New bill cutting energy initiatives announced as Palaszczuk Govt continues to use energy assets to back Qlders

The Palaszczuk Government has announced a new suite of measures to create electricity savings for Queenslanders under the Palaszczuk Government’s $2 billion Affordable Energy Plan, including removing a restriction on regional electricity customers going back to Ergon Energy.

The fresh initiatives announced by Treasurer Curtis Pitt and Energy Minister Mark Bailey complete the $300 million package announced by the Premier on Sunday, and will also enable more energy consumers to invest in new technologies that will cut their electricity bills.

Mr Pitt said the Palaszczuk Government was investing $40 million to remove barriers to regional Queenslanders switching retailers and to improve access to solar panels and household storage batteries.

"The Palaszczuk Government is removing Ergon's 'non-reversion' policy," Mr Pitt said.

"We recognise the desire of regional customers to have more choice of electricity retailers, so we will amend the current policy that prevents customers who switch away from Ergon Retail from returning.

"Removing the policy will give regional customers more choice and control over their energy bills which is good news for electricity bill savings in regional areas.

"It will also free up customers to return to Ergon Retail to take up the $75 Easy Pay Reward."

Mr Pitt said the Palaszczuk Government would also be offering no-interest loans to help those Queenslanders who don’t have access to the upfront capital required to invest in solar and battery technologies to help reduce their bills and be part of a clean energy future.

"Solar panels and batteries are a great way for households and small businesses to cut their electricity bills, but for some the upfront cost can be a challenge," the Treasurer said.

"It will also help in supporting to kick start the growth of the battery industry in Queensland.

"Queenslanders will be able to apply from March 2018, with savings of up to $700 per year expected for those who take up solar."
Mr Bailey said under the Affordable Energy Plan, the Palaszczuk Government was also undertaking a trial program to work with landlords and renters to enable the savings from solar to be shared.

"Under this trial program we will offer financial incentives to landlords to install solar systems and pass on savings to their tenants," Mr Bailey said.

"Under this trial, a tenant could save up to 10 per cent off their annual bill, or up to $150, with landlords expected to receive a rebate of up to $520 per year.

"This trial will embrace the falling costs of solar technology and offer clean energy to renters - which has been an inaccessible market segment."

Mr Bailey said under the initiatives are part of the Palaszczuk Government’s $2 billion Affordable Energy Plan to provide cost of living relief by delivering a $50 a year Asset Ownership Dividend and ensuring power bills for households and small business are pegged to average inflation over the next two years.

Initiatives under the Affordable Energy Plan:

- Rebates of up to $300 to purchase an energy efficient fridge, washing machines or air conditioner. This provides bill savings of up to $50 a year for an energy efficient washing machine or fridge or $135 a year for an air conditioner. Up to 100,000 Queensland households are expected to take up the offer.
- An Asset Ownership Dividend of $50 a year for every household bill over the next two years, starting from January 2018 and evident on bills from the second quarter of 2018.
- Annual discounts for regional Ergon customers of $75 for households and $120 for small businesses that take up Ergon’s direct debit payment options. 200,000 regional households are expected to initially take up this offer.
- Another 4000 regional households can save up to $200 through the expansion of the Energy Savvy program.
- Support for primary producers by delivering an additional 200 energy audits to agricultural customers through an expanded Energy Savers Plus program in partnership with the Queensland Farmers’ Federation, as well as providing a 50% co-contribution (up to $20,000) to implement audit recommendations.
- Support for Queensland jobs and industry by providing energy audits for large customers including manufacturers, with a 50% co-contribution to implement recommendations (up to $250,000 per customer). This is expected to deliver savings of 10% to 40% for large industrial customers.
- Remove Ergon Energy’s non-reversion policy to give regional customers more choice and control over their energy bills.
- No-interest loans to help those Queenslanders who don’t have access to the upfront capital required to invest in solar and battery technologies to help reduce their bills and be part of a clean energy future. Queenslanders will be able to apply from March 2018, with savings of up to $700 per year expected for those who take up solar.
- Take action to remove barriers preventing solar on rental properties. Under this trial for 1000 households, a tenant could save up to 10 per cent off their annual bill, or up to $150, with landlords expected to receive a rebate of up to $520 per year.

ENDS.

Media contact:

Treasurer’s office – Lindsay Marshall 0447 316 432

Minister Bailey’s office – Zoe Russell 0428 079 640