

## The complaint

Mr and Mrs H's complaint is, in essence, that Shawbrook Bank Limited (the 'Lender') acted unfairly and unreasonably by (1) being party to an unfair credit relationship with them under Section 140A of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 (as amended) (the 'CCA') and (2) deciding against paying a claim under Section 75 of the CCA.

## What happened

Mr and Mrs H were members of a timeshare provider (the 'Supplier') – having purchased several products from it over time. But the product at the centre of this complaint is their membership of a timeshare known as Balkan Jewel Fractional Owner's Club (the 'Fractional Club') – which they bought on 10 July 2015 (the 'Time of Sale'). They entered into an agreement with the Supplier to buy 10,000 fractional points at a cost of £6,900 (the 'Purchase Agreement').

This was a standalone purchase, by which I mean Mr and Mrs H did not trade in an existing timeshare as part of the purchase. They also held 21,000 fractional points from an earlier purchase of Diamond Fractional Owner's Club. This means that the purchase increased their fractional points, which could be used to buy holidays, by about 47%. This meant they had significantly more fractional points to spend on holidays.

Fractional Club membership was asset backed – which meant it gave Mr and Mrs H more than just holiday rights. It also included a share in the net sale proceeds of a property named on the Purchase Agreement (the 'Allocated Property') after their membership term ends.

Mr and Mrs H paid for their Fractional Club membership by taking finance of £6,900 from the Lender (the 'Credit Agreement').

Mr and Mrs H – using a professional representative (the 'PR') – wrote to the Lender on 7 February 2022 (the 'Letter of Complaint') to raise several different concerns. Since then, the PR has raised some further matters it says are relevant to the outcome of this complaint. As both sides are familiar with the concerns raised, it isn't necessary to repeat them in detail here beyond the summary above.

The Lender dealt with Mr and Mrs H's concerns as a complaint and issued its final response letter on 6 July 2022, rejecting it on every ground.

The complaint was then referred to the Financial Ombudsman Service. It was assessed by an Investigator who, having considered the information on file, upheld the complaint on its merits – concluding that the Supplier had breached the Timeshare Regulations<sup>1</sup> by marketing or selling Fractional Club membership to Mr and Mrs H as an investment, which was material to their decision to purchase.

The Lender disagreed with the Investigator's assessment and asked for an Ombudsman's decision – which is why it was passed to me. I issued a provisional decision explaining that I

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<sup>1</sup> The Timeshare, Holiday Products, Resale and Exchange Contracts Regulations 2010

was not planning to uphold the complaint. While the Supplier may have breached the Timeshare Regulations at the time of sale, I did not think this was material to Mr and Mrs H's decision to purchase and as such it did not create an unfair relationship between them and the Lender.

The Lender accepted my provisional decision.

The PR responded to say that it disagreed with my provisional decision and provided some comments it wanted me to consider when making my final decision.

### **The legal and regulatory context**

In considering what is fair and reasonable in all the circumstances of the complaint, I am required under DISP 3.6.4R to take into account: relevant (i) law and regulations; (ii) regulators' rules, guidance and standards; and (iii) codes of practice; and (where appropriate), what I consider to have been good industry practice at the relevant time.

The legal and regulatory context that I think is relevant to this complaint is no different to that shared in several hundred ombudsman decisions on very similar complaints. And with that being the case, it is not necessary to set it out here. However, the following regulatory rules/guidance are also relevant:

The Consumer Credit Sourcebook ('CONC') – Found in the Financial Conduct Authority's (the 'FCA') Handbook of Rules and Guidance

Below are the most relevant provisions and/or guidance as they were at the relevant time:

- CONC 3.7.3 [R]
- CONC 4.5.3 [R]
- CONC 4.5.2 [G]

### The FCA's Principles

The rules on consumer credit sit alongside the wider obligations of firms, such as the Principles for Businesses ('PRIN'). Set out below are those that are most relevant to this complaint:

- Principle 6
- Principle 7
- Principle 8

### **What I've decided – and why**

I've considered all the available evidence and arguments to decide what's fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint.

Following the responses from both parties, I've considered the case afresh. Having done so, I've reached the same decision as set out in my provisional findings – that is I do not uphold this complaint – for broadly the same reasons. A copy of my provisional findings is below.

