

Submission

to

Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education
References Committee

Building and Construction Industry Inquiry

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Senate Inquiry into Building and Construction Industry Improvement Bill 2003



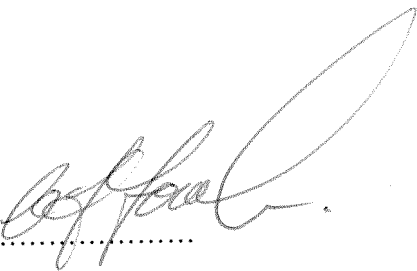
SUBMISSIONS OF GREG FOLWER

I am a registered plumber, having done my apprenticeship between 1977-1980. I am the Director of Contrax Plumbing Pty Ltd, incorporated in 1984. The Company has about 50 to sixty employees in Victoria. We also work in New South Wales, Queensland, regional New South Wales and regional Victoria. All up we have about one hundred and fifty employees.

I have not read the Bill although I am aware of some of the provisions in them. I wish to make observations about the Construction Industry. I like to say that I have no problems with pattern agreements, as knowing the terms and conditions of employment of my competitors is one less factor I have to consider when tendering a job. Also, because I work on sites which have a number of contractors, I think it's important that everyone has uniform conditions, say, for example, health and safety measures and dispute resolution provisions and inclement weather provisions. To have contractors having different terms would only create problems on site, because a problem which creates an issue in one agreement may not create an issue in another agreement. This would issue only lead to confusion on site. Also, I have never had a problem when Union officials coming on site, I have never found Union officials to interfere unduly with work practices.

My relations with the Union are good. I find them easy to talk to and we can discuss any problems that may arise. I have never experienced coercion or intimidation when signing agreements or how we do work practices. The Union has never used protected action against the Company when negotiating an agreement.

I do have a few of beefs though. One is first and second year apprentices. They get paid too much – the cost of training them, schooling them, and their wages, means that the Company losses money on them. Another problem I have is with theft of tools on site. Tools are often stolen, this, again, costs the Company. Maybe the Union could be more pro-active on these two issues. The third problem I have is with insurers. In the last few years the costs of insurers, for example public liability, has gone through the roof. This cost I think is way too high. Furthermore, I do not think we need another regulatory body. To have another, in addition to the Australian Industrial Relations Commission, for example the Australian Board Construction Commissioner, seems ridiculous.

Signature: 

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Date: 25/2/04.