

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and the Arts
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

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Thank you for the opportunity to lodge a submission regarding this enquiry.

The Green Loans programme has been a wonderful and brave policy delivery of a programme that has the potential to make a hugely significant impact on the sustainability of our residential sector and if we can get this right there is massive potential to extrapolate the results through to all domestic sectors as well as into the small business, commercial and industrial areas and to develop a model that can be used on a regional and international scale as well.

I offer the following experiences, insights and ideas in the hope that we can generate the political will to develop and deliver successful and practical sustainability programmes now and into the future.

I would like to say that these ideas are hardly original but have been formulated and developed through many discussions with other home Sustainability Assessors, householders, business, financial and IT people as well as call centre staff and ABSA representatives.

If there is anything contained in these suggestions that may prove useful for future policy choices or programme delivery, I urge the reader to make full use of these ideas.

Should it be at all necessary or beneficial, I am quite prepared to appear before the enquiry and I am most available for further comment or input.

My submission follows the Terms of Reference as a guide to the outlay of these pages and although there are many areas of overlap, I hope that this submission is useful for the purposes of assisting the enquiry.

Jeff Wormald

(a) (i)

(A) The basis on which the Government determined the amounts of the loan to be made available and Government subsidy thereof.

With reference to Green Loans Programme Guidelines 1.1 :-

Objectives of the Program the key objectives of the Program are to:

- *encourage wide-scale improvement of energy and water efficiency in existing Homes*
- *provide sound advice to Households on the most appropriate actions to reduce the environmental impact of operating their Home*
- *provide financial assistance to Households to gain access to the resources they need to invest in energy and water efficient technologies*

The third in the list of the stated outcomes provides for access to resources that the householder needs to make the changes and clearly many of those that took up the Green Loan were in a position to afford the capital to make the desired changes for energy and water efficiency gains while in many other cases the interest free capital was the only means available to lower income households to achieve these goals – so in the case of the former, the availability of interest free capital was the "cream" rather than the "bread and potatoes" of necessary change for the latter.

I would strongly suggest that while the eligibility income limit of \$250,000 per annum is fine for free assessment eligibility, a halving of this threshold would be more appropriate for the actual Green Loan component.

The actual amount of \$10,000, interest free for a period of four years is a good amount for the purposes of putting a household on the path of being sustainable with regards to energy and water use when coupled with other incentives, rebates and subsidies, with many households being able to develop carbon neutral strategies using this amount, My experience as a Home Sustainability Assessor would suggest that \$15,000 interest free capital would give most households the opportunity of developing a carbon neutral home with regards to reasonable usage of energy and water.

The keys to developing these strategies hinge around solar PV installs or other suitable small renewable energy generation systems, coupled with generous gross feed in tariffs for grid connect systems – and in this way a single house hold can often be better than carbon neutral as they generate in excess of their own needs.

Developing policies such as these allow for shortened pay back periods for the householder and most often a revenue neutral situation for the house hold during the pay back period as the feed in tariffs and reduced energy bills offset capital repayments. This also creates a decrease in the demand for further infrastructure such as major coal fired power plants or other major polluting options, and these savings must be factored in when costing and developing future policy.

Future funding models for a Green Loan type package should consider the sizeable compensation payments that will need to be made to households under the CPRS or similar, and the fact that many of these payments may be voided if we develop policies to future proof our households now, thus developing a budget neutral situation or it may even prove to be more economical to take action now to deliver affordable electricity to households rather than compensate these households in the future..

(B) Regulation of Home Sustainability Assessments Practices , including promotion of assessments.

I have been conducting Home Sustainability Assessments since October 2009, and in that time there has been absolutely no promotion of the Green Loans Programme by the Government that I am aware of. Through 2009 the only media mention that I am aware of are advertisements from training organisations seeking trainers or participants in the programme. Having now conducted over 250 Home Sustainability Assessments, I have had no departmental feed back whatsoever as to the efficacy or accuracy of my reports, whether or not I am conducting the assessments to the required standard, where and how I can improve my assessments, or whether or not any of my assessments have in fact been subject to any auditing or quality assurance process.

I view the current booking system as being extremely open to wide scale rorting and abuse as it is the case that with the vast majority of the HH that I have assessed there has been absolutely no official contact between HH and the government. Even for as basic a reporting document as the House Holder Declaration form there is no mechanism for official return or validation.

With such obvious shortcomings in the regulation and validation of the programme and in the booking and reporting procedures, it is quite easy to develop a scenario to conduct "phantom" assessments and it is very naive to imagine that this has not happened. Whether or not there are actually "phantom assessors" doing "phantom assessments" is a matter for the strength of the accreditation process and identity checks prior to the issue of contract with DEWHA.

This situation is further compounded by the fact that a large proportion of assessment reports have not been issued meaning the official contact for HH remains at zero and rorting would continue to remain undetected.

My question with regards to rorting is that if one were dishonest enough to rort the programme for the \$200 assessment fee, wouldn't the lure of \$10,000 Green Loan be just too tempting not to access?

Does the government have any real plans for ascertaining the integrity of the actual Green Loan spend?

