

Hi there

Please find below some outlined information about what I have had to sacrifice, what I have done and how I feel about the Green Loans Programme over the past 6 months. I have written this under the headings as advised by ABSA. I hope you find this of benefit.

Your personal experience as an assessor and the sacrifices you made to do this.

I undertook my training with Sustainable footprint in November 2009, the course ran for 4 days and I thought it very good, as I have a strong interest in the environment and sustainable living I had an advantage of a great deal of prior knowledge but still learnt plenty during the course. It then took over 6 weeks for my registration to be processed and I started assessing on 11th January 2010. After just a few weeks I was starting to get really settled in the role and looked forward to work each morning. I have bought hardware such as laser measurement equipment and electric device which measures the power usage of appliances so I can show home owners exactly how much power certain appliances use in their homes. Unfortunately I only managed to get 6 weeks of full time work before the changes were made and my work cut hugely. I enjoyed the full time work very much, meeting many different people and enjoyed assessing the houses and educating them in more sustainable living practises. I enjoyed answering questions and found that in many cases I would learn things from the homeowners where they have greater knowledge on topics. If I was asked questions that I was unable to answer I made a point of doing some research myself into the subject. After 3 weeks of assessing when I was at our local markets I was approached by two people who's houses I had assessed who had more questions. This was a surprise to me but I enjoyed the fact the I was able to help them out more.

The sacrifices I made was mainly leaving the previous role initially to a part time position while I got up and running with the assessing. After 11th January I went full time assessing and therefore left my previous role. After the changes came in it took a little while to find out exactly what was going to happen and how the programme would continue as there were very little or no support information wise from anyone.

How the changes to the scheme have impacted on you, your family and business.

Since the changes were brought in and the number of assessments limited there have been several knock on effects, firstly and the biggest change is the fact that I am now working part time (2 days a week) and the reduction in income has meant we are currently subsidizing our living from past savings, this however can't continue long term. Secondly, the changes through me a little as they were totally unexpected and now find myself in a job with an uncertain future which isn't great. I have started to try and find other part time work and applying for part time jobs, ideally within the same industry which will add value to my existing skills and hopefully lead to something stable, secure and long term within the industry however part time work which can be flexible around the assessments isn't easy. It has also caused some upset in the house due to this financial insecurity, I believe the programme will and can continue but there is a time limit as to how long I can (and I guess others can) hold out, my wife and I have concerns about bills and mortgages being met, and now after 7 weeks are asking the questions how long can we hang out (I think about 1-2 weeks more max) on the reduced income before I am forced to take any job just to get by which I don't really want to do as it will only be another stop gap until I get back into this industry.

Measures which could be put in place to revitalise the scheme and any other useful suggestions and potential solutions.

I think the total scrapping of green loans was a major step back in making the households of Australia more sustainable, the concept and idea of this scheme is brilliant and I don't think it was given a proper chance at all mainly due to the fact that no body actually received their reports, (for the record I assessed my house 8 weeks ago and nothing has been received as yet, and for the record I would have applied for a loan to add a 6000 litre water tank to the property as we already have grey water and solar electricity in place) If this report isn't getting to home owners how are they going to make the changes and obtain the loan if required?

When the data is uploaded to the system it is possible to see the report instantly, surely if couldn't be that difficult to print and mail it within that same computer programme?

I think there should be an increase from 5 assessments per week to 15 with immediate effect, this will then provide full time work for all assessors and a reasonable living can be made, it will restore some confidence in the programme without it being a blank cheque for people who have been drawn to this purely for the money. The limit of 3 assessments a day i think is a great idea, this will mean that all assessments are done correctly and that plenty of time is given per household, in quite a few cases where the homeowner is really interested in sustainable living and what I have to say about reducing there energy consumption i have found that 2 hours is not enough.

The administration has to be organised quickly, it's not ideal for me when I meet people in the street who have had their house assessed 6 weeks ago and are still waiting for the report. It makes me and the industry look unprofessional.

I feel that the representation from ABSA in this situation has been very poor, they are supposed to be our body and are the major link with DEWHA, the fact that DEWHA didn't even contact ABSA about the changes just goes to show how little influence they have here. Although ABSA have managed a meeting with the new heads of the programme i don't see anything positive that has come from this except webinar's and now planned days for assessors across Australia, I noticed that in the schedule of events for the day there are 2 planned continued professional development sessions and Iquestion; 1. what will we learn? 2. What's the point if there is no work or long term work? 3. The Adelaide one is planned on May 14th that will be 3 months after the changes where made, if many assessors are in my position they won't be working as assessors by that time as other work will need to be undertaken to pay bills. Most people can't go for 3 months on part time work.

I hope that something can be worked out soon so I can continue working in this industry and better still as a Home Sustainability Assessor as the work is rewarding, very enjoyable and I believe very worth while for the future of our planet.

Mark Clayton