



Speech by

Hon. Stirling Hinchliffe

MEMBER FOR STAFFORD

Hansard Thursday, 25 February 2010

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Energy Efficient Design

Hon. SJ HINCHLIFFE (Stafford—ALP) (Minister for Infrastructure and Planning) (10.16 am): I wish to advise the House of a tropical design forum that I will be hosting in Cairns to celebrate the unique energy efficient characteristics of Queensland homes. In the face of climate change, it is important that energy efficient design features, such as outdoor dining areas and our trademark verandas, are widely recognised and rewarded. Feedback from the forum will help instruct national building guidelines to determine the energy efficiency of Australian homes.

Under a Council of Australian Governments initiative announced in April 2009, all new residential buildings will have to meet six star or equivalent energy efficiency requirements by May 2011. While the initiative is encouraging, not all Australian homes are the same. At the moment, the proposal is governed by a very broad set of national building codes that could determine the energy efficiency ratings of homes throughout our state. But we all know that Queensland is unique. We live in subtropical and tropical climates and that needs to be reflected in the guidelines that determine our energy efficiency ratings.

The Bligh government is leading the charge to have unique design features in Queensland homes accredited. We cannot let southern-centric building codes drive expensive and unsuitable design outcomes that are incompatible with the way we live. For example, the existing national guidelines suggest that suspended floors be insulated to achieve six-star ratings. Anyone lucky enough to live north of the border knows that that is a largely unnecessary and expensive condition. In fact, in Queensland, heat transfer through suspended floors is an appropriate feature for the vast majority of the climate year. The traditional Queenslander is one example of how the state's energy efficient housing designs and materials should be recognised and rewarded.

To ensure that the six-star standards are in step with Queensland's enviable lifestyle, as I say, I am convening the tropical design forum on 2 March. This forum will provide an opportunity for industry stakeholders and experts to discuss the proposed energy efficiency requirements of the 2010 Building Code of Australia and to play an important role in ensuring that the final building codes improve rather than impede our trademark tropical characteristics.