I have personally taken out two Green Loans with the funds for the first of these being issued as a \$10,000 bank cheque and the second loan having been placed in an account with the lending organisation for disbursement as I see fit.

I would strongly suggest that as a minimum for checking and validation of the Green Loan spend, the Green Loan funds are only made available by way of bank cheque or electronic transfer direct to supplier or installer of energy efficiency technology and that in this way there is at least some accountability of the use of the Green Loan funds and some means of verification put in place as the funds are spent.

C Accreditation of Home Sustainability Assessors

When I first saw advertisements for HSA trainers or training, it was clear that there were prerequisites and although these were never clearly stated, even with my years of building design and construction experience I was unsure as to my ability to obtain a start with the Green Loans Program – but when I did my training in September 2009, these prerequisites were not mentioned and there were at least two out of the five that attended that course that had no experience at all with building practices. I am aware that many people who have completed the training and accreditation process have little or no experience with building design or thermal performance, with energy efficiency, clean energy generation or home sustainability in general.

While the HSA training course that I attended was small in number of attendees and well delivered with a very knowledgeable trainer and quite a lot of extremely useful input from the course participants, I would be at a complete loss if this were to be my only source of expertise to draw upon for the purposes of conducting an assessment.

The real qualifications necessary for conducting an accurate and useful Home Sustainability Assessment may not be extremely high, but some level of proficiency in most of the above areas is an essential if this or similar types of programmes are to have any real relevance to the house holder for use as a real and effective tool for energy efficiency and sustainability, although the importance of people skills must never be underestimated as this is after all an educational process.

The development of AS/NZS National Standards is an essential for enhancing and ensuring the quality of both the training of assessors and the actual assessment process.

I understand that the DEWHA approved or developed course material constitutes a non accredited course of study and it is also my understanding that the implications of going with a non accredited training course and the subsequent potential for non Registered Training Organisations to deliver the course and that a possible lowering of the standards may eventuate were issues that were pointed out to DEWHA prior to the en masse delivery of training and that DEWHA seemed to pay little or no heed to these concerns.

As to the oversupply of trained HSAs, I would point to the very clear and at times quite public concerns put to DEWHA by ABSA on a number of occasions and as with the issue of the standard of training, DEWHA failed to act upon or investigate such concerns and advice and in fact after a prolonged period proclaimed to have no opinion on the issue!!

Further to this it was always a stated and recognised outcome of the programme that there would be a pool of industry trained assessors and I refer to the Programme Guidelines as listed in official documentation:-

1.3 Outcomes of the Program

The key outcomes of the Program are the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and water consumption in existing Homes through:

- *the engagement of Households in reducing the environmental impact of operating their Home*
- *a recognised industry of expert Assessors providing tailored information and guidance on energy and water saving actions*
- *a research industry analysing the environmental impact of Homes and Households.*

With this stated key outcome of "a recognised industry of expert Assessors" well and truly over achieved by the government despite the very clear warnings of the looming oversupply, the government must not be allowed to use the "no guarantee of work" even one more time to excuse their responsibility to these people as the pool of assessors was a projected outcome of the programme and the government must be called to account on the issue of the oversupply of assessors and the level of assistance required by these people. I understand many are in desperate circumstances after having out laid thousands of dollars for training and accreditation, after having faced extended delays with zero income from these activities and now facing the next round of insurance premiums for a risk that has never been undertaken.

It would be quite possible to develop a package similar to that offered to the insulation industry and workers and to develop a package for compensation for those who will not get a contract to conduct Home Sustainability Assessments with the department. This compensation could be funded by the lowering of the number of available assessments by 100,000 which would free up at least \$25 million and this amount could see as much as \$5000 being offered as a compensation package for losses and expenses of 5000 assessors. Rationalising the current contracts would also be necessary as it is recognised that there may be many inactive contracted assessors and all HSAs could be invited to renew their contracts and if inactive or un-contactable would need to justify why a contract should be reissued and thus it is possible shed many of the "sleepers."

It is one of the tragedies of the Green Loans Programme that any funds for the 600,000 additional assessments or indeed, funds for compensation, are actually the funds that were rightly allocated to subsidise the interest component of the Green Loans, and I ask that all members be willing to explore other avenues of assisting households to access capital for the much needed changes in our energy use and production.

An auditing of the delivery of assessments is essential to determine the efforts and effectiveness of the assessor, the effectiveness and the shortcomings of the programme and what areas need to be improved upon and what is actually working.

What does the auditing process entail, what follow up and what staging of follow up is intended for determining the efficacy of the programme and how will the government engage with their key personnel – that is the assessor – now and into the future with regards to feedback, training, support and effectiveness?

(D) Ensuring value for money for taxpayers.

Practical experience of engaging with house holders within the delivery of the Green Loans assessment process has demonstrated the achievability of the carbon neutral house hold as a common goal on a wide scale within the community, and that given the full range of tools to work with, such as the interest free capital of the Green Loan, the RECs multiplier for small generation units, a generous gross grid feed in tariff, subsidies and rebates on solar hot water systems, water tanks and energy efficient appliances as well as effective energy pricing policy, coupled with education, encouragement and example this carbon neutral status is well within the reach of most households I have assessed. I am sure the vast majority of dwellings in the country fall into this criteria and serious economic modelling needs to urgently undertaken to pursue this goal and to build upon the wonderful initiative of the Green Loans programme..

