

Productivity Commission

25 august 2011

Dear Sirs

I am writing in relation to the reports coming out of the retail employers submissions on employment conditions of retail workers. I make the following submission:

1. I am a sixty –one year old woman. For the past six years I have worked two days a week in a city shop.
2. I am employed as a casual worker with no entitlements. I earn \$20.43 with an allowance for working Saturday of \$13.80.
3. I work from 10 am to 6 pm with no break for lunch and have to eat lunch behind the counter. Most of the time I am interrupted to help customers while eating. Because of the needs of the business it is impossible for me to take a half hour break away from the shop.
4. On busy days I am on my feet for the whole eight hours.
5. During the Christmas trading period which for us commences in October until 24th December, every day we unpack goods, price, place on shelves, sell to customers, gift wrap, tidy dust and vacuum the shop.
6. During this period it is common for us to not be able to take a toilet break when necessary, lunch (when eaten) is often not until after 2 pm, and there is no time at all during the day to sit down.
7. Because we serve a niche market customers expect us to have a detailed knowledge of our stock items such as educational toys and their suitability for children of specific ages, collectable bears and dolls. I received no training in any of these items and research these things myself outside work hours.

I receive no additional payment for this as it is not a requirement of my employer. However, I feel it necessary for me to do this so that I can adequately fulfil the requirements of the job because the general public are very demanding and quick to dismiss retail workers as uninformed, unhelpful and untrained.

9. I am aware that employers today believe that Saturday and Sunday is no different to any other day of the week and when I commenced working Saturdays I agreed with them – at least in relation to Saturday. However, after six years of Saturday work I can state that I am excluded from many social activities with friends and family because so many of them take place on Saturday – a quick glance through the Sydney

Morning Herald Saturday Spectrum activity section will verify this.

An example of the impact that this has had on my personal life is that of my relationship with my step-daughter which has been affected by my not being available for outings on Saturday which used to take place weekly before I took this job – my no longer being available to do this has resulted in us growing apart over the six years.

10. With regard to the minimum hours worked per shift, at least in my job I work a full eight hour shift. With travel fares being as expensive as they are in Sydney working short shifts means that a sizeable portion of the days pay can be taken up in fares. The suggestion that workers be called in for one hour shifts will result in many of them working for nothing.

I request that members of the Commission take into account the low rates of pay of retail workers, and the fact that Sydney is a very expensive city, Australia a very expensive country in which to live. Retail workers are entitled to have a comfortable life too.

Yours faithfully

JENNIFER WALDRON