## **Section 75 of the CCA: the Supplier's misrepresentations at the Time of Sale**

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The CCA introduced a regime of connected lender liability under Section 75 that affords consumers ("debtors") a right of recourse against lenders that provide the finance for the acquisition of goods or services from third-party merchants ("suppliers") if there is an actionable misrepresentation and/or breach of contract by the supplier.

Certain conditions must be met if the protection afforded to consumers is engaged, including, for instance, the cash price of the purchase and the nature of the arrangements between the parties involved in the transaction. The Lender doesn't dispute that the relevant conditions are met. But for reasons I'll come on to below, it isn't necessary to make any formal findings on them here.

It was said in the Letter of Complaint that Fractional Club membership had been misrepresented by the Supplier at the Time of Sale because Mr and Mrs H were:

1. Told by the Supplier that Fractional Club membership had a guaranteed end date when that was not true.
2. Told by the Supplier that they owned a 'fraction' of the Allocated Property when that was not true as it was owned by a trustee.
3. Told by the Supplier that Fractional Club membership was an "investment" when that was not true.

Neither the PR nor Mr and Mrs H have set out in any detail what words and/or phrases were allegedly used by the Supplier to misrepresent Fractional Club for the reason given in points 1 or 2. However, the PR says that such representations were untrue because the Allocated Property was legally owned by a trustee and there was no indication of what duty of care it had to actively market and sell the property. Further, there is no guarantee that any sale will result at all, leaving prospective members to pay their annual management charge for an indefinite and unspecified period.

However, I cannot see why the phrases in points 1 or 2 above would have been untrue at the Time of Sale even if they were said. It seems to me that they reflect the main thrust of the contract Mr and Mrs H entered into. And while, under the relevant Fractional Club Rules, the sale of the Allocated Property could be postponed by unanimous written consent of the Owners, and the Trustee may postpone the sale if it reasonably believes it to be in the best interest of the Owners, that does not render the representation above untrue. So, I am not persuaded that the representation above constituted a false statement of fact even if it was made.

As for point 3, it does not strike me as a misrepresentation even if such a representation had been made by the Supplier (which I make no formal finding on). Telling prospective members that they were investing their money because they were buying a fraction or share of one of the Supplier's properties was not untrue – nor was it untrue to tell prospective members that they would receive some money when the allocated property is sold. After all, purchasing Fractional Club membership clearly included acquiring the rights to a share of the net sale proceeds of a specific property in a specific resort. And while the PR might question the exact legal mechanism used to give prospective members that interest, it did not change the fact that they acquired such an interest.

The PR has raised other matters as potential misrepresentations, but it seems to me that they are not allegations of the Supplier saying something that was untrue. Rather, it is that Mr and Mrs H weren't told things about the way the membership worked. It seems to me that these are allegations that Mr and Mrs H weren't given all the information they needed at the Time of Sale, and I will deal with this further below.

So, while I recognise that Mr and Mrs H - and the PR - have concerns about the way in which Fractional Club membership was sold by the Supplier, when looking at the claim under Section 75 of the CCA, I can only consider whether there was a factual and material misrepresentation by the Supplier. For the reasons I've set out above, I'm not persuaded that there was. And that means that I don't think that the Lender acted unreasonably or unfairly when it dealt with this Section 75 claim.

### **Section 140A of the CCA: did the Lender participate in an unfair credit relationship?**

I've already explained why I'm not persuaded that Fractional Club membership was actionably misrepresented by the Supplier at the Time of Sale. But there are other aspects of the sales process that, being the subject of dissatisfaction, I must explore with Section 140A in mind if I'm to consider this complaint in full – which is what I've done next.

Having considered the entirety of the credit relationship between Mr and Mrs H and the Lender along with all of the circumstances of the complaint, I don't think the credit relationship between them was likely to have been rendered unfair for the purposes of Section 140A. When coming to that conclusion, and in carrying out my analysis, I have looked at:

1. The standard of the Supplier's commercial conduct – which includes its sales and marketing practices at the Time of Sale along with any relevant training material.
2. The provision of information by the Supplier at the Time of Sale, including the contractual documentation and disclaimers made by the Supplier.
3. The commission arrangements between the Lender and the Supplier at the Time of Sale and the disclosure of those arrangements.
4. Evidence provided by both parties on what was likely to have been said and/or done at the Time of Sale.
5. The inherent probabilities of the sale given its circumstances.
6. Any existing unfairness from a related credit agreement.