Any determination of value for money for taxpayers must be taken in the context of future costs of energy generation and carbon production and the associated overwhelming infrastructure costs. Also there could be a mitigation of compensation for CPRS type legislation against the subsidies for PV solar generation systems in particular. Further modelling of this concept may even show net savings for the government in coming years and will likely coincide with time frames for moving the budget out of deficit.

With the relief that I have seen expressed by many householders when they realise that there is something very meaningful that they can do with regards to energy use, green house gas production and environmental sustainability being a good indication of the effectiveness of a well delivered Home Sustainability Assessment the question still remains as to whether or not the systems have been put in place for future monitoring of the actual ongoing effectiveness of the programme.

Has the required information been collected so as to monitor Green Loan participant's energy and water use as agreed to within the Householder terms and Conditions and are the mechanisms for this promised level of follow up in place or in planning?

The goodwill generated within the community, the wealth experience and knowledge gained by dedicated and professional assessors through well delivered assessments, the insight into what is effective and what is achievable is all part of the true value to the taxpayer and is on the whole yet to be realised or determined.

To lose the initiative and momentum gained within the community – already sorely interrupted at this stage – through incompetence, political expediency or cheap point scoring and a continued "bagging" of the programme would be a waste of tragic proportions as the true potential of this type of programme is sure to be an integral part of the overall solution as we grapple with the enormity of tackling the energy, water and carbon reduction issues ahead.

I urge all members of all political persuasions to get behind these types of initiatives and help get the Green Loans programme or similar back on track and to set the mechanisms in place for efficient and effective delivery with timely and appropriate support for HH and assessor alike, and that we truly begin the move towards a sustainable society.

(E) Waste, inefficiency and mismanagement within the program

From the outset of my involvement with the GL programme there has been much confusion and ambiguity.

From the use of style guide and mandatory use of government logos and the coat of arms on advertising material – creating for me either the look of a government organisation or a "shonky" operator trying to appear as a government agency to such things as extended waiting times and non delivery of materials, a cumbersome and unresponsive booking system and a slow and sometimes irrelevant assessment calculator were the minor bug bears and difficulties to overcome. I have been operating for the last three months with photo copied stationary.

The main issue for me has been the decreasing ability or willingness of DEWHA to open meaningful and workable lines of communication and support for assessors and the apparent unwillingness to take on reasonable and easily achievable suggestions about improvements in delivery of the programme and the lack of any real system for input by assessors – it feels almost as though we are being treated as the enemy and every so called improvement by DEWHA has been a major step backwards.

While it was rude and unprofessional for DEWHA to remove the GL booking calendar at such short notice on 24th Dec, 2009, to have compounded this by extending the time it would not be available – once again with little or no notice – and the apparent disregard for forward bookings that assessors may have had with house holders and the negative impact that this has had on public perception of the programme, and the slight on the professionalism of assessors and the massive impact on their incomes is an entirely different level of ineptitude, culpability and an absolute disgrace.

To then enter the madness of the collapsed booking system through the latter part of January and most of February 2010 brought about extreme hardship for many, many hardworking individuals, financial ruin for many small companies trying to enter the field, to have no functioning online calendar, to have the actual booking process taking longer than the assessment time per assessment and the inflexibility and unaccountability of a booking system that did not consider the difficulties brought about with regards to customer

management and booking times, and always putting the onus back on to the assessor for a situation of DEWHAs making, and to do all this with almost zero communication to the assessors and no real apology or resolution to tidy up the mess left behind is simply unbelievable for a government of a developed nation in this day and age.

Is it true that throughout this period, preferential treatment was given to a number of large companies through the provision of on line booking facilities and early access to email booking facilities?

How many companies had access to preferential booking facilities through out the programme and in particular through out January and February 2010, when the bulk of assessors had minimal and ad hoc access to bookings, support and information? And why were the rest of the assessors not granted the same level of access?

Why was the capacity for email bookings kept from most of the assessors? – I was only told of this capacity in mid January after persisting with a phone call and many pertinent questions and then being shunted up through three levels of management within DEWHA, at which time I was told that some companies had access to the online portal, that there was an email booking facility but that DEWHA "did not want it to get out."

Why were some assessor organisations given preferential treatment when the general assessor community were experiencing long delays for basic services?

When the new portal failed to function why was the previous system not immediately reinstated – at least as an interim measure - so as not to impede the Green Loans process?

Was the collapse of the booking process and the assessor calendar and portal a deliberate ploy to impede the Green Loans process?

Is the subsequent five assessments per week not a reflection upon the answer to the previous two questions and the government's attempts to impede and draw out the Green Loans programme?

With the assessor portal remaining largely dysfunctional, are there plans and processes in place to make this an effective tool for assessors and will we have access to an online booking process?

