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Committee Secretary

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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 manager, currently earning around $54 per hour.

I have a mortgage. My nephew is in casual employment in WA while he studies and a loss of penalty rates makes it harder for him to afford books and living expenses. His availability to work is based around his Uni work and if often early in the morning (5AM) and late at night and on weekends.

I am a nurse and ours is a 24/7 profession I know of staff who work night duty and their ability to participate in professional development and family activities is compromised they should be compensated financially for this disruption. If penalty rates were abolished it would be very difficult to staff Hospitals and Nursing Homes on afternoons, nighs and weekends. At times I have to work evenings and some weekend days

outside my Monday to Friday role and the small amount of penalty rates provide some small compensation for this work and disruption it causes me socially and physically. There is documented research on the effect working nights in has on our cicadian rhythms, being awake when you body tells you that you should be asleep and the increase in OH&S risks of accidents and injury during these hours. It has to be made financially worth while to get up when others are going to sleep to leave work when most people are just starting work, deal with getting children off to school and the poorer quality of sleep during the day compared with at night. There are also strange tricks your mind can play telling you that you don't need to sleep, things get out of proportion because your day is upside down.

My weekends are important to me because they are my time off for me to spend with friends and family. I sing with a choir that has rehearsals and performances on weekends. Since expanded retail trading the weekend as down time has been eroded and the ethos of family time and relaxation is being lost, there is constant pressure to work, shop and be busy. My weekends are for time out to rejuvinate my self.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. There are many jobs that work shift work, but those of us in the health professions look after you at your most vulnerable times. To look after you and your family and friends there needs to be professionally qualified and appropiately paid staff.

Submitted by
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