I have then considered the impact of these on the fairness of the credit relationship between Mr and Mrs H and the Lender.

### **The Supplier's sales & marketing practices at the Time of Sale**

Mr and Mrs H's complaint about the Lender being party to an unfair credit relationship was and is made for several reasons.

They include allegations that:

1. Mr and Mrs H were pressured by the Supplier into purchasing Fractional Club membership at the Time of Sale.

2. The right checks weren't carried out before the Lender lent to Mr and Mrs H.
3. The loan interest was excessive.
4. Mr and Mrs H were not given a choice of lender by the Supplier.
5. The Lender paid commission to the Supplier for arranging the Credit Agreement but didn't disclose this to Mr and Mrs H.

However, as things currently stand, none of strikes me as a reason why this complaint should succeed.

I acknowledge that Mr and Mrs H may have felt weary after a sales process that went on for a long time. But they say little about what was said and/or done by the Supplier during their sales presentation that made them feel as if they had no choice but to purchase Fractional Club membership when they simply did not want to. Mr and Mrs H were also given a 14-day cooling off period and they have not provided a credible explanation for why they did not cancel their membership during that time. And with all of that being the case, there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that Mr and Mrs H made the decision to purchase Fractional Club membership because their ability to exercise that choice was significantly impaired by pressure from the Supplier.

I haven't seen anything to persuade me that the right checks weren't carried out by the Lender given this complaint's circumstances. But even if I were to find that the Lender failed to do everything it should have when it agreed to lend (and I make no such finding), I would have to be satisfied that the money lent to Mr and Mrs H was actually unaffordable before also concluding that they lost out as a result and then consider whether the credit relationship with the Lender was unfair to them for this reason. But from the information provided, I am not satisfied that the lending was unaffordable for Mr and Mrs H.

The PR has not explained how, if it were true, Mr and Mrs H not being offered a different lender to pay for Fractional Club membership caused them any unfairness or financial loss. Mr and Mrs H was aware of the interest rate, which was set out on the face of the Credit Agreement, as well as the term of the loan and the monthly repayments, so they understood what it was they were taking out.

Further, I don't think the rate of interest was excessive, compared either to other rates available from other point-of-sale lenders or on the open market, so I can't say it would be fair or reasonable to tell the Lender to do anything because of this.

Overall, therefore, I don't think that Mr and Mrs H's credit relationship with the Lender was rendered unfair to them under Section 140A for any of the reasons above. But there are other reasons why the PR now says the credit relationship with the Lender was unfair to them. Firstly, the suggestion that Fractional Club membership was marketed and sold to them as an investment in breach of the prohibition against selling timeshares in that way. And secondly, in regards to the payment of commission by the Lender to the Supplier. I deal with these points below.

### **The Supplier's alleged breach of Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations**

The Lender does not dispute, and I am satisfied, that Mr and Mrs H's Fractional Club membership met the definition of a "timeshare contract" and was a "regulated contract" for the purposes of the Timeshare Regulations.

Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations prohibited the Supplier from marketing or selling Fractional Club membership as an investment. This is what the provision said at the Time of Sale:

*“A trader must not market or sell a proposed timeshare contract or long-term holiday product contract as an investment if the proposed contract would be a regulated contract.”*

But the PR and Mr and Mrs H say that the Supplier did exactly that at the Time of Sale – saying, in summary, that they were told by the Supplier that Fractional Club membership was the type of investment that would only increase in value.

The term “investment” is not defined in the Timeshare Regulations. But for the purposes of this provisional decision, and by reference to the decided authorities, an investment is a transaction in which money or other property is laid out in the expectation or hope of financial gain or profit.

A share in the net sale proceeds of the Allocated Property could constitute an investment as it offered Mr and Mrs H the prospect of a financial return – whether or not, like all investments, that was more than what they first put into it. But it is important to note at this stage that the fact that Fractional Club membership included an investment element did not, itself, transgress the prohibition in Regulation 14(3). That provision prohibits the *marketing and selling* of a timeshare contract as an investment. It doesn’t prohibit the mere existence of an investment element in a timeshare contract or prohibit the marketing and selling of such a timeshare contract *per se*.<sup>2</sup>

In other words, the Timeshare Regulations did not ban products such as the Fractional Club. They just regulated how such products were marketed and sold.

