



Environment and Resources Committee

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The Environment and Resources Committee is a select committee of the Queensland Parliament. It was established by resolution of the House on 23 April 2009 to monitor and report on: environmental protection; climate change; land management; water security; and energy.

Media Release

Energy efficiency should be number one energy priority for Queensland

Queensland should consider investing in energy efficiency ahead of other energy resources, including renewables, a parliamentary committee has found.

The report by the Environment and Resources Committee from an inquiry into energy efficiency improvements has made 18 recommendations.

Committee Chair, Carryn Sullivan MP said Queenslanders could be throwing away billions every year by wasting energy and failing to take advantage of energy efficiency improvements.

“Energy use in Queensland has trebled over the past thirty years. We are the nation’s energy gluttons because of our heavy industry and mining, decentralised population, energy hungry lifestyle and addiction to air-conditioning.”

“Energy efficiency, which is about doing the same or more with less energy input, holds the key. Investing a little extra in energy efficient appliances, equipment, homes and buildings really is the answer.”

“It starts with a simple question, ‘is it energy or fuel efficient?’ All Queenslanders need to ask this question a lot more, and before any other considerations when they shop.”

“The government also needs to treat energy efficiency as the state’s first energy resource. This means investing in energy efficiency ahead of any other energy investment, including renewables, to meet the state’s energy needs.”

“The government already has most of the necessary policies and programs in place, and is working on a state energy efficiency strategy to tie it all together. They just need to make sure their programs are working as intended, and to expand them.”

“We have recommended that programs are reviewed routinely and that existing public education programs, including the ClimateSmart Home Service Program, are expanded and improved.”

The government is required to table a written response in Parliament to the committee’s report and recommendations.

For further information contact the committee’s secretariat at Parliament House ph 3406 7908 or 1800 504 022.

INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE

The committee was required to investigate the economic and environmental potential provided by energy efficiency improvements for households; communities; industry; and government. In the course of the inquiry the committee was required to consider:

- the economic and environmental costs and benefits arising from energy efficiency improvements;
- potential barriers and impediments to improved energy efficiency;
- potential policy options for energy efficiency improvements, with an emphasis on initiatives that are cost effective for individual producers and consumers; and
- the role of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and other Commonwealth Government initiatives in encouraging energy efficiency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the government provides funding to continue the ClimateSmart Home Service, subject to the findings of an independent evaluation, and examines the benefits and costs of amending the ClimateSmart Home Service program to include a follow up visit or phone call to clients to reinforce the benefits of the program and gauge their progress.
2. That the government encourages all local councils and electricity retailers to offer rebates and other assistance to their clients to meet all or part of the \$50 service costs to participate in the ClimateSmart Home Service program.
3. That the government sets targets for the provision of ClimateSmart Home Service visits to low income households as well as households in remote and regional areas.
4. That the government investigates new technologies to overcome the barriers to installing smart meters in multiple dwellings that are not individually metered.
5. That the government commits to a program of independent evaluations of all major energy efficiency programs.
6. That the government reports to Parliament the findings from independent reviews of its major energy efficiency programs.
7. That the government reviews its funding for renewable energy programs to determine whether investing in energy efficiency improvements would achieve better value for the Queensland economy.
8. That the government investigates in consultation with the Australian Building Code Board, potential bias issues involving the use of computer software packages to rate building energy efficiency to ensure that the software adequately reflects the energy efficiency benefits of designs that capitalise on passive heating and cooling.
9. That the government, through the Queensland Energy Management Plan, acknowledges that energy efficiency is Queensland's first energy resource, and that the government will consider investing in programs to realise energy efficiency gains before investing in new generating or transmission capacity to meet Queensland's energy needs.
10. That the Queensland Energy Management Plan:
 - sets measureable targets and timeframes for energy efficiency gains;
 - quantifies, for each policy or initiative, the anticipated energy efficiency gains to be achieved;
 - describes how the plan links to the National Framework for Energy Efficiency and the National Energy Efficiency Strategy;
 - encompasses supply-side energy efficiency improvements and demand-side improvements across all portfolio areas including land development, building and transport;
 - includes the contribution of local government to energy efficiency improvements;
 - addresses the need for equitable access to energy efficiency gains;
 - specifies the roles and accountabilities of agencies and coordinating mechanisms;
 - addresses data collection and dissemination issues, and sets a timetable for outcome evaluations of all major energy efficiency programs and initiatives;
 - explains the linkages between energy efficiency and other strategies promoting clean energy, renewable energy, and climate change mitigation;
 - identifies opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the plan; and
 - outlines funding mechanisms for energy efficiency improvements.
11. That the immediate priority actions to be addressed in the Queensland Energy Management Plan and the first annual action plan prepared under it, should include:
 - expansion of existing public education designed to achieve attitudinal change about energy use and efficiency;
 - a plan for the evaluation of major energy efficiency policies and initiatives; and
 - specific mention of assistance for low-income households that are most vulnerable to the effects of rising energy costs.
12. That the government establishes a 'one-stop' shop to provide energy efficiency information centrally for residents, businesses, communities and governments; and explores the feasibility of using existing community extension worker networks, industry associations, trades and professional people and energy companies to deliver energy efficiency information and assistance to consumers.
13. That the government ensures that low income households have access to adequate information and other support, so that they may implement energy efficiency improvements should cost reflective electricity tariffs be introduced.
14. That the government continues to support the No Interest Loan Scheme program and explores the feasibility of offering targeted rebates of \$100, modelled on the Victorian scheme, to No Interest Loan Scheme loan clients who purchase energy efficient whitegoods such as refrigerators, freezers and washing machines. The committee also recommends that the government explores the feasibility of establishing a program in the community sector, modelled on the Phoenix project to assist low-income households access energy efficient second-hand appliances.
15. That the government, through the Ministerial Council on Energy, seeks the establishment of strict guidelines which allow Government Owned Corporations in the energy generating sector to invest in appropriate and/or speculative investments for the purposes of energy efficiency research and development.
16. That the government examines the potential benefits of utilising distributed generation in Queensland.
17. That the government explores the feasibility of a Queensland white certificate scheme consistent with schemes operating in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, and which includes energy efficiency improvements that are appropriate to Queensland's tropical climate.
18. That the government canvases the feasibility of a national white certificate scheme through the Ministerial Council on Energy.