

Dear Commissioners,

As an underemployed retail worker on an award wage, I was particularly interested to read the section in your draft report regarding reducing the penalty rates paid to people in hospitality and retail on Sunday. You have argued that Sundays should be treated similarly to Saturdays because fewer people in today's society are religiously observant and that there is a greater expectation today than there once was for people to be able to shop and enjoy the services of the hospitality industry on Sundays. I could, however, find no explanation given for why the Sunday rates of hospitality and retail workers should be cut while Sunday penalty rates in other industries should remain as they are. I suspect that the unstated reason is that retail and hospitality workers tend to have a low level of power in the workplace and the economy in general. We are highly casualised and easily replaceable and therefore "easy pickings". I do not believe that the family and social time of a worker in one industry is any more or less valuable than that of someone in another industry. Shopping and enjoying restaurants on Sunday may be desirable but it is not necessary. Why not have an across the board Sunday surcharge so that people who want the convenience of Sunday trading pay extra? Or perhaps government could offer a tax concession for businesses that open on Sundays. Retail and hospitality workers already often receive a low hourly rate compared to other jobs. I can see no fair and just reason why they should they be singled out to bear the cost of meeting the community's shifting demands while others are left alone. As your report notes, some people rely on penalty rates to cover their basic expenses. If rates are reduced, these people will need more hours or a better job and they are often people who find either option difficult to come by. Your report states that there are already services in place to support people in such a situation. How will you guarantee all workers whose pay is cut access to assistance? I assume that the support you are referring to is the existing employment support services. In my experience, they are much better at ensuring that people meet government requirements than they are at actually helping people find jobs. What changes will be made to put more emphasis on finding people suitable employment?

I do not believe that the cost of meeting community expectations should be borne by workers on relatively low incomes, which is what your report appears to propose.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Scott