

# SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT, COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS

26<sup>th</sup> March, 2010

Submitted by: Les Pink

HSA - Waiting for Accreditation

Background:

- Project manager since 2001 of the Long-term Erosion Project on Coal-mines in Central QLD and the Vegetation Assessment Trial and the Mount Morgan Mine-site for the Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management.
- Distinctions in Earth Science and Environmental Planning at Griffith University, Gold Coast.

The following responses are in accord with the ToR as set out by DEWHA

- (i) the administration of the program from a pricing, probity and efficiency perspective, including:
  - (A) the basis on which the Government determined the amounts of the loan to be made available and Government subsidy thereof, **no comment**
  - (B) regulation of Home Sustainability Assessment practices, including the promotion of assessments,  
**ELIMINATE CALL CENTERS. REDUCE BOOKINGS TO TEN PER WEEK PER ASSESSOR.  
ASSESSOR SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO BOOK AN ASSESSMENT.**
  - (C) accreditation of Home Sustainability Assessors,  
A LIMITED UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCIENCE OF SUSTAINABILITY APPEARS TO BE THE CURRENT STANDARD AMONG ASSESSORS.  
**I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT ASSESSORS SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO HAVE AN IN DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF EARTH SCIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE CONCEPTS. TO BECOME A HAS**

**BUILDING THERMAL ASSESSOR, IT IS REQUIRED TO HAVE PRE-REQUISITE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE AND ASSESSOR NUMBERS ARE CONTROLLED.**

(D) ensuring value for money for taxpayers,

MY PARENTS RECEIVED AN ASSESSMENT LAST YEAR WHICH WAS NOT VALUE FOR MONEY FOR THEM AS A CLIENT AND CONSEQUENTLY FOR TAXPAYERS. ALMOST NO FEEDBACK WAS PROVIDED BY THE ASSESSOR, NO ADVICE WAS OFFERED AND NO OBSERVATIONS WERE VOICED.

- **ASSESSMENTS NEED TO BE PRACTICAL AND USEFUL.**
- **ASSESSORS NEED TO ENGAGE THE CLIENT.**
- **ASSESSORS NEED A COMPREHENSIVE UNDERSTANDING OF SUSTAINABLE PRINCIPLES SO THAT THE SERVICE OFFERED IS OF VALUE AND THE ADVICE IS ACCURATE.**
- **ASSESSORS NEED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY WISH TO ASSIST THE CLIENT TO BECOME MORE SUSTAINABLE.**
- **AS ABSA RECOMMENDS, SUB CONTRACTING AND ON-SELLING SHOULD BE ELIMINATED**

(E) waste, inefficiency and mismanagement within the program,

SEE ABOVE COMMENTS PLEASE

(F) ensuring the program achieves its stated aims of improving water and energy efficiency,

- **IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO FOLLOW-UP ON THE ASSESSMENT TO HELP THE HOUSEHOLDER TO UNDERSTAND AND IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS; ESPECIALLY APPLICABLE TO THOSE WITH LITTLE EDUCATION AND/OR WHO'S ENGLISH IS LIMITED.**

(G) the consultation and advice received from financial institutions regarding their participation, **no comment**

(ii) an examination of:

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

MY WIFE AND I INVESTED ALL OF OUR SAVINGS, \$6000 INTO THE GREEN LOANS PROGRAM. IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT LARGE TRAINING COMPANIES WERE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO GREEDILY TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE PROGRAM. I FLEW FROM BRISBANE TO PERTH AND PAID FOR ACCOMMODATION IN FREEMANTLE TO GET TRAINING BEFORE THE GOVERNMENTS CUT OFF TIME AND THAT I FELT WAS BEST PRACTICE. THE COURSE SIZE WAS SMALL (8 PERSONS), AND THE INSTRUCTOR WAS WELL INFORMED. DESPITE THE BEST INTENTIONS OF MOST IN THE CLASS, AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE SCIENCE OF SUSTAINABILITY WAS AND REMAINED WOEFULLY LACKING AMONG ALL OF THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS. THE COURSE MY WIFE UNDERTOOK ON THE GOLD COAST WAS A LARGE COURSE THAT HERDED MASSES OF PEOPLE IN A DAY SHIFT AND A NIGHT SHIFT (40+ PERSONS PER SHIFT). THERE WERE NO CONTROLS IN RESPECT TO WHO COULD TAKE THE COURSE, HOW MANY COULD TAKE THE COURSE, AND MY WIFE AND BROTHER-IN-LAW WERE LED TO BELIEVE THAT THERE WAS JUST ONE PLACE LEFT THAT THEY NEEDED TO INSTANTLY FILL WHEN THAT WAS CLEARLY NOT THE CASE. THE IMPRESSION OF INDIVIDUALS WHO UNDERTOOK THE COURSE WAS THAT IT WAS WEIGHTED TOWARD HOW MUCH MONEY ONE COULD MAKE FROM THE SCHEME.