To conclude, therefore, that Fractional Club membership was marketed or sold to Mr and Mrs H as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3), I have to be persuaded that it was more likely than not that the Supplier marketed and/or sold membership to them as an investment, i.e. told them or led them to believe that Fractional Club membership offered them the prospect of a financial gain (i.e., a profit) given the facts and circumstances of *this* complaint.

There is competing evidence in this complaint as to whether Fractional Club membership was marketed and/or sold by the Supplier at the Time of Sale as an investment in breach of regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations.

On the one hand, the Supplier made efforts to avoid specifically describing membership of the Fractional Club as an ‘investment’ or quantifying to prospective purchasers, such as Mr and Mrs H, the financial value of their share in the net sales proceeds of the Allocated Property along with the investment considerations, risks and rewards attached to them.

On the other hand, I think that the Supplier’s sales process left open the possibility that the sales representative may have positioned Fractional Club membership as an investment. So, I accept that it’s equally possible that Fractional Club membership was marketed and sold to Mr and Mrs H as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3).

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<sup>2</sup> The PR has argued that Fractional Club membership amounted to an Unregulated Collective Investment Scheme, however this was considered and rejected in the judgment in *R (on the application of Shawbrook Bank Ltd) v Financial Ombudsman Service Ltd* and *R (on the application of Clydesdale Financial Services Ltd (t/a Barclays Partner Finance)) v Financial Ombudsman Service* [2023] EWHC 1069 (Admin).

However, whether there was a breach of the relevant prohibition by the Supplier is not ultimately determinative of the outcome in this complaint for reasons I will come on to shortly. And with that being the case, it's not necessary to make a formal finding on that issue for the purposes of this decision.

### **Was the credit relationship between the Lender and Mr and Mrs H rendered unfair?**

Having found that it was possible that the Supplier breached Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations at the Time of Sale, I now need to consider what impact that breach had on the fairness of the credit relationship between Mr and Mrs H and the Lender under the Credit Agreement and related Purchase Agreement as the case law on Section 140A makes it clear that regulatory breaches do not automatically create unfairness for the purposes of that provision. Such breaches and their consequences (if there are any) must be considered in the round, rather than in a narrow or technical way.

Indeed, it seems to me that, if I am to conclude that a breach of Regulation 14(3) led to a credit relationship between Mr and Mrs H and the Lender that was unfair to them and warranted relief as a result, it is important for me to consider whether the Supplier's breach of Regulation 14(3) led them to enter into the Purchase Agreement and the Credit Agreement.

On my reading of the evidence before me, the prospect of a financial gain from Fractional Club membership was not an important and motivating factor when Mr and Mrs H decided to go ahead with their purchase. I say this because in Mr and Mrs H's unsigned and undated statement, which the PR says was taken on 4 June 2021, but was not provided as part of this complaint until 15 January 2024, they say of the Time of Sale that they:

*"were convinced into buying another fractional to bring us up to Gold member level".*

That seems to make clear the reason they purchased was to obtain the benefits of being a Gold Tier timeshare member. They also increased their holiday purchasing power by about 47% - so could take more (or more expensive) holidays because of the purchase (they also say it gave them more priority on bookings).

While they go on to say it was also a better investment opportunity, they do not say that this was part of the Supplier's sales pitch at the time. And while a share in the sale proceeds of the Allocated Property would've been an additional benefit to the purchase, their statement does not persuade me it was a material factor in their decision. I say this because the main benefits of the purchase were the additional holiday rights and upgrading to Gold Tier membership – the second of which Mr and Mrs H say was what convinced them to purchase.

That doesn't mean Mr and Mrs H weren't interested in a share in the Allocated Property. After all, that wouldn't be surprising given the nature of the product at the centre of this complaint. But as Mr and Mrs H themselves do not persuade me that their purchase was motivated by their share in the Allocated Property and the possibility of a profit, I don't think a breach of Regulation 14(3) by the Supplier was likely to have been material to the decision they ultimately made.

I have considered the handwritten call notes the PR provided, which were also undated. But these do not persuade me that my above conclusions on this point are unfair or unreasonable. I think Mr and Mrs H's statement, which is longer and more detailed, is the more persuasive evidence of what motivated their purchase. In any case, I do not think the call notes contradict what is said in the statement.

