

Submission to the Senate re GREEN LOANS 13 April 2010

By Bobbi McKibbin Accredited Home Sustainability Assessor

I am an accredited Home Sustainability Assessor, however missed out on becoming a part of the Green Loan Program.

I have 5 years experience in advising on ways that people can reduce their energy and water consumption, thus reducing greenhouse gases and also saving people money (very important going ahead with what is happening to the cost of utilities). I have co-ordinated a semi government funded program on exactly this topic, which was quite successful. I have for the last 2 years worked in the Renewable Energy sector another hot topic at the moment and works hand in hand with energy consultancy, and recently formed a company with 3 others advising, selling and installing Renewable Energies, energy and water saving ideas and devices.

Last year I trained with EcoMaster for my accreditation at the time I was in two minds as to becoming an accredited assessor as I was dubious of a program that is prompted by the government having been involved in a similar program previously where targets were changed and the emphasis was taken away from the education process and refocused on simply the changing of light bulbs I did not like or agree with this as the decision meant the major benefit of the program was lost. Also with all the debacle that was occurring with the Solar Power Rebate and length of time that it takes to be paid for those rebates, but was grateful that finally I had my skills and knowledge recognised. Thankfully Eco Master is one of the training companies that have been held in high regard since conception of the program.

The future I think we have all realised is heading towards and needs to head towards a much more sustainable lifestyle for both us as a country and us as a world, and also in the affordability stakes. However this requires public education, and in some instances a gentle reminder to some of the ways that things used to be done, I refer to it as one of life's cycles. This is where as Home Sustainability Assessors we are the direct medium to see this through. However there is the issue of education standards, this needs to be structured and standardised, and those of us that have believed in the program by jumping on board (accepted by the government or not) should have the first opportunity to have our skills recognised with at least a Certificate level of qualification, and this should be done at no cost or minimum cost (no cost is what we were told at our training), at least as recognition for the support that we have shown and to make up for some of the many losses that have occurred as a result.

Even though I am not a part of the Federal Governments program I have chosen to continue with energy consulting as there is a demand out there however this is hard when there is a free version available and unfortunately people do not know the difference in qualities of assessments.

I believe whole heartedly in this program and know what it can achieve that is why I am writing this submission. What I believe the government should do is encourage this new business sector and encourage small businesses to develop. Therefore I have the following suggestions to offer:

- Immediately halt the existing program, stating that it will be overhauled and re released once it is on track
- Certify energy consultant's qualifications with a certificate level recognition, allowing those of us that have already shown great interest in the program the option of having our skills assessed and where needed any extra modules required paid for, there will be those that will drop out of the program
- Offer all residents of Australia a gift voucher to a specified amount i.e. \$200 to which they can then choose if and who they redeem their gift voucher with. Let the public decide who they want, who they are comfortable with. I am in two minds as to offering this to consumers that have already had an assessment after all there has been significant talk that some of the assessments undertaken were substandard
- Perhaps give the gift certificates an expiry date
- Open energy consulting up to small businesses, after all habits consume a lot of energy, and in some instances when people are at work they don't care about the energy they use after all they are not paying for it. Rather than sending them a gift voucher make it a tax deduction or something of the sort

The principal of the program is brilliant, however there is so much more that can be done to bring this brilliance into fruition and make a huge contribution to reducing the Greenhouse Gases and also arming people with the knowledge of better ways to use their energy that will see them cope with the prices rises that are expected in the VERY NEAR future.

I look forward to the response and outcomes that the Senate puts forward to ME as an Assessor, ME as a Tax Payer, and ME as a Voter.

Bobbi McKibbin