

Submission to Senate Enquiry on Green Loans Scheme

From Dot Green, April 4 2010

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Enquiry.

Background

I am an accredited Green Loans Assessor (ABSA number HO52888). I did my training in October 2009 and signed my contract with the Green Loans Scheme in mid-December 2009. I completed 13 assessments in January 2010 and was gearing up to make this my full time income in 2010.

In February I only completed 4 assessments due to the breakdown in the Green Loans booking system. I am not currently seeking to book assessments because the future of the scheme is so unclear. I am however standing by to see what's next and how I can be involved.

I was very excited about the Green Loans Scheme because

- it allowed me to earn an income making a difference in an area that I'm passionate about,
- it empowered households to understand their water and energy use and actions they could take to reduce this, and
- the interest-free loan component provided concrete support for their implementing the recommendations.

Impact of the Disintegration of Green Loans Scheme.

Personal Impact

I invested approximately \$3,000 in training, insurance, accreditation and equipment to set myself up as a Green Loans Assessor, in anticipation that this would be my main source of income for the next 2 years. I have received \$2,800 payment to date, and have an invoice of \$600 submitted on March 10 awaiting payment. I am uncertain whether this payment will be forthcoming due to recent changes in the administration of the scheme. I am almost compensated for my financial investment, but not at all for the time invested in training and organising and undertaking the assessments.

I won't continue to promote the scheme when there is no clear picture of what will replace the green loans component and all householder documents still reference green loans.

As far as I'm concerned the green loans component was the most powerful and attractive part of the scheme and its removal has ipso facto reduced the power of whatever is to come.

The recent limitation to 5 home assessment appointments per week locks in that work through the scheme is on a part-time basis only.

Impact on My Clients.

The majority of my clients were keen to obtain a Green Loan to implement the recommendations of the report generated from the assessment. However the official report was required to apply for the green loan, not one of my clients received the report from the Green Loans Scheme and they were therefore not able to apply.

Once notice was given of termination of the scheme, loan providers ceased to offer the loans. However the Call Centre continued to advise clients on how to obtain the loans leading to more frustration and anxiety.

The main reason stated for the termination of the green loans component of the scheme was lack of uptake of the green loans component of the scheme. Based on the experience of my clients I believe the Department was either not aware that the reports were not being sent, or conveniently ignored that fact in its public communications.

Quality of Assessment Tool

The report generated by the online assessment tool provides useful information to households. However it could be strengthened considerably. For example

- as an assessor enters data about the household in the online tool, there are graphs provided about where energy and water is used in the house. This information is not made available to the householder in the report generated by the assessment tool.
- There are gaps between the hard copy of the assessment tool (which is used as the basis of the assessor's interview with householders) and the information required to complete the online assessment.
- From household to household with similar circumstances the recommendations are unpredictable. For example, in some instances installing a water tank would be recommended, in some instances not, with no apparent reason for the difference. This reduced the credibility of the scheme and the assessment tool.
- That no information is requested about water use in the garden is a major missing.

As a tool that provided broad brush strokes towards obtaining a green loan to implement recommended capital changes the online tool was almost adequate. However it is not adequate in its own right.

Recommendations:

1. Households which had assessments submitted but didn't receive a report from the Green Loans Scheme should receive the report and a limited-time opportunity to access a green loan. This would restore integrity to the scheme and provide a basis of credibility for

something new to be created.

2. In lieu of the green loan, offer other financial incentives for householders to implement the recommendations of whatever scheme replaces the Green Loans Scheme.
3. Review the online assessment tool so it is more flexible and reliable.
4. Increase the cap on assessments from 5 – 10 assessments per week.

I DO NOT require that my submission be kept confidential. I am happy to be contacted for further information.

Dot Green