



Speech by

Hon. T. McGRADY

MEMBER FOR MOUNT ISA

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Sustainable Energy; Kyoto Protocol

Hon. T. McGRADY (Mount Isa—ALP) (Minister for Mines and Energy and Minister Assisting the Deputy Premier on Regional Development) (9.54 a.m.), by leave: The energy sector in Queensland and, indeed, all over the world, is facing a revolution. There is a change—and, indeed, there is a need for a change—that cannot be ignored by any right-thinking person or, as my colleague said, left-thinking people as well. The change is based on environmental awareness and responsibility in regard to how we produce and use energy.

The Kyoto Protocol, arrived at in December 1997, was formulated to set out greenhouse gas emission targets to be ratified by Governments throughout the world. It is designed to address problems created by greenhouse gas emissions and represents a huge challenge to Governments and communities everywhere. In the wake of the Kyoto Protocol, we have a need to move towards a sustainable energy future. Obviously, this will take time. We have to recognise that as a fact, but we also have to recognise that nothing will happen unless we make it happen.

As members of the House are aware, the Government has established the Office of Sustainable Energy, which will oversee policies relating to sustainable energy. The innovations which are being implemented through the Office of Sustainable Energy are the types of things that can place Queensland at the forefront of green technology, thereby paving the way for a whole new dimension to our energy sector. So while we move to address the issues raised in the Kyoto Protocol, we believe there are other valid reasons for pursuing this new horizon in the energy industry.

In fact, I believe that investment in energy innovation is critical to Queensland's continued economic successes. To this end we have committed \$35m over the next four years for the Office of Sustainable Energy. This will provide the ability to focus on maintaining and improving Queensland's competitive edge in the efficient use of energy resources. The office is made up of three main units which cover energy innovation, energy information and energy programs. In essence, these units manage the Sustainable Energy Development Fund to help develop new technologies, provide advice and information on energy efficiency and renewable energy, and develop programs to help meet an increasing demand for energy that is reliable, innovative and environmentally friendly.

As part of the Beattie Government's approach to green energy, we are determined to provide real incentives for change. I am not just talking about providing incentives for others to change. The Government must also be prepared to lead by example through purchasing green energy for its own operations as well as through other initiatives. The Beattie Government made a commitment that 2% of State Government electricity purchases would come from renewable sources. I am pleased to inform the House that that target has been achieved and will almost certainly be exceeded.

Three key Government buildings have now been signed up to the Energex Earths Choice program. These buildings are the Executive Building, the Queensland Minerals and Energy Centre, and the Precinct Centre. Under the Earths Choice program, 100% of the energy consumed in these buildings will be supplied as green electricity. This large amount of electricity achieves the Government's 2% commitment to green energy. The electricity is drawn from a number of renewable sources, including mini-hydro and landfill gas. In the future, Energex will also source additional green electricity from sources such as biomass and solar.

The Government will also be supplied with renewable energy by Ergon, and this will provide about 20% of the power used in seven other major Government buildings. So the Government is putting its money where its mouth is. I believe the Government is now the largest green electricity consumer in Queensland. By doing this, I believe we are sending a clear message to the electricity industry which will help drive investment in new green energy projects. This will help in bringing down prices for this type of energy, so that it becomes more competitive with electricity from more conventional sources. In short, the stage is being set for Queensland to become the leading Australian State for renewable energy projects.
