Luke Simmonds

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

PO Box 6100

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 casual employee, working as a bar manager, currently earning around 21 per hour.

I live in a studio apartment in by myself. I quit my job in IT to pursue a career in hospitality, with the goal of opening my own bar. I am paying about half of my wages on rent, leaving what's left for food and bills. I'm currently struggling to pay off a significant debt on my electricity bill.

Penalty rates make a world of difference to my weekly payslip, without them, I fear I would not be able to sustain myself. I estimate I would lose between $70-90 per week if penalty rates were eliminated. For me, this is a very significant amount. This is about 10% of my after tax income.

Weekends for me are the only chance I have to see my partner, and my mother, who lives outside of . I often miss out on birthdays and other special occasions with family and friends. Without penalty rates, this would make a decision to pursue a career in hospitality very difficult to justify.

Those of us working in hospitality already have it tough, for most of my colleagues, it's a constant struggle to get enough shifts in a week, and as a result, I know many people who are doing cash in hand work on the side just to get by.

Sydney is known worldwide for its thriving food and beverage scene, and it's the hospitality workers who make this possible. While I understand that many hospitality workers are students or backpackers just trying to make a bit of cash, many of us have a great passion for providing quality services and entertainment to our community. To remove penalty rates would not only be a kick in the teeth for hospitality workers, but also for the larger community, and the culture that we work so hard to maintain. Certainly in my case, a loss of penalty rates would force me to either reconsider my career, or move to a cheaper area to live and work.

While a basic wage with no penalties may be enough to get by on for someone living with their parents, or in more suburban or rural areas, the simple fact is that the majority of restaurants and bars are in urban cultural hotspots, and the employees must live nearby (or spend more of their precious wages on transport which is not available late at night). Making it impossible for hospitality workers to live in cultural hotspots would be disastrous. Those who are able to remain in the area would become more stressed, and as a result their work ethic would decrease, causing a great reduction in quality of service, and loss of business for restaurants and bars.

In my mind, getting rid of penalty rates would benefit nobody. Not employees, not

employers and not the wider community.

Submitted by

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