

Dear Productivity Commission members,

I am appalled that the Australian retail industry wants to take away its workers' fair and equitable working conditions fought for - long and hard - by Australian unionists including:

1. **Reducing minimum wages.** This would only ever be justified if managers, directors and owners were to also exist on similar pittance;
2. **Getting rid of unfair dismissal protections.** Women and older workers especially need to have this protection to fight against bullying and harassment from overpowering bosses;
3. **Removing penalty rates for workers who work late at night or on the weekends.** It's ridiculous for highly-paid salaried managers and bosses to expect low-paid wage-earners to work long hours and on weekends, relinquishing their leisure hours with family members and friends, for no incentive;
4. **Cutting back the minimum shift length, so that a worker could be called to work for as little as 1 hour.** This is so ridiculous it's laughable! Do the bosses think their workers are mindless robots without family and other obligations! What about workers with long distances to travel?;
5. **Getting rid of the rule that ensures workers have to be "better off overall".** This rule is as a result of mean-spiritedness from employers and this only goes to show that employers in the retail industry are even more mean-spirited than they have been in the past; and
6. **Reducing pay to retail workers, 'replacing' it with incentive or performance-based pay.** This would take Australian workers back centuries. Who will judge 'performance' - and how? Will each worker wear a camera or computerised bracelet or chain that records her/his every movement?

Australia still enjoys a reputation of fair-go internationally. We live in a world that devalues human labour and endeavour and gives more to the Haves by exploiting the Have-Nots. I would like to think that Australian employers enjoy their (earned) privileges because our society is not (yet) experiencing the selfishness and greed of the upper classes in Less-Developed countries. Most of our retailers buy their products from countries whose workers are shamelessly exploited. Very few retailers Buy Australian. Why do they still live here?

In Solidarity,

Diana

*Diana Rickard  
Sustainability Educator*