The lack of the assessor's ability or the ability of the house holder to readily contact somebody within the relevant department with regards to Green Loans issues – as apart and distinct from contracted call centres who just paraphrase what we already know from the website – is an issue that must be addressed as a matter of priority. There are many issues that the call centres can not and will not deal with and we need direct access to invoicing information and grievance procedures. Phone contact for these avenues has remained non existent and even emails are on the whole either not responded to, just evaporate or prove to be a blind link. Much of the assessors time and energy is taken up with seeking ways of having input to and gaining access and information from the relevant Department with no listed phone contacts, (apart from call centres) the email link from the Green Loans home

web page having never once being responded to from my many attempts to gain information or seek action through this channel, and the feedback link from the portal now returning a message that this email link will not be responded to and includes yet another email link that by all reports is not responded to. It should also be noted that the assessor is further disadvantaged in this circus merry-go-round of non communication by the fact that there is no history function for the assessor on either the feedback link from the portal or the complaints and comments form from the web page and of course my many post script notes on my emails to this effect have had completely no response.

(F) Ensuring the program achieves its stated aims of improving water and energy efficiency.

Appropriate training and monitoring of assessor performance with the opportunity to upgrade their skills base and to have access to resources and data banks ought to be one of the very first priorities in ensuring quality of delivery and enhanced outcomes of the programme.

To ascertain that the assessment process is actually delivered at all or for an appropriate duration can easily be covered in a sensible resetting of the booking process.

Anecdotal evidence as supplied during direct follow up with HH has often revealed a marked improvement in attitude and performance with a very real enthusiasm and desire for further change and improvement with regards to energy and water use. I have no doubt that a well delivered Home Sustainability Assessment will have a beneficial effect in greater percentage of cases and I can cite numerous cases where the house hold has undergone profound change in energy usage and general outlook on sustainability.

Effective follow up programmes must be implemented to capitalise on the goodwill and momentum already gained, and particular note made of those areas where HH most commonly struggle to improve and of course those areas and strategies that have been most effective. One area of concern often mentioned to me by HH is the difficulty and reluctance of teenagers to participate in energy efficient strategies and I suggest that as an area of policy and programme development there may be few better ways of benefiting all other programmes and strategies going into the future than to engage this demographic.

The effectiveness of the actual assessment process is yet to be determined and I question whether DEWHA or any other Department has the ability to accurately determine outcomes as the energy provider information was never collected but possibly at some time in the future a questionnaire could be offered to householders who have participated in the Green Loans programme as a means of collating actual outcomes. Such a questionnaire could initially be easily delivered during the assessment process and could include checks and balances on the effectiveness of the assessment process and the assessor's delivery of the programme.

(G) The consultation and advice received from financial institutions regarding their participation.

While the exact numbers are not known to me, I understand that the Hunter United Employees Credit Union has issued in excess of 450 Green Loans and I do know that many more of the HH I have assessed would also have made application had they not been prevented from doing so by the huge demand leading into the cut off date and the subsequent inability to even gain an appointment with the Credit Union, the early withdrawal of other financial institutions, or by the lack of notification of any such cut off date, or by the lack of a Green Loans report or even by the lack of a Green Loans booking number !!

There has been discrimination against tenants within the application for Green Loans as I am aware of some financial institutions that will not even consider renters for a Green Loan.

If a person meets the eligibility criteria for participation in the programme then surely they should be eligible for all parts of the programme?

Many low income earners were unsuccessful with loan application and it may be of assistance to this sector if arrangements could be made to have the savings from efficiency programmes factored into their income potential or even arrangements to collect directly the earnings from gross feed in tariffs to post against loan payments. At 60 cents per kilowatt hour gross feed in tariff this strategy would work even for full payment of interest bearing loans taken out over a period of five years– at least at latitude 33 degrees it does. So the question then becomes not how to subsidise the loan but how to make the capital available.

I urge all members of all political persuasions to get behind these types of initiatives to help get Green Loans or similar back on track, to set the mechanisms in place for efficient and effective delivery with timely and appropriate support for HH and assessor alike, and that we truly begin the move towards a sustainable society.

(a) (ii)

(A) Employment and investment in Home Sustainability Assessments resulting from the program, including that resulting from Government statements regarding the number of accredited assessors.

Before investing funds and undertaking training I did what market research I could and although I had not actually read it anywhere I was under the strong impression that the number of HSAs would be limited to 2000 on a nation wide basis and the Green Loans website at that stage was stating that 360,000 to 400,000 assessments would be conducted. My many efforts to determine how many assessments had actually been done or been booked resulted in my gaining no further information or insight into the matter.

Never the less, I estimated that the program was still in the early stages and that with 2000 assessors and 360,000 assessments to be delivered, an average of 180 assessments were available to each assessor and that at an average of ten assessments per week the delivery of the programme in its entirety would take approximately four months.. This would amount to average earnings of about \$36,000 per assessor for the life of the programme and I decided to

back my ability to earn a reasonable income for this period while pursuing an area of great passion and personal interest.