I also note that Mr and Mrs H say they paid £7,000 for a company to help them surrender their Fractional Club membership. That would be an odd thing to do if the purchase was motivated by the potential of making a profit – not only giving up that potential profit but paying a significant amount of money to do so. While not crucial to my decision, this does appear to support the conclusion I have reached that the purchase was not motivated by the possibility of making a profit.

On balance, therefore, even if the Supplier marketed or sold Fractional Club membership as an investment in breach of Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations, I am not persuaded that Mr and Mrs H's decision to purchase Fractional Club membership at the Time of Sale was motivated by the prospect of a financial gain (i.e., a profit). On the contrary, I think the evidence suggests they would have pressed ahead with their purchase regardless of whether there had been a breach of Regulation 14(3). And for that reason, I do not think the credit relationship between Mr and Mrs H and the Lender was unfair to them even if the Supplier did breach Regulation 14(3).

### **The provision of information by the Supplier at the Time of Sale**

The PR says that Mr and Mrs H were not given sufficient information at the Time of Sale by the Supplier about Fractional Club membership, including about the ongoing costs and the fact that Mr and Mrs H's heirs could inherit these costs.

As I've already indicated, the case law on Section 140A makes it clear that it does not automatically follow that regulatory breaches create unfairness for the purposes of the unfair relationship provisions. The extent to which such mistakes render a credit relationship unfair must also be determined according to their impact on the complainant.

I acknowledge that it is also possible that the Supplier did not give Mr and Mrs H sufficient information, in good time, on the various charges they could have been subject to as Fractional Club members in order to satisfy the requirements of Regulation 12 of the Timeshare Regulations (which was concerned with the provision of 'key information'). But even if that was the case, I cannot see that the ongoing costs of membership were applied unfairly in practice. And as neither Mr and Mrs H nor the PR have persuaded me that they would not have pressed ahead with their purchase had the finer details of the Fractional Club's ongoing costs been disclosed by the Supplier in compliance with Regulation 12, I cannot see why any failings in that regard are likely to be material to the outcome of this complaint given its facts and circumstances.

As for the PR's argument that Mr and Mrs H's heirs would inherit the on-going management charges, I fail to see how that could be the case or that it could have led to an unfairness that warrants a remedy.

### **Commission: The Section 140A unfair relationship complaint**

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Mr and Mrs H says that a payment of commission from the Lender to the Supplier at the Time of Sale should lead me to uphold this complaint because, simply put, information in relation to that payment went undisclosed at the Time of Sale.

As both sides already know, the Supreme Court handed down an important judgment on 1 August 2025 in a series of cases concerned with the issue of commission: *Johnson v FirstRand Bank Ltd*, *Wrench v FirstRand Bank Ltd* and *Hopcraft v Close Brothers Ltd* [2025] UKSC 33 ('*Hopcraft, Johnson and Wrench*').

The Supreme Court ruled that, in each of the three cases, the commission payments made to car dealers by lenders were legal, as claims for the tort of bribery, or the dishonest assistance of a breach of fiduciary duty, had to be predicated on the car dealer owing a fiduciary duty to the consumer, which the car dealers did not owe. A “disinterested duty”, as described in *Wood v Commercial First Business Ltd & ors and Business Mortgage Finance 4 plc v Pengelly* [2021] EWCA Civ 471, is not enough.

However, the Supreme Court held that the credit relationship between the lender and Mr Johnson was unfair under Section 140A of the CCA because of the commission paid by the lender to the car dealer. The main reasons for coming to that conclusion included, amongst other things, the following factors:

1. The size of the commission (as a percentage of the total charge for credit). In Mr Johnson’s case it was 55%. This was “so high” and “a powerful indication that the relationship...was unfair” (see paragraph 327);
2. The failure to disclose the commission; and
3. The concealment of the commercial tie between the car dealer and the lender.

The Supreme Court also confirmed that the following factors, in what was a non-exhaustive list, will normally be relevant when assessing whether a credit relationship was/is unfair under Section 140A of the CCA:

1. The size of the commission as a proportion of the charge for credit;
2. The way in which commission is calculated (a discretionary commission arrangement, for example, may lead to higher interest rates);
3. The characteristics of the consumer;
4. The extent of any disclosure and the manner of that disclosure (which, insofar as Section 56 of the CCA is engaged, includes any disclosure by a supplier when acting as a broker); and
5. Compliance with the regulatory rules.

