

From: Justin Cofield
To: [OnDemand Inquiry \(DEDJTR\)](#)
Cc: [\[redacted text\]](#)
Subject: Inquiry into the Victorian On Demand Work Force - Submission from Lonely Pets Club Pty Ltd.
Date: Wednesday, 23 January 2019 10:37:07 AM

23 January 2019

Inquiry into the Victorian On Demand Work Force - Submission from Lonely Pets Club Pty Ltd.

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ATT: Natalie James

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Hi Natalie,

I am excited and hopeful that your inquiry will result in positive Industrial Relations reform, across the many industries that have a Gig Economy / On Demand work force operating within them.

Our business, Lonely Pets Club – ACN 105 116 121, is one of many businesses who have been adversely affected by the advent of the emerging Gig Economy / On Demand Work force business models.

Over the last 4 years, I have written into the Fair Commission dozens of times outlining how the Gig Economy is creating such an uneven business playing field, that sees legitimate and lawful business models suffer commercially. Many to the point of closing down.

In addition, we have engaged our Lawyers to submit their findings - in person - to the Fair Work Commission. They felt that the majority of Gig Economy businesses are working in a newly found 'grey area' in industrial relations work place laws and that new laws need to be implemented if a level playing field for all businesses were to exist.

We definitely welcome this inquiry; as all businesses with any industry, should be able to enjoy the same business trading conditions. This is definitely not currently the case within many industry sectors.

Lonely Pets Club operates within the Pet Care service industry. We manage a workforce of people who go into people's homes to walk their dogs and feed their pets.

In 2015 The Fair Work Ombudsman looked into how we engage our workforce, and they decreed that our work force needed to be viewed as 'employees' and not 'sub contractors'. As I write this, 4 years on, 99% of the pet care industry still operate under a sub-contracting business model, thus 99% of our competitors are

operating outside current IR laws. I have anonymously reported many of these business' via the FWO website dozens of time, trying to see if they can conduct a blitz on our growing industry. Still non-compliance is commonplace.

Within our industry, these businesses have started up peer to peer / Gig Economy / On Demand websites. And there will be more.

- www.madpaws.com.au
- www.pawshake.com.au
- www.petcloud.com.au
- www.petsonme.com.au
- www.petstays.net.au
- www.pethomestay.com.au

All of which hide behind their mantra of ' being just a website' and they take a no care and no responsibility approach. This is evident both in quality control within their businesses and also in regards to complying with current Industrial Relations work place laws.

By putting a page of disclaimers on their websites, it appears that they have no obligation whatsoever to pay their workforce minimum wage levels including penalty rates for weekend and Public Holidays, Superannuation and a Travel Allowance of .78 cents per KM - which the Fair Work Ombudsman confirmed is compulsory and non-negotiable.

As a result, our costs of supplying the same service as these On Demand businesses, are dramatically higher. I estimate we have lost over one million dollars in mostly new business revenue over the last 4 years, as a direct result of the uneven playing field that continues to exist in our industry. Even though we run the largest pet sitting business in Australia, I am not confident we, nor the pet sitting industry as a whole, can survive On Demand business models coming in an undercutting everyone else. It is simply not fair.

To help highlight how unfair this is, we have employees who also earn money from these websites under an On Demand business model. They do the same job, in the same areas, via logging onto a website. However when they do a Lonely Pets Club job they receive minimum wages including penalty rates, superannuation and a travel allowance of .78 cents per KM travelled. When they do an On Demand job, they don't, they just get a set 'per unit' rate.

Having On Demand website based businesses dominate any market sector, is like a race to the bottom. Having them supply a cheaper service as a result of underpaying their workforce benefits no one, least of which the client.

This is not the type of business environment Australian's should be creating.

The Fair Work Ombudsman has confirmed Pet Sitters and Dog Walkers fall under the Miscellaneous Award. Like us, these On Demand / Gig Economy businesses, should be open to conduct business, as long as they are complying with their minimum wage and working condition obligations.

If you need any further information from me, feel free to call me on 0414 750 150.

Please can you reply email back to say that you have received this.

Regards and thanks for overseeing this important inquiry.

Justin