I had read the individual contract that DEWHA had posted on the web site and I understood that there was no guarantee of work but I could never have been reasonably expected to foresee the almost blatant efforts by DEWHA and the Minister to slow me down and actively impede my progress at almost every turn. The government must not be allowed to use this line even one more time as an excuse for the terrible mismanagement of the delivery of the programme and the subsequent chaos this has caused for well intentioned people with well thought out business strategies.

Due to statements made by ABSA, I was aware as early as November 27, 2009 of the ongoing training of assessors and the looming oversupply and expected that there would soon be a cap on assessor numbers but instead a statement appeared on the DEWHA website at about this time to the effect that there would be "no limit" on the number of assessors.

Announcements such as these, the escalating rate of bookings being made, the inability or unwillingness of DEWHA to provide any real information around such simple queries as to the actual number of bookings completed, number of assessors contracted or number of Green Loans funded, was the beginning of a very stressful time as we watched booking numbers escalate. Through out all of the time that I have been conducting assessments, there is not a single instance that I am aware of that DEWHA has actively promoted the Green Loans programme apart from the efforts of the assessors and the Green Loans website.

(B) The effectiveness of the booking system

There have been many problems with the implementation of and access to the booking system and with the technologies and systems available in this day and age most of these issues are easily dealt with and the fact that the government continues to persist with systems that so obviously slow the process down must raise the question for me – IS THIS A DELIBERATE PLOY to contain a programme that is out of control for the department?

Some of the difficulties I have experienced with the booking process are outlined as follows.

While I have always thought that there needed to be a cooling off period for protection of the HH rights and privacy, and have spoken in favour of this idea to the _____, the then DEWHA director of the programme at a time when it was being floated to scrap the 48 hour booking delay, the actual effect of the implementation of this policy and the determination that the 48 hour lag time is two full days from the close of business on the day of booking, means that if an assessor does not get their bookings for the earlier part of the following week booked into the calendar by Friday, then the earliest date they can then do assessments is the following Thursday !! That is book in on Monday, count Tuesday/Wednesday as two full days then next work date is Thursday, yet Call Centre generated bookings (what few there have been) have often been dropped into a busy schedule with inappropriate time framing, no return 48 hours notice to the assessor and often inappropriate postcode groupings for the day

– to the extent that I most often saw the CC generated bookings as a hindrance yet there is no facility to opt out of these and take control of my own calendar.

Simple things have so often been complicated by seemingly arbitrary decisions by CC staff about the implementation of the booking rules and the lack of any clear stream for the assessor to communicate problems, needs and ideas for improvements for the delivery of the programme. An obvious case to highlight this is the example of the many times when I would make the booking in the name of the HH husband or wife and then need to change to the partners name due to better circumstance with regards to Green Loan application or home ownership and thus eligibility issues. My early experience allowed me to book the assessment in both partners name but with out explanation or notification (as I discovered was customary in the DEWHA management of the programme) this was changed to allow for only one name on the booking – yet in cases where I had personally made the booking, for some inexplicable reason I could not request any necessary changes to the booking details and the HH would need to contact the CC to make the changes. This policy seemed to extend at times to such simple requests as to correct the name or address spelling errors most often made by the Call Centre and it important to have these details correct as the report is the basis for the Green Loan.

The locking in of specific time slots on the hour every second (odd) hour for assessments is an unnecessary impost on HH and the assessor as well as an unneeded increase in work load for CC staff – surely just a date should be good enough for booking purposes and the exact timing can be arranged between HH and assessor.

These minor but very irritating issues aside, the booking process itself is inherently flawed and open to wide scale abuse and rorting. For the vast majority of the assessments I have conducted, there has been absolutely no contact and confirmation between HH and DEWHA and it is quite simple to build a scenario for "phantom" assessments to so easily be run through the system given the astonishingly low levels of checks and balances in the booking and invoicing process.

A far better system could be easily implemented and run along the lines of the assessor making bookings online through a functional portal facility – would eliminate CC spelling errors from verbal communications – and the CC then contacts HH to confirm details and ascertain identity and eligibility etc and then and only then is the booking number allocated. In this manner at least every HH has been through some verification process and has had some contact with the department or their agents and had their bona fides checked. It also results in the assessor not needing to make any phone contact with CC thus freeing up assessor and CC staff for more productive outcomes.

The CC contact with the customer could also alert the HH as to what to expect from an assessment with regards to duration and GL etc, and allow for complaints and feedback from HH with regards to marketing strategies employed, timeliness and professionalism and product on sell.

There should also be a guarantee that at least some component of any work invoiced for will be audited BEFORE any payment is made, thus helping to eliminate "phantom" assessments and ten minute doorstops BEFORE the disbursement of tax payer's funds.

Also if there is to remain any cap on the number of assessments then at least allow that assessors are mature enough and professional enough to organise their own calendar on a monthly basis.

Following a similar model as this for booking and invoicing procedures would mean that the checks and balances are built into the system rather than tacked on at the end in the form of audits made after the taxpayers funds are paid out.

