

# SUBMISSION 50

23 September 2008

  
**Private Lender**  
abn 19 102 355 420

Mr Craig Thomson MP  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Economics  
PO Box 6021  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
AUSTRALIA



Dear Mr Thomson

## **Inquiry into competition in the banking and non-banking sectors**

Mortgage brokers play a critical role in maintaining a competitive mortgage market because they subject every loan they originate with either a bank or non-bank lender to independent price scrutiny and comparison with competing products. This process continuously puts pressure on lenders to offer homebuyers competitive rates and loan features on new lending. It is therefore critical that the Federal Government's proposals to regulate the mortgage broking industry and consumer credit enhance and not undermine competition between broker services and both bank and non-bank lenders offering their own branded products direct to borrowers.

Borrowers from either bank or non-bank lenders will benefit from an efficient, competitively neutral mortgage broking regulation regime which provides them with appropriate consumer protection without adding unnecessary costs to brokers and, ultimately, to borrowers.

Loans originated directly by either a bank branch or a non-bank mortgage provider are not subjected to a process of independent comparison. In those circumstances the loans officer should be required to inform the loan applicant that they act for the lender and not the borrower, and are not able to provide independent advice about whether the loan is appropriate for the borrower relative to other available competing products.

Broking regulation is likely to require brokers to disclose the fees and commissions they receive for broking a loan. To maintain a fair and competitive market, bank and non-bank staff arranging loans direct with a borrower should be required to disclose any incentive based remuneration they will receive from selling a mortgage or other financial products related to the mortgage

**The first defect** is that brokers would be required to independently determine a borrower's capacity to make repayments. That function is properly the role of the lender.

The US sub-prime crisis demonstrated the folly of lenders not being responsible for credit checks. Requiring brokers to duplicate credit checks would result in significant additional costs to homebuyers.

This has an anti-competitive dimension as it would, by definition, prohibit brokers arranging low doc loans. Under the draft legislation banks are exempt from this requirement, effectively granting them an exclusive right to offer this type of loan product.

People who need low doc loans, like small business operators and families relying on part-time and casual employment, would be **denied the services of a broker** to choose a suitable loan amongst competing products. Instead, borrowers will only be able to deal with a bank selling their own products and not act for the borrower as a broker does.

**The second defect** is the provision to give borrowers the right to seek a stay of enforcement of their mortgage against the lender if the borrower has a dispute with their broker.

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This interference with lenders' security will:

- increase the risk premium required by lenders resulting in higher interest rates;
- increase the premiums on Lenders Mortgage Insurance paid by first home buyers; and
- increase Professional Indemnity Insurance premiums paid by brokers thereby increasing the cost of broking services.

**The third defect** is the substantial increase in documentation that must be produced by a broker.

This would provide little of value to homebuyers but significantly add to their costs. It is important not to repeat the mistakes with Financial Services Regulation that added so much to costs that many people were priced out of the market for advice from financial planners.

Like most people who work in the mortgage broking industry, I believe that regulation is desirable to ensure high standards of service to borrowers and provide a mechanism to remove from the industry any operator who is incompetent or dishonest.

An effective and efficient regulatory regime should require brokers to:

- be registered;
- have appropriate qualifications and experience, such as a Certificate IV in Financial Services (Finance/Mortgage Broking) or equivalent;
- enter a written contract to act on behalf of the borrower, specifying the type of loan sought and setting out the broker's remuneration;
- hold adequate professional indemnity insurance; and

be a member of an external dispute resolution scheme to give borrowers access to an inexpensive and efficient mechanism for resolving complaints.

Mortgage lending is a highly competitive industry with many brokers operating across State boundaries. Even small regulatory differences between States interfere with the efficient delivery of mortgage finance and increase costs to borrowers. For this reason any regulation of mortgage broking should be a Federal Government responsibility.

Brokers play a critical role in a competitive mortgage market subjecting every one of the loans originated through them with either a bank or non-bank lender to independent price scrutiny and comparison with competing products.

Loans originated by a bank branch are not subjected to this process of independent comparison.

Bank staff should be required to inform loan applicants that they are acting for the lender and not the borrower, and that they are not able to provide independent advice about whether a bank loan is the most appropriate for the borrower relative to other available competing products.

In the same way that brokers will be required to disclose the fees and commissions they receive, bank staff should be required to disclose to loan applicants any incentive based remuneration.

Borrowers from either banks or non-bank lenders will benefit from an efficient, competitively neutral mortgage broking regulation regime which provides them with appropriate consumer protection without adding unnecessary costs to brokers and, ultimately, to borrowers.

These are important issues for the homebuyers our business assists by arranging finance.

I would appreciate your response so that I can assure clients that you do not support inclusion of the defective State proposals in the federal regime for mortgage broking regulation.

I would also ask you to inform me of the response you receive to any representations you make to the Government on these matters.

Yours faithfully



H Marc Gardiner