

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee
Additional Estimates Hearing – February 2010
ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE

Topic: Home Sustainability Assessments

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Type of Question: Written

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Question: (Senator Birmingham)

1. How was the Home Sustainability booking system developed?
2. Why does it take up to two hours for booking numbers to be provided under this booking system.
3. What notice was provided to assessors, and when, that the booking call centre would have reduced capacity over the Christmas period.
4. Please explain any issues arising where, as has been the case, an assessor emailed a substantial number of bookings over the Christmas period, after a number of days still did not have the booking numbers but carried out the assessments without the booking numbers. Does the assessor get paid?
5. After the booking system by phone was reactivated the phone line was so busy that after 90 minutes assessors were told to hang up and that they would be called back with a booking number. Please explain why, as was the case, some of these calls were returned within five days and some not at all?
6. When is it expected that the funding will be exhausted for the budgeted 360,000 Home Sustainability Assessments?

Answer:

1. The Green Loans appointment booking system was developed by an external supplier contracted to the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (the Department).
2. The booking system call centre experienced a significant call load at the end of 2009 and in early 2010. Over 112,000 calls were made to the Booking Centre in the first week of February 2010, and on 8 February 2010 alone over 90,000 calls were made to the booking centre. During this period, callers experienced significant delays in making a booking through the call centre.

On 22 February 2010, the Green Loans Enquiries Line was introduced to manage non-booking related calls. As a result, wait times for bookings significantly decreased. For example, the average wait time for assessors calling the Booking Centre in March 2010 was 5 seconds. Since then, the average wait time has consistently remained low (<12 seconds).

3. An Assessor eNewsletter was sent to assessors on 3 December 2009 advising that the Booking Centre would operate at reduced hours over the Christmas and New Year period. On 24 December 2009, assessors were advised that the Booking Centre would be closed to new bookings up to and including 8 January 2010.

4. For the period 14 to 22 January 2010, the Department made available a temporary e-mail booking system for assessors to use, due to the delays being experienced with the Booking Centre. Due to the large number of emails received, it took the Department some time to process all requests.

All valid email booking requests submitted during this period have now been processed, and assessors are able to invoice for valid assessments.

5. There were 1,479 messages left requesting call backs. Additional staff were employed at the Booking Centre to return these calls. Where an assessor did not respond, a second (and where time allowed) a third attempt was made to call. Where available, messages were left with a third party requesting that the assessors phone the Booking Centre.
6. At 1 October 2010, over 440,000 assessments have already been funded under the Green Loans Program.