

Positive Interest

I am pleased to report that householders on the whole are very interested and motivated to reduce their impact on the environment through the implementation of appropriate sustainability measures. The reports provide a very worthwhile overview of what efficiency measures have or are yet to be implemented in a particular home. It is interesting to note that many householders are questioning when business sustainability assessments will be introduced.

Financial Hardship

My family has endured severe financial hardship since completing my Assessor training in November 2009. I was forced to wait well over 2 months whilst ABSA and DEWAH processed my application before I could finally start as a Home Sustainability Assessor on the 1st of February. As at the 12th of April, I haven't received any payment for the many assessments I've completed thus far.

Reports Delay

I have completed over one hundred assessments during the past 10 weeks and only know of one householder who has received their report in that time. Obviously this is far from acceptable and reflects poorly on the Department and Assessors equally. Once an Assessor uploads their assessment to the Department the report is computer generated so any delay from there seems unfounded.

Booking System

The present system requiring Assessors to phone in their bookings is incredibly time intensive and inefficient. Replacing this with an email or web based solution would provide a quicker and more accurate outcome.

Interest Free Loans

The Department's decision to discontinue the interest free Green Loans on the basis of a low uptake is incredulous. Speaking with many hundreds of householders over the last few months regarding this has confirmed for me that the general public at large has: (a) never heard of Green Loans; or (b) were intending to apply for a Green Loan but were still waiting to receive their report after many months.

Assessor Assessment Cap

The decision to cap individual Assessors from a potential 49 assessments per week to 5 per week is unjust. This severe limitation makes the scheme unviable for most Assessors and will no doubt lead to many of the more competent Assessors being forced to leave the scheme to pursue full time employment elsewhere. Most Assessors were encouraged to join the program based on its high-income prospects.

Promotional Materials

The discontinuation of the provision of promotional materials for use by Assessors is unacceptable as these items are the interface between Assessors and the public. The printing and distribution of these materials must be of a consistent and high standard to ensure a professional image to householders and as such should be provided by the Department as originally promised.

Travel Fee

Assessors were led to believe that there were travel fees available for assessments provided over distances greater than 50kms. After 10 weeks of travelling over many great distances I have just learnt that the travel fees are only available where householders live distances greater than 50kms from their respective post office rather from the Assessors home base. I feel that this ruling is in contradiction with the Department's wishes to make assessments available to as wide a community as possible as I will be now more reluctant to travel too far. My additional travel expenditure therefore has further eroded my dwindling financial position. This needs to be addressed.

Sudden Changes Without Consultation

The changes that came into effect on 19th of February had a huge impact on the sector. Most disappointing of all, was the fact that there was no prior consultation with the Assessor industry. The ongoing uncertainty and continued lack of communication has been incredibly stressful for Assessors and their families. I have personally considered seeking compensation.

Future

The Home Sustainability Assessment Scheme is a wonderful initiative that is very much of our time. It has obviously thus far been marred by poor regulation of Assessor numbers and training leading to an overload for booking, reporting and accounting departments.

To identify the committed Assessors from the not so committed it would be ideal for Assessors to be presented the option of upgrading their training to a Certificate 4 Level (the Department did originally promise to fund this) by a certain date.

I see a sustainable future for this industry if committed Assessors continue to work together in consultation with the Department. This work is exceptionally valuable to make certain that homes become more efficiently run and hence reduce their negative effects on the environment.

Our population is exploding at an increasing rate and therefore our individual environmental footprint must be minimised to ensure a sustainable future. Home Sustainability Assessors play an incredibly important role in empowering householders with the knowledge to make appropriate decisions about their own future and the future of their community as a whole.