

SUBMISSION: SENATE INQUIRY INTO THE GREEN LOANS ASSESSMENT SCHEME

CONTACT DETAILS:

Roland Chorazy

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BACKGROUND: I have had 20 years experience writing Tariff Board/Industries Commission reports and 15 years running small businesses prior to retirement in 2000. I am also a qualified builder (building certificate) and have built several houses for family members. I am currently working as an accredited assessor contracted to Fieldforce. I was attracted to this job by the opportunity to help other Australians improve the comfort and efficiency of their homes.

SUBMISSION OBJECTIVE: Press reports indicate that the committee has had many complaints from individual assessors of 'unfair' competition from Fieldforce which has been very effective in this market. I seek to give some balance to the committee's evidence by presenting the experience of a Fieldforce assessor.

WHY FIELDFORCE:

1. **MARKETING:** I could have become an independent assessor. However it seemed apparent to me that independents would have a difficult time finding clients. Fieldforce has the great advantage of a professional marketing team and a large database freeing me from cold calling and selling. It is no surprise to me that many independents are having difficulty.

2. **TRAINING:** Fieldforce provides its contractors with a week long intensive training program. Training is ongoing through regular training/administration sessions. We all benefit from the interaction with other assessors with varying backgrounds and underlying skills. It would be difficult for me, if I were independent, to attain the same level of competence.

INCOME CONSIDERATIONS: When I started training in January 2010, the Assessment scheme provided the opportunity for 5 assessments per day per assessor and Fieldforce contractors were achieving these levels. A 3 day part-time week could have achieved a reasonable income of \$40,000 to \$50,000. Now that the scheme has been limited to 5 assessments per week per assessor, the potential income of Fieldforce assessors has fallen to a maximum of \$500 per week. In practise, the income is considerably less due to cancellations and public holidays.

In its deliberations the Committee needs to bear in mind that Fieldforce contractors receive only \$100 per assessment and are, therefore, unfairly discriminated by the application of an artificial quota. 5 assessments a week at \$200 might be a reasonable income for a semi-retired person like myself, but at \$100 it is not. In practice, cancellations and public holidays etc... reduce the actual achieved average to less than 4 assessments per week.

NEW ARRANGEMENTS: It is difficult to find a rationale for these new quota arrangements. The committee has heard many complaints about Fieldforce's claimed unfair arrangements. However, Fieldforce's success primarily rests on the strength of its data base and professional marketing team and its training programmes. Restricting or removing Fieldforce is most unlikely to result in any additional work for independent assessors. Indeed, the main result of independent assessor's claims

and public furore is probably to make it much harder for independents to secure clients – a classic example of self defeating behaviour.

It is obvious that the administering Department has found itself unprepared for the volume of work. It probably also lacks the practical administrative experience required to successfully implement such a program. It would probably benefit from the secondment of a few experienced staff from Finance or one of the administrative departments; the skills of policy and research type staff rarely translate well to practical policy implementation. The Departments practical workload problems are amply demonstrated by the fact that its turnaround in issuing assessment reports exceeds two months (while Fieldforce arranges, undertakes and lodges assessments within two weeks). It seems likely to me that the Department's action in capping individual assessors weekly assessment load to 5 is primarily concerned with easing its own workload without proper consideration or understanding of the consequences for the broad spectrum of assessors it has induced into the scheme.

SUGGESTIONS: I am not sufficiently informed to usefully comment on many of the issues in the terms of reference and will restrict my observations to areas of direct impact on me.

Press reports suggest that there is intent to limit the scheme to about 5000 assessors. Current indications are that this is to be achieved by strangling assessors of work until sufficient leave in search of more gainful employment. The immorality of making individuals suffer for the shortcomings of government should be obvious. Such an approach also raises the possibility of acrimony and law suits by disgruntled individual assessors. Fieldforce has invested heavily in training its assessors and setting up its administrative and marketing teams. As a result of the arbitrary introduction of the 'cap' and falling assessor incomes, it will inevitably struggle to retain its trained staff with potential consequences for the viability of its program.

Further, I believe that the design of the Assessment Form itself could be improved markedly. In practice, the assessment procedure is largely controlled by the format of the program. The program seems to me to have been designed to gather information for the convenience of the Department rather than for helping assessors carry out the other function of educating participants in energy saving techniques. I am also frustrated by the lack of support documentation which would summarise the schemes objectives and the main methods of energy and water conservation in the home.

- 1) A better and fairer approach to reducing the workforce would be to offer a voluntary redundancy program aimed at reimbursing struggling assessors for their out of pocket expenses.
- 2) Immediately abandon or significantly increase the cap on assessments for all assessors. As a temporary measure the cap should be at least doubled.
- 3) Review the design of the Assessment Form so that it facilitates the process of informing clients of the main energy.

DISCLAIMER: I wish to stress that these comments are my own personal observations and are made without reference to Fieldforce.

FINAL COMMENT: I also wish it to be known that I have found Fieldforce to be very supportive and committed to a high level of integrity in the performance of this work.