



IN THE HOT SEAT

In a burst of optimism and ‘arrogance’, **Daniel O’Brien** quit his banking job and launched PFS Financial Services in 2004. Since then, the broker has seen every possible loan scenario cross his desk – including an extramarital affair that caused financial carnage

Q Tell us a bit about your first job.

A I was a chef at KFC. I still remember my hourly rate: \$4.54 per hour! That was in 1995, which was long before rules and laws around occupational health and safety had properly kicked in. It was a very tough and physically demanding job – I still have the scars to prove it.

Q How long have you worked in finance?

A For over 20 years. I started out as a bank teller in Parramatta in 1999, then moved to the city, to Martin Place, in 2002 as a branch manager. At the end of 2004, I quit the bank and started PFS as a mortgage broker. In hindsight, it was a pretty arrogant and dumb move at the time. I was 24 and had no idea what I was getting into. But without that dumb, youthful arrogance, I would have not made the best financial decision of my life!

Q What is one thing you wish everyday borrowers knew about applying for a loan?

A That it’s not easy at times to get that loan approved. Most people think that if they have a bit of equity, that automatically translates to a quick and easy loan approval, which is definitely not the case. It helps, but post royal commission everything is harder when it comes to loan approvals.

Q Do you think anything positive has/will come out of the COVID-19 pandemic?

A I think a lot of people will see that business doesn’t have to be done the traditional way it has always been done. Clients can be interviewed via a video conference call. Loan documents don’t have to be printed, posted and executed in a broker’s office, as we can use E-DOCS.

Q What is one aspect of the broking industry you would change if you could?

A There should be no clawback. If I have churned a loan, fair enough. But if a client sells their house and repays their loan after six months because the husband is having an affair with the nanny, then I shouldn’t be penalised for that! You aren’t penalising branch lenders for that, so why do brokers get burned? This scenario actually happened, by the way – ain’t love grand?!

