

GREEN LOANS

Preamble:

My initial understanding of the Green Loans Program was very basic.

I understood I needed to apply for an Energy Assessment to be conducted in my house. Once the Energy Assessment was completed I would receive a Report which would outline products and services to make my house more energy efficient. However the best part of the Program offered an interest free loan to purchase the suggested products.

My experience:

I tried several times to make contact via a Call Centre to organize an Assessment of my home. I gave up on more than one occasion because I was put on hold for a very long time.

Disillusioned I searched the web site and finally found a long list of Assessors with phone numbers but no addresses. I did not know whether Assessors had a specific area, so I began ringing several South Australian telephone numbers. I finally spoke with an Assessor who was willing to visit my home at West Beach.

Although I have considered myself to be a fairly conservative user of energy our Assessor gave constructive advice which I found valuable.

He advised that our Report may take a while to be generated and to be patient. He said some people were still waiting for their reports several months after their Assessment.

Financial Institutions

A week or so after our Assessment I heard via the radio that the Green Loans Program was going to be closed.

I tried to make application for a loan with the financial institutions listed on the website but was advised by Wespac and ANZ that I could not be considered without a hard copy Report.

When I telephoned Community First Credit Union I was advised that they were still accepting Green loan applications but applications would not be processed until they receive payment of money owed to them by the Government for work associated with providing Green Loans in the previous six months.

Another application to Australian Central Credit Union generated the following email :

Dear

Thank you for contacting Australian Central.

The Federal Government has made a decision to discontinue the loan component of the Green Loan program.

Australian Central are accepting Green Loan applications until Saturday 13th March 2010.

*The conditions applicable are:
The applicant must have already received their Home Sustainability Report. Australian Central must have all 5 pages of the Home Sustainability Report.*

The loan must be finalised and disbursed by Saturday 20th March 2010. The loan must still meet all regular Green Loan lending requirements. Until we have confirmed your Assessment details with DEWHA, we can not fund their Green Loan.

You would have to agree that to make application and disburse the funds within a week would be difficult.

Assessment Report

I tried to ascertain how long it would be before I could expect my Report so that I could apply for a loan. I tried to ring the Green Loans Call Centre but it was always busy. I tried to ring many times and then disillusioned I sent several emails to the website and received several automated replies –all the same.

Thank you for your email. The Green Loans website will be updated with the most up to date information to keep you informed. Please Visit www.environment.gov.au/greenloans. Thank you.

This presented an almost impossible situation.

CLOSURE OF PROGRAM AND RECEIPT OF REPORT

The Program was due to close on the 22nd March 2010.

On Friday 19th March 2010 I received the following email.

From: Green Loans Assessors [mailto:GreenLoansAssessors@environment.gov.au]
Sent: Thursday, March 18, 2010 2:11 PM
To:
Subject: Home Sustainability Assessment Report [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Hi Michele

I refer to your emails of 22 and 24 February 2010 to the Minister for the Environment concerning your home sustainability assessment report. Can you please provide us with your full name, your home address and the AN or BK number that was allocated to your booking so we can send you your report promptly.

Kind regards

The Green Loans Team

I replied with my **home address** and AN number.

Then on the 19th March 2010 I received my Report –**via email**

*Dear Householder,
Thank you for your commitment to making your home more energy and water efficient by participating in a Home Sustainability Assessment through the Australian Government's Green Loans Program. Attached to this email is your Assessment report and information letter listing the best energy and water saving changes you can make to your property.*

If you wish to provide feedback please go to the Green Loans website at www.environment.gov.au/greenloans, select 'contact us' and complete the form.

*Regards,
Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Green Loans Program*

I have never received a hard copy of my Assessment Report posted to my home address. I have only ever received the email version.

In any case the report was received too late to make application for a Green Loan from the financial institutions listed on the website.

SUMMARY

The Program was a great initiative but it was impossible to obtain a loan.

- The Call Centre was always busy with long waiting periods
- The Assessment of the house was good
- The financial institutions cut short their services – obviously they were unhappy with the Government co-operation

- Generation of the Reports was ridiculously slow
- **Application for a Green Loan was almost impossible**

MINISTER WONG

From summary notes at a meeting with Minister Wong and the Green Loans Assessors Delegation on Friday March 19, 2010, Melbourne
the following statements were made by Minister Wong:

- *The Axing of the Green Loan was a Cabinet decision and will not be revisited.*
- *Options put forward for ongoing funding of the scheme are not viewed favourably because of the government view that the program is a finite one with a fixed budget and lifespan.*
- *Because the government view is that the scheme is finite financially, any changes must be within the current budget allocation.*

What a let down!

Why can't the Government reinstate the Green Loans for people who had their homes assessed prior to the close of the program. Of course, this would mean the Government encouraging or supporting a financial institution to provide the funds.

The Green Loans program could be a pseudo stimulus. People borrowing money on interest free loans to buy products – stimulating manufacture/retail – and at the same time making Australia more energy efficient....and without great costs to the Government.