



Amanda Rishworth MP's Green Hero News

December 2009

Green Loans mean Green Homes for Christmas

Welcome to the final Green Hero Newsletters for 2009. As the Christmas season approaches this edition will focus on green giving – the act of giving is something many of us do at Christmas time however it is important to remember green giving can be practiced every time we choose to give.

Often people don't participate in eco-friendly processes because they don't know enough about them and worry that it is all too hard. I would like to highlight how the Green Loan - the Rudd Government's green gift to Australian households can make eco friendly processes very easy to take on. The Green Loan scheme enables people to borrow up to \$10,000.00 to make environmental improvements to their homes.

The first step in accessing the program is to call 1800 895 076 and organize an assessment. This will involve an Assessor coming out to your home and conducting an appraisal of how energy efficient your house is, this can take up to three hours depending on the size and construction of your home. Once the assessor has completed the Appraisal a Green Loan Assessment Report is generated from the collated information.

- Your Home Assessment Report is your personalized action plan as it indicates how you can reduce your household bills and make your home more energy efficient.
- The five page report includes an Eligible Items Certificate which lists items you are able to use a Green Loan to purchase. Once you receive the Green Loans Assessment Report you can seek finance to assist you to follow through on your action plan
- It is a good idea to get some quotes for the items on your list before you approach one of the financial institutes accredited to administer the Green Loan (call the hotline 1800 895 076 or visit <http://www.environment.gov.au/greenloans> for a list of financial institutions). The amount that is borrowed must be paid back within a four year period. The government pays the financial institution the interest on the loan so your payback schedule will be interest free and tailored to suit your financial situation

Giving green for the Festive Season

As the theme of this quarterly newsletter connects to environmentally friendly issues I hope the suggestions presented below inspire readers to think about greener giving.

Purchasing locally made products, not only is environmentally friendly it is also socially and economically friendly. It reduces environmental impact from transportation of goods and at the same

time will support businesses in the South and our local economy.

- Fruit baskets from our many locally grown sources make terrific gifts. Remember too our Fleurieu Peninsula arts and crafts can offer some very unique items.
- Indulge someone with Fleurieu organic wines.
- Make up your own organic food gifts such as organic cakes and biscuits or create your own organic olive oil gift by adding dried chillies, garlic or herbs to an attractive bottle and filling it up with local olive oil.
- Another great green gift is to treat people to a special experience instead of an item – the options here are endless and I hope the suggestions below inspire you to think of more great green ways of giving and sharing;
- Treat people to a ticket to a concert or theatre, annual membership of a gallery, a massage or a session at a spa.
- Organize a carol singing party for friends and family
- Give a green echo voucher such as 'I promise to mow the lawn for one month' or 'I promise to tend the compost heap for one month' or 'I promise to rake the leaves for one month'.
- Make a commitment to your household to recycle and sort out cans, bottles or newspapers for collections or make a promise to sort out the unwanted books and items around the house
- Children and teenagers could make a promise to parents not to pester for toys or new clothes for the next three months and make use of what they have already
- Bake your own Christmas shape cookies and sprinkle with chopped organic dried fruits and nuts (add cranberry goji berries for a cheerful red Christmas touch). These can be packed in a recycled glass or container or basket trimmed with ribbons and sprigs from the garden.
- Create Christmas Coupons that can be redeemed for everything from a hug to weeding the garden, babysitting and taking out the rubbish. Use a colourful ribbon to hold your coupons together which could include a Breakfast in Bed Coupon, Walking the dog Coupon, An hour of silence Coupon, One hour control of the remote control, Big hug Coupon, Washing the dishes Coupon or whatever else comes from the heart.
- Give a gift box filled with hand-written letters of all your favourite memories.

Other gift ideas

- Vintage clothing and jewelry come from a time when products were not mass produced and great care was taken in their creation. Visit flea markets, antique jewellery and vintage clothing shops for gifts – you'll be giving a unique present, as well as recycling.
- Cut down on the stress of choosing presents if you've got a big group of people to buy for by organising a 'Secret Santa' – agree on a gift budget which everyone must stick to, pick one name each out of a hat, then everyone only has to buy one present
- Give grandma a "Biscuit of the Month" certificate along with one dozen biscuits. Each month for the rest of the year bake a different kind of cookie for grandma. Young children will love getting Grandma's parcel ready each month which could also include a recent photograph of the grandchildren.
- Wind chimes made from pottery discs or anything recycled could make an ideal gift
- Give "green" gifts such as long lasting fluorescent light globes or a battery recharging pack for Christmas. A household compost bin or a worm farm to dispose of Christmas food scraps.
- Frame a piece of art created by a child.
- Sew an apron for your favorite cook with a personalized saying on it.
- Cross stitch something onto a towel, apron or face cloth.
- Make a candle holder out of a tin can by punching a design into it with a hammer and nail. Recycled soup and coffee cans work well for this.

- Create a homemade photo album full of favorite family photos.
- Create a cookbook with your family's favorite recipes to treasure.
- Decorate, personalize and paint an old small box and use it for a jewelry box or knick-knacks. This is another fun craft children love to help creating.
- Decoupage someone's favorite photo onto a container or box so that they will be able to see it every day

Simple Green gifts for children could include a stainless steel water bottle, a flashlight, step stool or chair, bowls, baskets, weaving or sewing kit and items and accessories to encourage children's environmental and natural interests such as swimming goggles, a basketball, eco-friendly art supplies, magnifying glass, gardening tools etc.

A simple gift for grandparents, aunts and uncles is a print of the child's hand with name date and the following poem in a homemade card.

*Sometimes you get discouraged
Because I am so small
And always leave my fingerprints
On furniture and walls
But everyday I'm growing big
And soon I'll be very tall
Then all my little handprints
Will be hard to recall
So here's a special handprint
just so that you can say
this is how my fingers looked
when I placed them here today*

Greening those final touches

I think everyone would agree that a handmade card is always extra special alternatively if you are time poor as many of us are you could buy recycled cards.

Gift boxes can be created from cereal and tissue boxes. Get the kids to use paper and glue to decorate the cartons with a solid color and then they can cut out Christmas shapes, hearts or flowers from scrap paper or glue on buttons, leaves or anything else you have around the house to personalize it for that special touch. Remember ribbon, string, rope or wool can be used instead of sticky tape.

The gift and finishing touches for your gift can be as varied as the green gifts you choose.

I wish you all well with giving green this coming season and hope you all have a safe and happy Christmas. I look forward to sharing more Green Hero news with you in 2010

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