

## In This Months Issue

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### Geelong & Surf Coast Property Expo

**Geelong & Surfcoast Property Expo 2010: Saturday 20th - Sunday 21st March 2010**

This year we will be taking part in the Geelong and Surfcoast Property Expo at Deakin University Waterfront Campus.

On both days we are expecting around 35+ exhibitors offering a vast range of property related information and services. Education Sessions are a highlight with important topics being presented.

These include: Where to Buy your next Property, The Importance of Depreciation Schedules, Financing Your Investment, Common Mistakes Investors Make, Hot Spots in the Geelong and Surfcoast Region and lots more

If you decide to attend this year , be sure to drop by and say hello.

For more information on the expo please visit [www.geelongpropertyexpo.com.au](http://www.geelongpropertyexpo.com.au)

### Unsafe Curtain & Blind Cords

Claire Noone director of Consumer Affairs Victoria has issued a challenge for residents to make their curtain and blind cords safe.

"It is important to understand the risks and make sure there are no exposed loops hanging down in your home, to prevent any serious injury or deaths from occurring in the future, Claire said.

"Curtain cords can be a safety risk as they can form a loop and get tangled around the child's neck," she said.

"The easiest way to make cords safe in your home is to request a free safety kit from Consumer Affairs Victoria," she said.

Consumer Affairs Victoria Director, Dr Claire Noone said she was delighted with the response to the safety campaign so far, but suspects there could still be considerable numbers of unsafe curtain and blind cords posing a hazard to children across the state.

"By law newer blinds and curtains are required to comply with the mandatory safety standard, however there are many blinds and curtains that were made before these standards came into effect. Please be vigilant and check your home," Dr Noone said.

Unsafe curtain and blind cords have contributed to numerous child deaths, near misses and serious injuries both in Australia and overseas.

"There are cases where toddlers become entangled in blind and curtain cords but have luckily been discovered in time, but tragically sometimes it is too late, Dr Noone said.

"We have been encouraging relevant organisations, such as local councils schools, childcare centres, hospital maternity wards, kindergartens, curtain and blind retailers, hardware stores and real estate agents to spread the message about unsafe cords," she said.

"I encourage all parents to request a free safety kit from Consumer Affairs Victoria, to help make their curtain and blind cords safe," Claire said.

Anyone with looped curtain and blind cords and wooden window frames should request a free safety kit from Consumer Affairs Victoria by visiting [www.consumer.vic.gov.au](http://www.consumer.vic.gov.au)

If you do not have a wooden frame, your local curtain and blind shop or hardware store will be able to offer you an easy alternative solution.

For further information please contact Consumer Affairs on 1300 55 81 81.

## SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO COMMONWEALTH ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

The Government recently announced a series of changes to the administration of the environmental programs to boost safety and improve environmental performance. These changes are aimed at boosting safety for households and safety for the workers whose employment is funded by these important environmental programs.

The changes announced by the Government include:

- The establishment of a new household Renewable Energy Bonus Scheme to replace the Home Insulation Program and the Solar Hot Water Rebate.
- Significant changes to the Green Loans scheme to boost the effectiveness and sustainability of the scheme.

The changes have, will ensure the Government continues to help householders and business contribute to Australia's efforts to transition to a low carbon economy.

The changes announced put householders back in charge of the environmental products installed in their home. These changes will benefit good green businesses and are bad for the shonky operators who have begun exploiting this market.

### **A new household Renewable Energy Bonus scheme**

A new household Renewable Energy Bonus Scheme will assist households to save money on power bills and reduce their carbon emissions. This new Scheme will replace the Home Insulation Program and the Solar Hot Water Rebate Program both of which have been discontinued as of close of business on the 19/02/10.

The Government's focus is on the safety of households and tradespeople who will both benefit from the operation of this new scheme. Under the household Renewable Energy Bonus scheme, households will be able to receive a rebate for the installation of ceiling insulation or a solar hot water system or a heat pump. \$1000 rebates will be available for ceiling installation and solar hot water systems and \$600 rebates for heat pumps systems.

The new rebate for solar hot water systems and heat pumps will be available for systems installed after the 19/02/10. This scheme will institute several key changes to the delivery of ceiling insulation including:

- Householders – rather than installers - will claim the \$1000 rebate directly through the Medicare system.
- Introducing a new registration scheme requiring all installers to reregister, pay a cash bond, show evidence of meeting the training and skills requirements and provide certified quality assurance and occupational health and safety plans.
- Introducing a strengthened compliance regime in concert with State and Territory occupational health and safety and fair trading authorities.

It is intended that the insulation component of the Renewable Energy Bonus scheme will come into operation by 1 June. The Government's objective remains to see insulation installed in up to 1.9 million homes, including those already installed under the discontinued Home Insulation Program, to be completed by 2011.

The Government will also be commissioning an external assessment of the proposed implementation arrangements for the household Renewable Energy Bonus scheme and will continue to provide oversight to the scheme during its operation. This assessment will consider whether the arrangements and planned timelines proposed for the scheme's implementation are sufficient to meet the Government's expectations of safety.

The Government will continue to roll out an existing electrical safety inspection program of all homes that have had foil insulation installed under the Program. The Government will also be prepared to check as many houses as necessary which have insulation installed under the Home Insulation Program.

The Government will also establish a new Home Insulation Program Review Office to handle all complaints and inquiries and immediately address risks created by unscrupulous operators and will appoint an independent reviewer to conduct a review of the Home Insulation Program design, implementation and delivery.

### **Significant Changes to Green Loans Program**

The Government will help over an additional 600,000 Australian households tackle climate change through a re-designed and extended Green Loans program.

That is on top of the 360,000 assessments already available under the program, of which more than 270,000 have already been booked nationwide.

The re-design of the program will include:

- the discontinuation of the less popular loans component next month to provide for the significant boost to assessment availability;
- a new cap of 5000 assessors, allowing up to an extra 1200 trained assessors to contract with the Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts;
- a weekly cap of 15,000 assessment bookings and a daily and weekly cap per assessor of three and five respectively to ensure greater quality and a more even distribution of work for assessors right around the nation;
- changed booking arrangements allowing only individual assessors to make bookings. These new arrangements will apply to the end of 2010.

**IMPORTANT:** This is not advice. Clients should not act solely on the basis of the material contained in this newsletter. Items herein are general comments only and do not constitute or convey advice per se. The newsletter is issued as a helpful guide to clients and is for their private information. Every effort is made to ensure the contents are accurate at the time of publication. We take no responsibility for any subsequent action that may arise from the use of this newsletter.