



# Students' Representative Council The University of Sydney

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Committee Secretary  
Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committees  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
Australia

20<sup>th</sup> September, 2012

Dear Secretary,

The Students' Representative Council of the University of Sydney (SRC) is the representative student organisation for undergraduate students at the University of Sydney. That is, approximately 32,000 people. We appreciate the opportunity to provide a submission into this enquiry, as we believe that the issue of workplace rights, including penalty rates, impacts directly and indirectly on our students. Senator Xenophon believes that cutting penalty rates will enable students to get jobs. However, the SRC believes that this will lead to the exploitation of students' labour.

Senator Xenophon's bill states that the weekend is "largely outdated". Fair wages and rest times will never be outdated. Workers are more than just a tool for a business. They are consumers, members of families, friends, members of the community, and in the case of our members, they are students. While students often have irregular study hours their interactions with family, friends and other community agencies are still governed by a primarily Monday to Friday working week. This includes family celebrations, connecting with friendship networks, playing sports, and participating in community events.

The areas of work that will be affected by the Bill include retail, restaurant and catering sectors. Students regularly work in these sectors and are sectors of work, which already endure low hourly rates of pay, difficult hours, and physically challenging work. Further reducing the amount a worker is remunerated relegates these tasks to the workers that are the most vulnerable and have the least choice of workplace.

By reducing hourly rates, students will be forced to work more hours. This will be detrimental to their work / study / life balance. To maintain good mental health, good physical health and passing grades, students need to be able to take time off for their personal studies and for a personal life.

While the reduction of penalty rates may be seen as relatively small amounts of money compared to an average weekly wage, for a low-income earner, like a student, a reduction in wages of \$79<sup>1</sup> per shift presents significant financial stress.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on a six hour shift for a level 1 worker under the General Retail Industry Award



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Further than just impacting on the individual, this Bill will impact the broader community. The value of taking timeout to improve the quality of relationships will be undermined by the driving force of maximising business profits; the gap between low and high-income earners will widen.

Accordingly, the SRC does not support the Fair Work Amendment (Small Business – Penalty Rates Exemption) Bill 2012.

Yours sincerely,

Phoebe Drake  
President