myself by working as an assistant in nursing on the weekends and evenings. I can't work during clinical placements (approximately 20 weeks per year) so need to save money when I am not working (for free) in the hospital as a nursing student.

If penalty rates were abolished I would need to consider if I could afford to continue to study to qualify as a registered nurse. I work evenings and weekends because my hourly rate increases significantly so I have enough time to study and complete assignments; and save to support myself throughout clinical placements which are full-time unpaid blocks throughout the year.

I also strongly support penalty rates for people in other sectors - the issues are the same for them - especially students, and frankly, because I can't access services at 'normal' times, I need workers in all sectors willing to work when I'm not.

My weekends are important to me because, although I work most weekends, my family is home and I can see them after my shifts. I frequently have to decline events or gatherings in the evenings because I am either working or will be working early the next morning. Shift work has impacted not only on my social life but also my health - I am constantly fatigued and have been told my thyroid condition is related to disrupted sleeping patterns.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. The requirement for workers to work antisocial hours in aged care and health care in general will never go away and healthcare workers understand this, however, given the stresses the industry itself causes and the disconnection these hours caused, it's only reasonable that employers recognise this sacrifice in the form of penalty rates.

Submitted by

Miriam Walter

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