

12 April, 2010

## Submission to Green Loans Senate Inquiry

### My Story

On December 4<sup>th</sup> I attended an interview with Commonwealth Rehabilitation Service (CRS Australia) in Coffs Harbour looking for a new career direction due to my health issues. I was informed of the possibility there may be a position for me in a new evolving industry as a Home Sustainability Assessor (HSA) in conjunction with Green Loans, along with 5 other locals. After listening to the CRS employment consultants, the consensus was there would be ongoing work as a HSA with climate change, increasing power bills etc. constantly in the news. I understood there were no guarantees, but the gamble seemed reasonable considering ABSA was still taking registrations at this time and no hint of the Green Loan Scheme being squashed. I came to the conclusion this was a great idea the Rudd government had come up with and that I wanted to be a part of it. I first had to attend an interview with a company called Green Homes Express (GHE) in Erskineville (Sydney). GHE also felt there would be ongoing work as they were preparing to employ six of us from Coffs Harbour area alone to do assessments.

To become an assessor, I was informed by CRS that I needed move quickly and undergo a complicated set of procedures, all at my own expense outlined here:-

- Obtain a Police check (cost \$45).
- Attend and pass a 4 day HSA course at Newcastle Tighes Hill TAFE 14<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> December (cost \$960, accommodation motel \$360).
- After passing the course and receiving the police check, send off application to ABSA with J.P. certified copies along with registration fee and wait for accreditation to be processed (cost \$660).
- Once accreditation was received back from ABSA, contact GHE and have my name and ABSA registration number added to their contract with DEWHA for Home Sustainability Assessments.
- When DEWHA processes the contract amendment, commence work with GHE. I was supposed to be doing assessments in the Coffs Harbour area, hopefully by February 1<sup>st</sup>.

With this plan in mind, when I left the CRS interview, I then:-

- Immediately applied for the police check at Coffs Harbour Police Station.
- Booked and paid for HSA course at Newcastle Tighes Hill TAFE.
- Arranged for job interview with GHE.
- Drove 500km initially to Sydney for a successful job interview with GHE on the 11<sup>th</sup> December, staying with family on the Central Coast.
- Then drove to Newcastle on the 13<sup>th</sup> December staying in a motel for the duration of the TAFE course.
- Returned home to Sandy Beach, December 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Waited for my police check to finally arrive (24<sup>th</sup> December).
- Sent J.P. certified copies of course certificates etc. to ABSA on 29<sup>th</sup> December.
- Again waited...this time for accreditation notification from ABSA (10<sup>th</sup> February).

- Immediately contacted GHE who added my name to their contract with DEWHA and sent in on the appropriate paperwork.
- Work to commence immediately upon revised contract confirmed.

This is when problems occurred with DEWHA:-

- GHE revised contract came back to GHE – WITHOUT my name on it.
- Other names added at the same time WERE on the contract.
- GHE and I tried repeatedly to have the problem rectified – without success.
- Senator Garrett – Green Loan announcement (19<sup>th</sup> February), DEWHA follows with announcement on their website stating that “New applications to become contracted assessors are no longer being received”.

Dozens of phone calls & emails later, still no resolve and no employment as a Home Sustainability Assessor because I am not on anyone’s contract with DEWHA. I have since found other local employers willing to employ me as a HSA, if I can get my own contract with DEWHA.

My analysis of this whole Green Loans affair:

- Totally uncoordinated from the start.
- DEWHA, it appears, grossly underestimated the scheme.
- DEWHA has major problems with assessors such as poor communication; the online software is still inadequate, lack of payments to contracted assessors.
- No or little auditing that I am aware of any assessments.
- Some larger corporations and greedy individuals saw a chance of a quick dollar and have tainted the Home Sustainability Assessment Scheme and should be made accountable.
- Some training courses were obviously inadequate. This is down to ABSA and should be investigated independently.
- The almost cruel situation where 4 or 5 thousand assessors and their families like mine throughout this country have had their whole life put on hold since February 19<sup>th</sup> 2010 and Peter Garrett’s announcement.
- After investing thousands of dollars to get this far, there is still no definitive answers or even a time-frame of what is going to happen.

Surely all of this effort from so many people is not going to be wasted. The concept is still valid and the need is still there.

Personally, I am deeply disappointed but hope that some sought of green scheme can be resurrected from this mess and I can start work up here in Coffs Harbour saving people money on their energy bills and reducing green house emissions – like we were supposed to do and what I am trained for.