

RESTAURANT PENALTY RATES

EMPLOYMENT TYPE	MON-FRI	SAT	SUN	PUBLIC HOLS
Full-time and part-time	100%	125%	150%	250%
Casual (inclusive of 25% casual loading)	125%	150%	175%	250%

Source: Fair Work Australia



John Corias, financial controller of the Phoenix restaurant chain.
Picture: Carmela Roche

RESTAURANTS JUGGLE HOURS WITH WAGES BILL ON THE MENU

PENALTY rates are a curse for employers forced to open over public holidays.

The Phoenix group of restaurants, now in Castle Hill, the CBD, Parramatta, Rhodes and Manly, is a rapidly growing business. And that's where penalty rates come into the equation.

"We have different strategies for different restaurants on different days," says the group's financial controller John Corias. "On Anzac Day we might open our Sky (city) restaurant all day, but only open some of the other restaurants in the afternoon."

Because of the double time penalty

rates on public holidays, the group did not open at all on Good Friday except in Manly. Yesterday, on Easter Monday, doors opened for yum cha at lunchtime and closed for the evening.

Permanent staff who would normally be rostered on to work on the days the restaurant was closed were paid a normal annual leave rate.

"We open for half of the day, and give the staff the rest of the day off, which they wouldn't normally have. In other words, though they are paid double time, their hours are halved. To do more would jeopardise the day's takings."

The balance to this is the customers' expectations. Like all hospitality businesses, looking after the service side of the business has to be weighed up as well.

But even half a day of closure gives the business a chance to catch up.

"We call in the sub-contractors to do carpet cleaning and maintenance on those public holidays when we close. So we try not to lose time.

"Mind you, it would definitely be much better for the business if there were no penalty rates at all," Mr Corias said.