I do have further and ongoing concerns with regards to the lack of support for the assessor from the government and detail some of my experiences in *Attachment 1 (other related matters)* with regards to bookings emailed in during January 2010 and in accordance with given protocols at that time. I attach the email from DEWHA that sets out terms for emailed bookings *Attachment 2*, and as is usual for these types of communications, I have needed to receive this through another assessor forwarding the same onto me as I rarely if ever have received communications direct from DEWHA. There were some generic news releases and web postings from DEWHA saying that the issue of assessors not receiving emails from DEWHA was due to assessors having spam filters and the like on their email facilities but if this were the problem in my case the missing communications would have shown up in my trash, junk or spam folders and as the missing emails never showed, I can only surmise that they were never sent to me and have learnt through many conversations with other HSAs that it is the same in many other cases.

I had no official communication as to when the acceptance of emailed bookings had ceased, I just found out through other assessors that it had.

It is a matter of common knowledge amongst HSAs that many of us have bookings that were emailed through in January as per the given protocols and then subsequently assessed yet have never received booking numbers or official comment or status of any sort.

Once the emailed booking facility ceased, the wait times through the call centre became even worse with three people working almost full time trying to get my bookings in and I am aware that on at least two occasions, even with the use of three phones being employed for a whole day, not one booking was made!

(C) The effectiveness and timeliness of Home Sustainability Assessment reports being provided.

It is standard assessment procedure for me to apologise in advance for the quality, relevance and delay for HH in receiving their assessment report, such are the many problems with this particular aspect of Green Loans programme delivery.

The only real usefulness of the report has been for accessing and application for a Green Loan with many of the recommendations made within the body of the report seeming to be very much at odds with the reality of the given situation. This reflects poorly on all associated with the programme and must be remedied.

I do admit that the calculator has continued to improve both in usability for the assessor and relevance of recommendations for HH, but there is still much improvement needed.

A single anomaly will highlight the difficulties experienced when we take the average Australians love of the "beer fridge" and our reluctance to ever let go of or pass on any refrigerator that still has a bit of life left in it. If there is any issue where I have experienced a rankled HH it is around suggestions to let go of the "beer fridge" yet as soon as an assessor enters more than one fridge into the calculator all possibility of having a recommendation to replace inefficient refrigeration is removed from the calculator regardless of how poorly they perform or where they are situated (out in the back shed, 10 deg C warmer than every where else). This places the assessor in the position of either knowingly having the HH supplied with an inadequate report or providing incomplete or incorrect input data to achieve more realistic recommendations. A remedy to this as well as the inclusion of other such simple things as formulas to tally up room sizes to overall floor space and house size, making the *jump to menu* and *assessment wizards* available at all times regardless of how far one has scrolled into a page and the assessment number remaining visible at all times while using the calculator are simple and achievable changes that would help a great deal.

Input from seasoned assessors must be sought when asking how to set the tool that we use the most.

After the February 2010 announcements by Minister Garrett on the discontinuation of the Green Loans, I made an attempt to contact every HH I had assessed so as to give them the best chance possible to make their application. I was absolutely shocked to find that so many had not received their reports and estimate that about fifty percent of assessments done in 2009 had not received their report and not one assessment report from 2010 had been issued!!

This reflects very poorly on the assessors who are after all the public face of the Green Loans programme and it is especially unacceptable given that the report, in its entirety, is available from the moment that I enter all of the data into the calculator. It is my practice to upload as soon as possible with only a few times that I have not finalised within 48 hours of the assessment. On those occasions that I upload as I conduct the assessment, the report is available before I even leave the house hold – yet most of these have not even been issued !!

(D) The early reduction by the Government in the number of Green Loans to be offered, and subsequent discontinuation of the loans, including by financial institutions in advance of the Government's announced date of discontinuation.

The early withdrawal of the Green Loan, the way that it was done, the reasoning given for making the decision and the withdrawal of eligibility for those already assessed with the promise, hope and intent of taking up the interest free finance amounts to a gross breach of

promise by the government and has done much damage to other "Green" government initiatives. The subsequent lack of faith and uncertainty within the community with regards to other such programmes and initiatives may prove damaging to green initiatives and other government programmes for a long time into the future. One of the most common questions or observations I have encountered since the Peter Garrett announcement of 19th Feb, 2010, has been along the lines of "the (NSW) gross feed in tariff will be next."

The government must act quickly and decisively to restore faith and credibility in the delivery of carbon reduction policies and other energy efficiency and environmental programmes.

Did the Minister and the Government not consider the cost of the uncertainty generated in the market place by so arbitrarily ending these programmes and by the demonstrated pattern of ending other such programmes in such an abrupt manner?

Should it not have been a consideration of any reasonable decision making process to take into account the potential for loss of investment by companies and individuals involved in the current programme and also the impact that these management practices will have on attracting further investments of time and energy in future programmes?

Did the Minister or the Government consider the potential for being placed in a position of breach of promise or that the assessors may also be placed in a precarious legal and financial position as a direct result of this decision?

How did the Minister and the Government determine that the Green Loan was so unpopular and what advice did the Government seek on this issue?

If it can be demonstrated that the Green Loan was not as unpopular as estimated, but it was in fact the poor delivery of information and reports, the lack of governmental promotion as well as the promise of ample time that mostly contributed to the apparent unpopularity, will the government reinstate the Green Loan and if not why not?

