

To the Inquiry into the Green Loans Program

By the Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and The Arts

- As announced on 1st March, 2010

Attention: The Committee Secretary

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment, Communications and The Arts
Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600.**

I am a licensed Electrical Contractor with over 30 years of continuous employment in the trade. I have a broad and comprehensive skill-set with substantial experience in the domestic, commercial, industrial and marine areas of my trade. Over the past decade I have been developing a specialised interest and body of knowledge in the related fields of Sustainability and Energy Efficiency.

In late 2008 I relocated from Sydney to Brisbane ostensibly to complete training for, and to commence a contract in, providing Energy Efficiency Auditing and Advice to the general public in the domestic market. This step was both bold and very challenging and is indicative of my commitment to the goals of the drive towards sustainability and efficiency we all live with now. I contribute directly - both technically and practically - in the pursuit of improving energy efficiency and sustainability across all the areas that my trade serves. In real terms I am leading and advising friends, family, clients and customers in trying to manifest positive, proactive change for the good of all.

In December of 2009 I completed my training and accreditation as an Assessor under the HSAS Scheme. I have spent in excess of \$3, 000.00 just to get to the point of being allowed to **apply** for a contract [for the provision of Assessor Services under The Green Loans Program with the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts].

No one has advised me as to the status of my application. No one can advise me of even having *received* my application. No one I have contacted in Canberra can tell me anything meaningful (or even encouraging) regarding my predicament.

As a purely financial summary: I am out of pocket for the amount referred to above, plus expenses incurred in the accreditation process, plus loss of business during the accreditation process, plus the major losses associated with the disappearance of an expected income.

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I have just turned 48 years of age and believe it is entirely reasonable (and probably very necessary) for me to be moving into a role where I can use my substantial knowledge and experience by advising, instructing and leading others, within my field of expertise, towards the specific, achievable outcomes society so desperately needs. Due to the failure of the HSAS Scheme I have lost that most precious of commodities - **time**. In trying to survive and make a liveable income I am struggling to compete with competitors half my age - yet I frequently find myself spending time (and customer's money) undoing and rectifying my competitor's errors and obvious lack of experience and wisdom. This is a basic, human reality.

I am perfectly suited and placed to be conducting this service on behalf of the Government yet, unfortunately, I am still "treading water" searching for a valid, appropriate and achievable direction.

Suggested Changes and Improvements

- 1. Applications: Define the process, including time-lines, to set clear expectations regarding competency, suitability and the process of application.**
- 2. Set tighter, more appropriate requirements and standards of competency for Applicants.** "Weed out" the inappropriate applicants and reduce the overall number of assessors. In my Assessor Training class I was seated next to the following people: - two lawyers, a pest-control contractor, a secondary school-teacher, a self-employed printer, a florist and several ceiling-insulation installers (who were amongst a number of other ceiling-insulation installers who made up **over 50%** of the total class numbers). In the introductions performed at the beginning of the course, I think I counted just 5 tradespeople! Now, I may be riding dangerously close to the edge of the precipice that is political-correctness or even touching on some kind of "tradie racism" but, I believe this is the "elephant-in-the-room" as regards the failings of the Green Loans Program. In my opinion, the blindness and wastefulness of inviting virtually "anyone" in to this program constitutes a really amazing underestimation of both the goals and consequences of this program. The scope of work in this program suggests itself to tradespeople and engineers *from the outset*.

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How to set the appropriate requirements, standards and competency of the applicants is work that can reasonably be expected from government - at any level.

Some trades and professions must be automatically granted entry - as long as they are fully licensed and/or fully certified and can accept the burden of responsibility that is fair and relevant to the goals and intention of the service.

The Service should aspire to **quality and authority** and not be watered down to suit a range of sensitivities and abilities not acquitted for the genuine aims and intentions of the sustainability assessments.

3. **Refund the training fees of those who fall outside the necessary requirements and standards of competency for applicants.** Use the funds set aside from the abandoned Green Loans component to help achieve this.
4. **Take a levy from all of the Trainers/Training Companies who profited from the windfall of the Training/Accreditation rush of late 2009.** The levy should be graded as a percentage of the profit. Call it a “contribution” to assist the PR angle of the process. These moneys could assist the refunding of the training fees.
5. **Issue Status/Progress Reports forthwith, for Applicants waiting “in the dark”.**
6. **Reissue clear and transparent Rules for Operating - immediately.** Are companies allowed to make bulk-bookings? Are any companies operating with their own exclusive Booking System - as was alleged to have been occurring previously? Make these things known - make “the level playing field” a strong, reliable reality in a Federal system.
7. **“Free Services” are too open to abuse by customers - review the value and consider placing a modest fee on the service.** Seek to make the fee tax-deductable.

I continue to wait, in good faith, for a fairer and more acceptable outcome to follow on from this inquiry. I am available for query or comment - my needs are urgent and genuine.