

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

I am a permanent employee, working as a registered nurse, currently earning around \$38 per hour.

I am a single mother and have worked in nursing since my daughter turned 4, she is now 19 and about to leave home. In the early days in order to care for my daughter and support us without any assistance from her father I chose to work Sundays in order to maximise my income and minimise the hours I was away from her. It was very difficult finding childcare outside of normal hours and she had a bumpy ride until a good friend offered to have her on Sundays. I now work weekends whenever I can because I have other work as a credentialled mental health nurse during the week, this is casual work. I continue the hospital work I do because it provides me with certainty as a permanent part time worker. I would prefer to work 9-5 Monday to Friday but have not been successful in finding work I can guarantee an income with and I have a

\$250,000 mortgage to maintain. As a woman on her own I have had to earn enough money to pay for the kinds of things husbands commonly do like mow the lawn, fix the car, pay the mortgage on my own, as well as look after my daughter - I'm the everything person. Therefore I have sacrificed weekend social occasions to maximise my income with penalty rates.

If penalty rates were abolished... The government would find it had to coerce nurses to work weekends by making them sign contracts insisting on it. I only work weekends for the money and I'm not on my own. If there was no benefit to working weekends I wouldn't do it, I would become a casual employee and only take week day work. I have been trying for years to stop working shiftwork and weekends but I have to be able to meet my costs and be able to guarantee an income. Since I work most weekends my income would drop by thousands very quickly. The gross amount I earn by working both Saturday and Sunday is \$1001.94, minus the penalty rates of \$387.37 it would be \$614.57. I estimate I work approx 65% of available weekends per year which would add up to \$13,093.10 less per year without penalties. It's hard enough doing nursing without losing penalties. The basic rate for 8th year and thereafter nurses isn't anywhere near a recognition of the level of responsibility they have. This weekend coming I am rostered on to work and have just learned of a workshop I would like to attend. I live for the day I do not have to work shiftwork or weekends and have every weekend off without exception. If the government prevents me from receiving penalty rates that day will come even sooner.

My weekends are important to me because...I missed out on spending every Sunday afternoon with my daughter when she was in primary school and even more of the weekend when she was old enough for me to leave at home. Now, when I have weekends off I can go to Sydney and attend concerts or shows without being incredibly tired at work the next day. I love weekends off because most of my friends work normal

hours and I catch up with them. I've missed many an event because I work weekends, including next weekend when I would rather be at a wonderful workshop presented by an indigenous elder.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. Nurses are subjected to enough 19th century control without taking away financial recognition of the way they put themselves second for the good of others. There are no perks in the job, no paid conferences, no bonuses, only penalty rates to make their income up to something reflective of their responsibility and ability to care for others in times of need. AIN's (assistant's in nursing) working in nursing homes are paid very low wages, these workers who are mostly women, supplement their income with penalty rates. AIN's do not have the financial wherewithal to purchase the kind of media advertising that the mining industry purchased when it perceived a threat to its income through the Mining tax and to take their incomes down to a level below what they now earn would be disrespectful and cruel. Thank you for the opportunity to express myself on this subject.

Submitted by

Jennie Claire

Tuesday 25th of September 2012