With the Green Loans programme still really only months old and the projected time frame for the uptake of the Green Loans having been through to 2013, the Minister and the Government must have had very little faith in the initial modelling of the Green Loans or were the loans in fact discontinued for other reasons – and this again raises the question for me – has there been abuse and rorting of the loan component or is this an exercise in political expediency to ensure that the assessment process could continue just long enough to ensure that the bulk of Green Loan assessors were not on the same Centrelink queue as the insulation workers and that this would continue through to just past the Federal election?

We have been given no other justification for the ridiculously low cap of five assessments or ten hours work per week for each assessor – other than to "enhance the quality of the assessment process" or as stated in e-newsletter from DEWHA on 19th Feb, 2010 "To help ensure householders receive thorough and thoughtful advice from assessors, assessors can undertake no more than three assessments a day and a maximum of five assessments per week to ensure greater quality and a more even distribution of work for assessors around the

nation." or as currently stated on Green Loans web page "aims to help improve the quality of assessments being delivered under the program."

If it is true that the Minister and the Government do not consider me or other assessors capable of working more than ten hours per week without the quality of our work dropping dramatically, I demand to know what they are going to do about this because if this really is the case then we are in desperate need of further training - or if this decision has been made for other reasons then it requires nothing short of a full and frank apology, along with a full explanation being made as to the real motives behind such a slow down tactic and the drastic impact it has had on so many people.

Compensation for the complete mismanagement of this programme and assistance to those heavily impacted upon by such rash decisions and negligence must also be considered as an absolute given.

(E) Homeowner actions for which Green Loans have been sought and approved.

From the assessments that I have conducted, the most common reason stated by HH for seeking a Green Loan is without a doubt for the installation of PV solar systems and I am aware that many of the households that I have assessed have either had the installation done or are in the process of arranging it. The price to HH after RECs and the RECs multiplier coupled with the NSW gross feed in tariff of 60 cents per kilowatt hour means that in almost all cases the system generates rebates in excess of the payments for the equivalent amount of interest free capital and that the system pays for itself in less than the four year Green Loan period - making this model of delivery one of the most affordable and effective ways of attacking green house gas production in the domestic environment. If we can generate the political will to explore this type of delivery of carbon reduction technology to households then the idea of a truly carbon neutral residential sector appears to very achievable and over a relatively short time frame as well.

Even as I do assessments today, and even with the very popular Green Loan component removed, home owners are very keen and willing to explore the idea of PV solar generation and there exists the potential for massive future savings to government if the RECs multiplier and the gross feed in tariff earnings could be factored in when considering compensation to HH for any future Carbon Production Reduction Scheme or the like.

Without the Green Loan it is just that much harder for HH to find the capital and that much less likely that they go ahead with the install.

We most certainly have the required technology but do we have the back bone as a nation to take on this challenge?

(F) The level of evaluation of homeowner action following any Home Sustainability Assessment

I have no experience of any assessments I have conducted having been audited but I do have anecdotal evidence of telephone audits having taken place in Newcastle.

I am unable to comment on this area in depth except to say that I have personally assessed many very motivated HH and I am aware of quite a few solar PV and HWS system installs as well as many who have intended to enquire about natural gas connections, rainwater tanks, ceiling fans and even native gardens.

(G) What advice was provided to the Government on the feasibility and effectiveness of the program, including to what degree the Government acted on this advice.

I have heard it said by people who were involved from the outset of the Green Loans programme that the thing that stood this programme apart from the formation of other government programmes was the lack of consultative bodies and boards and that the process was largely done "inhouse."

(iii) an analysis of the effectiveness of the program as a means to improve the water and energy efficiency of homes, including comparison with alternative policy measures.

No comment on this issue.

(b) Consideration of measures to reduce or eliminate waste and mismanagement, and to ensure value for money for the remainder of the program, noting the commitment of funding for an additional 600,000 free Home Sustainability Assessments despite the discontinuation of the loans.

As noted in other areas of this submission, a resetting of the booking process is absolutely essential as is the development of some real and effective communications and feedback channels.

Other areas of priority are validation and verification procedures, resetting the assessment calculator and report process, timely delivery of reports, reasonable levels of support for assessors with regards to materials, feedback and invoicing and an urgent rebadging/rewriting of programme materials so as to reflect current policy and programme delivery.

(c) Other related matters.

Attachment 1

I would like to relay the following account to further outline the mismanagement and current chaos and apathy in the Governmental delivery of the Green Loans programme and the very real impact that has and is having at the human level.

With the removal of access to Green Loans Assessor calendar on Dec 24, 2009 and the subsequent catastrophic failure of the Green Loans call centre in January 2010,

there was at times three people employed almost full time just to ring through my bookings to the call centre – it was reported to me at that time that each booking was averaging about 3 hours phone time to get it lodged with DEWHA and that on at least one occasion no bookings were successfully made with three people trying constantly to get through for the whole day. Their procedure would typically be to keep ringing for 1.5 hours to get other than an engaged signal then be placed on hold for over two hours only to be dropped off the queue and then start over again.

