Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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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 project assistantt, currently earning around 34 per hour.

I am a parent with a 7 year old child. We both work so we need to pay for our child to have after school and before school care. We have to pay rent, bills and of course groceries etc... All these costs add up very quickly. I am also currently completing my practical legal training having obtained my law degree recently. I hope to be able to be admitted to practice early next year. Having to balance work, study and family life is always difficult and the rising costs of living in Melbourne do not make it any easier.

Although I don't work weekends myself, I know many people who do. Most of those I know would prefer not to have to work weekends - the main incentive for doing so is penalty rates. Without the additional penalty rates for weekends, my friends and family

would be losing valuable time with their friends and family without being adequately compensated.

My weekends are important to me because it is the only time that I really get to be a mother in the full sense of the word. As I work all week, I am pretty much only around to drop my son off in the morning and pick him up in the evening. The weekends are the time where I really get to be with him without being tired or thinking about all the things I have to do the next day. The weekend is when my family gets to catch up on the housework to keep us ticking over. The weekend is when we can see our other working friends and spend social time together. The weekend is my time - no one elses; and I get to decide how to spend it.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates. Without penalty rates, we are saying to workers your weekends are not your own - they are not a valuable commodity. We are devaluing families by saying to workers they will not be compensated for forgoing valuable family time. We are saying to workers that your social and family committments do not matter and that you should be expected to forgo those things at our behest and you will not be rewarded adequately for that. Many workers who work on weekends are students, hospitality workers, cleaners - low paid workers who are already vulnerable and left out of many of the protections that are offered to other workers. To remove their penalty rates would only push these sectors of workers into further vulnerability and disadvantage. It amazes me that we are even discussing removing these penalty rates.

Submitted by
Polly Walker
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