

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 permanent employee, working as a retail assist, currently earning around \$21 per hour.

After retiring from over 30 years of government service. I obtained a position working in the retail sector for a number of reasons. My primary one was to work with my son who at the time of starting was a school student and not driving I found i was spending more time at his workplace dropping him off and picking him up so I got a job there.

I always imagined retail to be a 9-5 monday to friday job with the odd saturday thrown in. How wrong I was. Since working in retail i have discovered another class of employees who are so vulnerable its ridiculous. It is one of the lowest paid positions I have ever worked in, there is no accounting for any skills or abilities just a scale of grades that mean nothing. The employers have high margins and high markups but yet

refuse to entertain any thought of higher wages. I work at _____ and am horrified that there is no such thing as overtime, they work and have had it implemented in their workplace agreement a system of annualised hours. So during a working year all the hours you work will add up to the equivalent 38 hrs per week. You get paid for 38 per week but at times may only work 32 hrs and so on. There are no after hours shift allowances and penalty rates occur only on Sundays and Public Holidays. The thought of that initially horrified me, coming from a system where working on an afternoon a penalty rate was applied weekends had a penalty rate and there was another benefit for working on a Sunday and that was extra leave. The rosters are a 7 day rosters rarely being flexible and primarily focusing on the needs of the business. Most of the people I work with have mortgages, children at school and debts much like everyone else in society. If penalty rates were abolished this would seriously affect their living standards. While working the weekend is not an ideal way to be family orientated and to have quality time, the compensatory factor is Sunday penalties.

My weekends are important to me but because of the needs of the business I work on a Saturday, I do not like it, it reduces my family time, but it is far greater than working on a Sunday for me. My sport involves Sunday and sometimes Saturday competition, it is a sport that my son is involved with and we compete together at our home club and away. Friends and neighbours work in unrelated industries and they have weekends off it is very difficult to have a normal life when there is an event or gathering on a weekend be it a Saturday or Sunday. In the retail sector weekends would not be such an issue if there were not fixed weekend rosters, ie On my roster I work Tue to Saturday with Sun and Mon as days off. It won't change my co-ordinator won't do a rotating roster always citing the needs of the business. I have no idea why anyone in government would push to have penalty rates removed, unless there was a large push from employers. It seems to me that the push is one of ignorance rather than practicality. Putting a socialist lean on the issue and regardless of the employer, profit

margins are largely quite high in all areas of the retail sector. Reducing penalty rates is a grab for more profit at the expense of the worker.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. Be realistic, aside from the inconvenient work times where penalty rates are a reward for working them, they are also an extra source of income to some of the lowest paid workers in the country.

Submitted by

John Elfes

Wednesday 3rd of October 2012