



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard 6 November 2002

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Solar Schools Pilot Program

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (10.04 a.m.): The Queensland solar schools pilot program is in the process of connecting 17 schools across Queensland with solar power. The latest installation was at Aspley Special School. After long advocacy for this program, the honourable member for Aspley was successful in seeing it installed. Others will be installed in central Queensland later this year. The honourable member for Keppel is actually on the telephone right now letting the schools in his electorate know that solar schools are going to be established in his area. The member for Fitzroy is sitting back in his chair because he has already done it.

Mr Schwarten: They come a poor second because I have already had mine at Glenmore High School for two years.

Mr WELLS: I note the comment of the honourable the Minister for Public Works because his territory has already profited from solar schools. More importantly, the school solar power systems will provide an educational opportunity for our students to experience Smart State technology first-hand. The systems will provide a focal point for developing a sustainable local community.

In these solar schools the children can go into the classroom where there is a computer which is connected to the system that allows the electricity in and out of the grid and they can see the amount of electricity that flows in from the grid and they can see how much flows out of the school into the grid on those quiet sunny days when there is very little power being used in the school.

In Queensland there has already been significant development of solar power systems. The remote area power scheme has led to the installation of more than 1,000 solar power systems in rural and remote areas since 1998. The rapid rise in the uptake of solar hot water systems throughout Queensland as a result of the government rebate scheme is a clear indication that attitudes are changing. Annually, there are more than 7,000 solar hot water systems installed. The solar schools program works by familiarising students and local school communities with solar power technologies.

The Environmental Protection Agency, with assistance from Education Queensland, the Department of Public Works, Stanwell Corporation, Energex's earth's choice program and Ergon Energy's clean energy program, have all contributed towards putting this pilot program together. Other groups are now coming on board. The Catholic Education Commission is planning to install 14 solar schools. Anglican schools in Brisbane are installing systems, starting at Hillbrook. There is also a solar police station and a solar post office. After completion of the 17-school pilot program a wider initiative is planned to extend the program to other government buildings with support from industry.

Let me be very frank with honourable members about solar power. Solar power is not yet, without government subsidy, more economic than the grid; however, it is already economic outside of the grid. When solar is built into a new home, even within the grid, as part of the set-up costs, it is much more economic. Economies of scale which will come if continued government support leads to the establishment of a solar manufacturing base in Queensland will, in the end, ensure that solar power is economically, as well as ecologically, preferable to traditional sources of electric power.