

Anger still simmers on slashed penalty rates

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HUNDREDS of workers took to the roads yesterday to stand up for what is fair.

Families, young children, union members and even their dogs marched in protest of fair work cuts including penalty rates.

Australian Workers Union (AWU) member Greg Shields said the loss of penalty rates would create a dim future.

“We don’t want to lose penalty rates,” Mr Shields said. “Once it starts it keeps going.”

Mr Shields said the cuts to penalty rates did not just impact hospitality workers, but spread across all industries including tourism at Heron Island.

“Lots of people don’t realise it’s a lot of other things too, not just cafes and small shops,” he said.

“Once we lose penalty rates, there’s not much left is there?”

AWU member Dave “Rhino” Reindl said penalty rate cuts could be fair for flat rate workers who worked Monday to Friday.

“We work shift weekends, public holidays and get shift rates it’s a big chunk of your income gone,” he said.

“They don’t improve the community where they’re working and they treat us like slave labour.”

Electrical Trade Union (ETU) member Robert Chard said the May Day march was important to give all the workers a voice.

“Everything from holidays, four weeks annual leave, sick leave ... all the things people take for granted,” Mr Chard said.

“Nothing was ever given to any worker just because a boss was generous.”

Because of the idea that Australians live in a constantly open community, Mr Chard said that fuelled the decision to cut penalty rates. “Now they’re taking



GOOD ROLL UP: Gladstone turns out for the annual Labour Day march.

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— Greg Shields

penalty rates away people are losing the distinction, everything thinks we’re a 24/7 community,” he said. “There needs to be some family time there. “Just leave (penalty rates) alone, just leave them alone it’s as simple as that.” Queensland Senator

Murray Watt, Gladstone MP Glenn Butcher, Gladstone Region Mayor Matt Burnett and councillor Kahn Goodluck all attended the march.

The march started at Gladstone Council Chambers car park and finished at the Gladstone marina with live entertainment and a barbecue.

AWU member Zac Beers was happy with the turnout yesterday.

“It has been good given we’ve had a lot of workers leave town and numbers are still staying up,” he said.

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CALL OUT: Maritime Union of Australia organiser Paul Petersen rallies the marchers.