

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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Australia

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

Dear Senators

I would like to have my say, with a few of my thoughts from being on the side that always seems to get hit all the time by business and govts whenever someone tries workplace reforms.

Why does the Aussie worker always have to bear the brunt of all the changes on any work related issue. You guys in government are the problem on all sides of the house. If you want to help small businesses then how about tax relief on all sides both to small business employers who you say are suffering, and their workers. Why do Aussie workers have to be hit all the time with so much tax. I'm lucky that I am working in the resources industry and can keep ahead, but Im continually astounded like my workmates about the amount of tax I pay. I have to spend 3/4 of a year away from my

family to stay "ahead of the wolves". I don't know how the hell workers in jobs you are describing can even stay in line with bills and debt let alone try to get ahead.

In the second reading of Mr Xenophon's submission to parliament, his explanations as to why he wishes to introduce this bill sites that times have changed and now we have a 7 day working week. Well to my mind this has come about because small businesses wanted to extend trading hours to make more money and now that costs keep going up workers try to keep up too by taking as many hours as they can, but taking penalty rates away will mean more workers will have no choice but to grab as many shifts as they can with no time for family and home which in turn will create disharmony at home and lead to more family breakdowns due to stress about money. I know because I have been down this road after living overseas for 12 years in different developed countries. It happened to my first marriage living in countries that had no minimum wage and are dictated by market wages with no penalty rates or protection on wages. Have you worked in the USA trying to live on tips? Or the UK or South Africa where your standard of living is being dictated to by market values with no protection for wage structures or minimum wages and Overtime rates. I used to brag in whatever country I worked in about how in Australia you could dig trenches and still own a home. Since my return to Oz in 1999 I have seen you guys try to hit the worker all the time and devalue our worth. Labour got in because of workchoices and I certainly don't want this country turning into another US.

I understand the concerns for small businesses and the description by Mr Xenophon of recently seeing, in his own street where his offices are, a downturn on weekend trading, but that is by his own terms "recently". Could it be that this is also an effect of the GFC. Could it also be because of other running costs for small business are also escalating, not just labour costs. Look at other issues that you as a government could explore ie fuel costs and transport costs which turn into mark up on

food, equipment costs, building rental, electricity, water, local rates and taxes, and it goes on. Give bigger relief to small businesses across all their costs, but the Aussie worker and labour costs always are the first to be singled out.

In the second reading of Mr Xenophon's explanations as to why he wishes to introduce this bill, he sites a report by Restaurant and Catering Australia and their findings as the basis to his reasons to introduce this Bill. I always find it hard to accept any inside industry findings as credible as they tend to manipulate statistics for their own self interest, which shows bias and would rather see findings from independantly chosen and funded reports that have nothing to gain. As for Mr Strongs suggestions and explanations, he too would be more interested in increasing his profit margins than worry about worker's situations. Call it what you will but the Council of Small Business Australia is a union that has sold itself to the public of being concerned for workers when its all about maximizing profits, not defending workers rights.

As for Mr Xenophon's comments about discussions with casual and part time employees all those I know in the hospitality industry rely on penalty rates to be able to get a decent wage, and all work on weekends or late shifts because of study or family commitments and couldn't survive without them.

Why should a sparky like me be so concerned about what happens in another industry? Because thats how it starts. Business groups will have a reason to attack working conditions and wages in all industries. Business groups cry poor and all of a sudden the working conditions get attacked and the ones that suffer are the workers. Business cant survive without workers. If you guys didn't learn from the workchoice campaigns and haven't learnt your lessons, beware all your positions in the senate because attacking basic wages that set Australia above any other country is asking for trouble.

I would hate anyone to be in a situation of their family falling apart because of working all the time to keep ahead with no time spent together (thats what happened to my first marriage in South Africa). Overtime rates allow us to be able to achieve that. Thanks to overtime rates my second wife and I have been able to get ahead and pay off our mortgage and have a secure home for our daughter, who now has a happy father and mother, and secure future.

Make the right choice for the Aussie worker. Remember there are more of us than business leaders.

Regards

Dave Wadling

Submitted by

David Wadling

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