**I STRONGLY BELIEVE THAT ASSESSORS SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO HAVE AN IN DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF EARTH SCIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE CONCEPTS. TO BECOME A HAS BUILDING THERMAL ASSESSOR, IT IS REQUIRED TO HAVE PRE-REQUISITE EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE AND ASSESSOR NUMBERS ARE CONTROLLED.**

(B) the effectiveness of the booking system, **no comment**

(C) the effectiveness and timeliness of Home Sustainability Assessment reports being provided,

AN ASSESSOR PROVIDED MY PARENTS WITH AN ASSESSMENT WHICH CONTAINED TWO RECOMMENDATIONS; 1. THAT THEY HAVE OPEN-ABLE WINDOWS AND 2. THAT THEY INSTALL CEILING FANS. THE HOUSE ALREADY HAS SECURITY SCREENED WINDOWS THAT REMAIN OPEN AND THE BEDROOMS AND LOUNGE ALREADY HAVE CEILING FANS. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE RESPONSE IN THE CASE OF MY PARENTS WAS NIL AND THE RESPONSE OF MY PARENTS WAS EXASPERATION.

**THE GRAPH IN THE ASSESSMENT REPORT IS HELPFUL, HOWEVER ASSESSMENT REPORTS COULD OFFER MORE SUGGESTIONS AND GREATER DETAIL THAN OFFERING GENERAL COMMENTS. THIS WOULD REQUIRE GREATER INPUT FROM THE ASSESSOR AND A MORE COMPREHENSIVE REPORT FROM DEWHA.**

- (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, **no comment**
- (E) homeowner actions for which Green Loans have been sought and approved, **no comment**
- (F) the level of evaluation of homeowner action following any Home Sustainability Assessment, THERE CURRENTLY IS NO PROVISION FOR FOLLOW-UP AFTER THE ASSESSMENT.  
**IT WOULD BE ADVANTAGEOUS FOR THE CLIENT TO RECEIVE A FOLLOW-UP VISIT TO ASSIST THE HOUSEHOLDER TO INTERPRET AND IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS.**
- (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, **no comment**
- (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;
- **ABSA'S RECOMMENDATION TO ASSIST LOW INCOME EARNERS TO LIVE MORE SUSTAINABLY AND TO REDUCE THEIR ENERGY EXPENSES IS AN EXCELLENT IDEA.**
  - **DEFINITELY A NEED TO FOLLOW-UP ON THE ASSESSMENT TO HELP THE HOUSEHOLDER TO UNDERSTAND AND IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS; ESPECIALLY APPLICABLE TO THOSE WITH LITTLE EDUCATION AND/OR WHO'S ENGLISH IS LIMITED.**
- (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;  
**ASSESSORS SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO HAVE AN IN DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF EARTH SCIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE CONCEPTS. ASSESSORS SHOULD BE AUDITED TO ENSURE THAT THEY ARE PROVIDING AN INFORMATIVE AND WORTHWHILE SERVICE TO THE HOUSEHOLDER. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND A FOLLOW-UP VISIT TO ASSIST THE HOUSEHOLDER TO INTERPRET AND APPLY THE RECOMMENDATIONS.**
- (c) other related matters.

**IT HAS BEEN OUR GOAL TO ENTER THE SUSTAINABLE INDUSTRY LONG-TERM. WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE UNDERLYING PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND WE LIVE SUSTAINABLY. OUR PERSONAL PLAN WAS TO OPERATE AS ASSESSORS VIA BICYCLE. OUR HOME OFFICE HAS BEEN SET UP SO THAT OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT IS AS LOW AS IS PRACTICABLE. MY WIFE AND I INVESTED ALL OF OUR SAVINGS, \$6000 INTO THE GREEN LOANS PROGRAM AFTER BECOMING AWARE OF THE PROGRAM FROM THE DEWHA WEBSITE. WITH UNIVERSITY TRAINING IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE, 13 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE, A BUSINESS PLAN THAT IS UNDERLINED BY SUSTAINABLE PRECEPTS, ALONG WITH AN APPRECIATION OF PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE, WE FEEL THAT WE CAN OFFER THE DEWHA PROGRAM VALUABLE EXPERIENCE IN SCIENCE AND IN WORKING WITH AND HELPING PEOPLE. IT WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE IF ASSESSORS WITH SCANT KNOWLEDGE OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND WITH BUSINESS MODELS THAT HAVE MAKING MONEY AS THE PRIME FOCUS WITH LITTLE CONCERN FOR PEOPLE, WERE THE STANDARD OF ASSESSOR THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT WAS SATISFIED WITH.**

We look forward to your response to the submissions and appreciate your interest in the viewpoint of (potential) assessors like ourselves.