During a mid January telephone conversation that with a DEWHA team leader in the GL assessors dept. it was revealed to me that there was a facility to email in our bookings but "they didn;t really want it to get out". I was supplied with the email address and used it successfully for about 25 bookings. All but three of these bookings have since been issued booking numbers post assessment date and many of the house holders have gone on to secure a Green Loan.

Of the assessments emailed in, three were not issued with booking numbers and two of these house holders have applied for Green Loans and have not been able to proceed with out the booking number. I have received many phone calls from the householders and have submitted many emails from the assessor portal (which has no history function for assessors) and at least two emails from the Green Loans website link (which has no history function for the assessors) and made many phone calls to DEWHA and to the call centres to be invariably told that the emailed bookings were still being processed. There has been no reply to my electronic correspondence and I would note that electronic or land mail is the only way for assessors to contact the actual department – rather than a contracted call centre.

Since the Green Loans were discontinued and a weekly cap imposed of five assessments per week on Feb 19, I have been almost continuously engaged in chasing up unissued reports and booking numbers and fielding phone calls and emails from householders regarding the changes and their eligibility to apply for a Green Loan. I would estimate at least thirty hours per week of unpaid work since the announcements.

One of the householders I had assessed and who did not have a booking number issued was approved for a Green Loan pending the issue of booking number and report and with days left until the credit union would cease to accept GL applications, I rebooked this house holder, using one of my five time slots for the week under the new cap, and in effect forfeiting the opportunity to earn an assessment fee with that time slot. I explained the situation to the call centre staff and they said there was nothing they could do about it and if I wanted a booking number for that job that was the only way I was going to get it.

I informed the householder of the booking number and their ability to proceed with the GL and within ten minutes I received a phone call from one of the other householders without a booking number (related to HH #1 and assessed the same day). They were very upset and expected the same service as HH #1, but I explained that with the new cap in place and my severely decreased earning capacity and with me having already forfeited \$200 in earnings for that week, I could not afford to sacrifice further earnings and that they needed to talk to the call centre and the government and insist upon their rights.

I was absolutely floored when HH rang me back within half an hour and told me that the call centre had said that her booking had most definitely not been made and that I did not even appear as a registered assessor. HH was extremely irate and berated me for being a dodgy operator and no wonder the scheme had fallen over with people like me involved – such is the level of support assessors can expect from CC staff !! I patiently explained the history of the mismanagement of the GL scheme and asked that they continue to contact the government and their local member to secure their rights under the programme. They emailed me within ten minutes and offered me \$200 to sacrifice another of my time slots to secure them a booking number and a Green Loan.

I immediately contacted the call centre and asked them to investigate what had happened with these emailed bookings when all others had been allocated booking numbers – even some from the same email had been successfully allocated booking numbers. The operator initially said that there was absolutely nothing that could be

done from the call centre and that I should use the complaint form from the Green Loans website – I explained my previous attempts and he said that there must be some problem and maybe I was over the cap for that week – and I explained to him that there was no cap at that time. He then asked me how many bookings I had for that week and when I replied about twenty-five he said "no wonder the programme was in trouble and the cap had to be put in place."

Twice in one day I am credited with the demise of the Green Loans scheme!

I persisted with the operator – after offering a short history lesson and a caution to be mindful of assessors sensitivity around these issues – and it eventuated that he could after all make contact with the secret department that deals with the emailed bookings of January 2010 and that I would get a call back within four business hours regarding the matter but that he could only deal with one HH at a time !! (another cap perhaps)

Well, just telling me this at the beginning would have saved us both half an hour but dealing with the other two house holder details at the same time had the potential to save even more time !!

The call back did come from the same CC operator within four hours and I was told that the bookings email had been found and that the HH details were correct but have not been uploaded or allocated booking status because *I had mismanaged my calendar* and that I did not have available time slots for those bookings. I explained that I had zero access to the calendar facility at that time but that all available time slots had always been left open on my calendar and that the error was with the department. The operator said there was absolutely no way to deal with the issue unless I choose to rebook the assessment and sacrifice a time slot.

Such is the working day of a Green Loans assessor post Peter Garrett, pre Penny Wong policy clean up. I have been given, by default, an unpaid full time job cleaning up the mess left by those who awarded me my part time status, I have been told I am not professional enough to cope with a full time job, I have done another six hours of unpaid work, sacrificed earning capacity to achieve the ends of the programme and the reasonable expectations of the

HH, I have been slighted, maligned and close to abused, I have had my professionalism questioned and even my very identity as an assessor denied by the call centre and I have been told that at least two assessments that I have conducted in good faith will never be honoured, and on top of that I have been told on two occasions that I am the reason for the failure of the programme.

Having gone through this I try to wash the bad taste out of my mouth, get a few big breaths in, clear my mind of negative thoughts like "when will my January invoice be paid" and soldier forth and conduct assessments that deliver good outcomes for house holders and for the environment and hope to encourage one more householder into the carbon neutral household adventure.

Please – let us get this type of programme back on track – make the adjustments needed to streamline delivery and curb the wholesale roting that has happened – but we must support our people on the ground.