

To whom it may concern,

After receiving an email from my union, I felt I needed to submit to you my opinions regarding this email regarding the following:

*Employers have asked the Productivity Commission to reduce important workers' rights. The employer demands include:*

- 1. To reduce minimum wages;*
- 2. To get rid of unfair dismissal protections;*
- 3. To remove penalty rates for workers who work late at night or on the weekends;*
- 4. To cut back the minimum shift length, so that a worker could be called to work for as little as 1hr;*
- 5. To get rid of the rule that ensures workers have to be "better off overall"; and*
- 6. To reduce pay to retail workers, 'replacing' it with incentive or performance-based pay.*

I am currently employed by a company as a grocery nightfiller. Prior to this role, I always worked in admin positions. I changed my line of work because I had a child. My husband and I are both working to pay our mortgage and to raise our daughter the best that we can.

Yes, it is my choice to work in the role that I do. I chose to do this because the cost of childcare far outweighed the benefits of me returning to an admin position part-time. I can sympathise with employers of smaller companies feeling the pressure to make cuts to their business, but cannot understand why these points are even on the table being considered. Surely there must be other ways to cut costs in order to make their business more financially viable.

There are so many jobs out there where people get paid extraordinary amounts of money for really not very much at all and then there are people like me who are trying to make a good life for my family. Yes, again – it is my choice to do the work I do. I work nights. I work any time between 5pm and 1.30am and I also work weekends. I believe that I deserve to have the wage I earn and even more. The work is physically exhausting – even for the fittest of us. Our joints get worn out, our muscles ache but we go in there and get the job done for the pittance they pay us. Most of us are mothers and fathers.

To reduce the minimum wage requirement is something I find so stupid. People who work in low paying jobs choose to do this not necessarily because that is all they can do, but because it fits into the lifestyle/family situation they are in. Do these people realise that most people who work in low paying jobs are school kids, university people, and parents? Would they be able to put themselves in the same position as these people and try to make a life on the kind of incomes we make? People who work on minimum wage are usually doing laborious and menial work but do it because they are earning a wage that gets them through the week. I would personally love to see the head of the company I work for come in to our store and work shoulder to shoulder with my colleagues and I whilst we split the 10-45 pallets of stock we receive every night then

walk the 5 kilometres or more a night that we do to get the stock out there, then rip or cut open the boxes or plastic wrapped stock that we then have to manually put on the shelves perfectly for the customers the next day. They would not survive a week. Yet we go in there shift after shift for \$18-\$19 hour we earn. I would LOVE to see them sacrifice their evening with the families during the week and on the weekend. Personally, I know we are all worth the wage we earn and then some.

As for unfair dismissal laws...these were only originally brought in because there were too many employers getting rid of employees for ridiculous reasons. How can that protection be taken away from us. I know there are a lot of people who abuse this privilege and skate on the edge of being dismissed. I know that there are do-gooders out there who push the legal boundaries out so far that it seems impossible to get rid of a *bad* employee. I understand all of this, but it is up to the industrial relations commission to make those decisions. They need to stop people from finding ways around the rules or make the rules more black and white.

Taking away our penalty rates is ridiculous. A lot of us do the work on the weekends because it is that little bit extra in the pay packet. Why else would you bother. Our job is not a 5 day a week, 9-5 job. We work at night so the customers have their stock on the shelf. The store is open from 6am to 11pm most days – 10 pm on Sunday. I cannot imagine why they do not believe that we are not worth paying the extra because we work late into the night or that we give up our weekends to make sure the business survives. There are people higher up the ladder who get bonuses if they achieve their targets – but they are based on us at the bottom getting the job done. Do they think we do not realise that our hard work is the reason the all these people going up the chain of command get these huge bonuses that we don't even get a thank you for? How about cutting the bonuses – they would surely kick and scream and say how unfair it is.

As for getting rid of the minimum time to work – how can they even think that is fair. Ok, I may not have to travel too far to work – 20 minutes, but to drive 20 minutes to do 1 hours work instead of my minimum 4 hours would not be worth me starting my car. How silly can people be? Some people travel even further than I do and to be asked to come in for an hour would be like asking them to come in to pay for your transport cost whilst helping our business make more money. Not very smart. People do not necessarily work in the area they live in. There is not always work close to home and having to travel maybe even 2 hours for a 1 hour shift would make the job not even worth going to. May as well get people on the benefits – I think they would choose to be on the benefits rather than come into work for an hour.

I can understand the logic of *performance based incentives/pay*, it makes sense right? Well, not really. In the supermarket, the aisles are different. There are different types of stock, heavy, light, small, big, bulky, not bulky. There are different people working every night. It is not the same team. How can you set a rate of cartons, or stock to fill and then get paid for it? It may make some of the slower people pick up their game, but ultimately, it will burn a lot of workers out a lot faster. I believe there will be more people claiming workers comp because they throw OH&S out the window because they need the money.

The abovementioned points are - I assume, have been raised by people with smaller businesses where cutting employee benefits may be the only way to make their businesses more viable financially, but bigger companies such as the one I work for will reap the benefits of these changes should they be implemented. They will make their profit margins so much bigger than they already are and the people at the top will get paid even more than they are worth. Being at the bottom of the ladder is not an easy choice to make or job to do. We are always the first ones to be penalised and the last ones to be recognised.

Please think very hard when you consider whether or not these points should be changed. I am not a hard line union member, I am just a mum who decided to go back to work, but realised that to go back to my original career would mean I would be financially worse off. I would have missed out on my little girl growing up, the achievements she has made and watched her be raised by strangers in a child care centre. It would have cost my husband and I a fortune to place her and inevitably I would have been earning my money and paying it straight to them. I know I am not the only mum who has changed careers to suit her family. Once upon a time, I would not need to work and I would have been the carer of my family. Today I have to be a mother, a carer and all it involves, as well as earn a dollar the best way I can. The best way I believe I can earn money is to take a job where I bust my gut to get the job done, at night time when my family are asleep, for a small amount of money which is way better than the other option. I feel I contribute to my family not only emotionally but financially and that I don't need to get on a benefit to help make ends meet. I also believe that I contribute to society too. I do not claim any kind of benefit throughout the year. I pay my taxes every week and if I am entitled to other government benefits - that is a bonus. I do choose to put my daughter into childcare a couple of days a week, but in saying that I do it because I can CHOOSE to - not because I HAVE to.

This letter is a vote against the proposed changes to the legislation. Think very hard before you decide to ruin a lot of peoples live.

Yours sincerely

Pauline Boltjes