From my reading of the Supreme Court’s judgment in *Hopcraft, Johnson and Wrench*, it sets out principles which apply to credit brokers other than car dealer–credit brokers. So, when considering allegations of undisclosed payments of commission like the one in this complaint, *Hopcraft, Johnson and Wrench* is relevant law that I’m required to consider under Rule 3.6.4 of the Financial Conduct Authority’s Dispute Resolution Rules (‘DISP’).

But I don’t think *Hopcraft, Johnson and Wrench* assists Mr and Mrs H in arguing that their credit relationship with the Lender was unfair to them for reasons relating to commission given the facts and circumstances of this complaint.

I haven’t seen anything to suggest that the Lender and Supplier were tied to one another contractually or commercially in a way that wasn’t properly disclosed to Mr and Mrs H, nor have I seen anything that persuades me that the commission arrangement between them gave the Supplier a choice over the interest rate that led Mr and Mrs H into a credit agreement that cost disproportionately more than it otherwise could have.

I acknowledge that it's possible that the Lender and the Supplier failed to follow the regulatory guidance in place at the Time of Sale insofar as it was relevant to disclosing the commission arrangements between them.

But as I've said before, the case law on Section 140A makes it clear that regulatory breaches do not automatically create unfairness for the purposes of that provision. Such breaches and their consequences (if there are any) must be considered in the round, rather than in a narrow or technical way. And with that being the case, it isn't necessary to make a formal finding on that because, even if the Lender and the Supplier failed to follow the relevant regulatory guidance at the Time of Sale, it is for the reasons set out below that I don't think any such failure is itself a reason to find the credit relationship in question unfair to Mr and Mrs H.

In stark contrast to the facts of Mr Johnson's case, the amount of commission paid by the Lender to the Supplier for arranging the Credit Agreement that Mr and Mrs H entered into wasn't high. At £69, it was only 1% of the amount borrowed and 1.36% as a proportion of the charge for credit. So, if they had known at the Time of Sale that the Supplier was going to be paid a flat rate of commission at that level, I'm not persuaded that they either wouldn't have understood that or would have otherwise questioned the size of the payment at that time. After all, Mr and Mrs H wanted Fractional Club membership and had no obvious means of their own to pay for it. And at such a low level, the impact of commission on the cost of the credit they needed for a timeshare they wanted doesn't strike me as disproportionate. So, I think they would still have taken out the loan to fund their purchase at the Time of Sale had the amount of commission been disclosed.

What's more, based on what I've seen so far, the Supplier's role as a credit broker wasn't a separate service and distinct from its role as the seller of timeshares. It was simply a means to an end in the Supplier's overall pursuit of a successful timeshare sale. I can't see that the Supplier gave an undertaking – either expressly or impliedly – to put to one side its commercial interests in pursuit of that goal when arranging the Credit Agreement. And as it wasn't acting as an agent of Mr and Mrs H but as the supplier of contractual rights that they obtained under the Purchase Agreement, the transaction doesn't strike me as one with features that suggest the Supplier had an obligation of 'loyalty' to them when arranging the Credit Agreement and thus a fiduciary duty.

Overall, therefore, I'm not persuaded that the commission arrangements between the Supplier and the Lender were likely to have led to a sufficiently extreme inequality of knowledge that rendered the credit relationship unfair to Mr and Mrs H.

### **Section 140A: Conclusion**

Given all the factors I've looked at in this part of my decision, and having taken all of them into account, I'm not persuaded that the credit relationship between Mr and Mrs H and the Lender under the Credit Agreement and related Purchase Agreement was unfair to them. And as things stand, I don't think it would be fair or reasonable that I uphold this complaint on that basis.

### **Commission: The Alternative Grounds of Complaint**

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While I've found that Mr and Mrs H credit relationship with the Lender wasn't unfair to them for reasons relating to the commission arrangements between it and the Supplier, two of the grounds on which I came to that conclusion also constitute separate and freestanding complaints to Mr and Mrs H complaint about an unfair credit relationship. So, for completeness, I've considered those grounds on that basis here.

The first ground relates to whether the Lender is liable for the dishonest assistance of a breach of fiduciary duty by the Supplier because it took a payment of commission from the Lender without telling Mr and Mrs H (i.e., secretly). And the second relates to the Lender's compliance with the regulatory guidance in place at the Time of Sale insofar as it was relevant to disclosing the commission arrangements between them.

However, for the reasons I set out above, I'm not persuaded that the Supplier – when acting as credit broker – owed Mr and Mrs H a fiduciary duty. So, the remedies that might be available at law in relation to the payment of secret commission aren't, in my view, available to them. And while it's possible that the Lender failed to follow the regulatory guidance in place at the Time of Sale insofar as it was relevant to disclosing the commission arrangements between it and the Supplier, I don't think any such failure on the Lender's part is itself a reason to uphold this complaint because, for the reasons I also set out above, I think they would still have taken out the loan to fund their purchase at the Time of Sale had there been more adequate disclosure of the commission arrangements that applied at that time.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, as things currently stand, I do not think that the Lender acted unfairly or unreasonably when it dealt with the relevant Section 75 claim, and I am not persuaded that the Lender was party to a credit relationship with Mr and Mrs H under the Credit Agreement that was unfair to them for the purposes of Section 140A of the CCA – nor do I see any other reason why it would be fair or reasonable to direct the Lender to compensate them.

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END OF COPY OF PROVISIONAL FINDINGS

### The PR's response to my provisional findings about an unfair relationship

My role as an Ombudsman isn't to address every single point which has been made to date, but to decide what is fair and reasonable in the circumstances of this complaint. If I haven't commented on, or referred to, something that either party has said, this doesn't mean I haven't considered it. Rather, I've focused here on addressing what I consider to be the key issues in deciding this complaint and explaining the reasons for reaching my final decision.

The PR's further comments in response to the provisional decision only relate to the issue of whether the credit relationship between Mr and Mrs H and the Lender was unfair. In particular, the PR has provided further comments in relation to whether the membership was sold to Mr and Mrs H as an investment at the Time of Sale causing an unfair relationship.

As outlined in my provisional decision, the PR originally raised various other points of complaint, all of which I addressed at that time. But they didn't make any further comments in relation to those in their response to my provisional decision. Indeed, they haven't said they disagree with any of my provisional conclusions in relation to those other points. So, I see no reason to change my conclusions in relation to them as set out in my provisional decision.

The PR has provided further comments and evidence relating to whether Fractional Club membership was marketed or sold as an investment in breach of the prohibition in Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations. However, as I explained in my provisional decision, while the Supplier's sales processes left open the possibility that the sales representative may have positioned Fractional Club membership as an investment, it isn't necessary to make a finding on this as it is not determinative of the outcome of the complaint. I explained that Regulatory breaches do not automatically create unfairness and

that such breaches and their consequences (if there are any) must be considered in the round, rather than in a narrow or technical way.

The PR's comments and evidence in this respect do not persuade me that I should uphold Mr and Mrs H's complaint, because they do not make me think it's any more likely that the Supplier's breach of Regulation 14(3) led Mr and Mrs H to enter into the Purchase Agreement and the Credit Agreement.

The PR has provided its further thoughts as to Mr and Mrs H's likely motivations for purchasing Fractional Club membership. I recognise it has interpreted Mr and Mrs H's evidence differently to how I have and thinks it points to them having been motivated by the prospect of a financial gain from Fractional Club membership.

In my provisional decision, I explained the reasons why I didn't think Mr and Mrs H's purchase was motivated by the prospect of a financial gain (i.e., a profit). And although I have carefully considered the PR's arguments in response to this, I'm not persuaded the conclusions I reached on this point were unfair or unreasonable.

From Mr and Mrs H's statement, I think it is likely that they purchased primarily to increase their membership tier to Gold. And that they would've done so regardless of whether or not there was a breach of Regulation 14(3) of the Timeshare Regulations at the Time of Sale. As such any breach, in my opinion, did not cause their relationship with the Lender to be an unfair one.

## **Conclusion**

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In conclusion, I do not think that the Lender acted unfairly or unreasonably when it dealt with the relevant Section 75 claims, and I am not persuaded that the Lender was party to a credit relationship with Mr and Mrs H under the Credit Agreement that was unfair to them for the purposes of Section 140A of the CCA – nor do I see any other reason why it would be fair or reasonable to direct the Lender to compensate Mr and Mrs H.

## **My final decision**

For the reasons I've explained, I do not uphold this complaint.

Under the rules of the Financial Ombudsman Service, I'm required to ask Mrs H and Mr H to accept or reject my decision before 17 February 2026.

Phillip Lai-Fang  
**Ombudsman**