

**Question on Notice  
No. 662  
Asked on 16 June 2004**

QUESTION:

MRS SULLIVAN asked the Minister for Environment (Mr Mickel)—

- (1) How long has the solar hot water rebate been in place?
- (2) How many people have availed themselves of the rebate?
- (3) How effective has it been since its introduction?
- (4) What other initiatives are in place to assist in the reduction of greenhouse gases?

ANSWER:

I congratulate Queenslanders for embracing the scheme so enthusiastically and for protecting the environment by using solar energy for domestic water heating. In April this year I handed over the 30,000th rebate cheque.

The Queensland Government rebates and the Commonwealth Government's Renewable Energy Certificates have made solar hot water systems cost competitive with other water heaters and therefore more affordable.

- (1) The Solar Hot Water Rebate Scheme initiative was launched by the Beattie Government in May 1998 to encourage greater use of solar hot water in Queensland.
- (2) More than 30,000 homeowners in Queensland have received a rebate under the Scheme since its introduction in 1998, with the Queensland Government investing over \$16 million in the scheme.
- (3) An average solar hot water system not only saves householders money it also reduces the amount of greenhouse gas emissions by three tonnes a year. My department advises the installation of these solar hot water systems will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 1.3 million tonnes (the equivalent of taking 30,000 small cars off the road) over their 15 year life expectancy. The market penetration of solar hot water has almost doubled, from 4.8% to 9%.

My department advises the value to the industry in Queensland to date as a result of the Solar Hot Water Rebate Scheme is in the order of \$108 million. Information provided by the Australian Business Council for Sustainable Energy and the solar hot water manufacturing industry indicates that about 12,000 solar hot water systems were sold in Queensland during 2002-2003.

(4) Under the “Queensland Energy Policy – A Cleaner Energy Strategy” a number of initiatives are in place to assist in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions:

- the “Queensland Sustainable Energy Innovation Fund” assists with commercialisation of innovative, renewable energy and energy efficient technologies;
- the “Government Green Power Purchase Program” promotes the uptake of green power in residential, public and business sectors;
- the “Demand Side Management Program (EnergyWise)” encourages electricity retailers to work with householders and small to medium businesses to use energy more efficiently; and
- the “Solar Schools Program” was launched in mid 2001 as a partnership initiative with energy providers to promote community and business uptake of green power and lead to the development of new, renewable energy projects in Queensland. The program also provides an opportunity for school children to learn about the benefits of solar power first hand. Schools are the ideal place to change the energy practices and attitudes of the past, and introduce the benefits of sustainable energy to the next generation of homeowners and consumers. As at May 2004, there have been 44 successful installations under the Solar Schools Program. In 2004-05 it is anticipated that a further 35 systems will be installed.

EcoBiz is an EPA industry partnership program helping Queensland companies adopt new resource-efficient practices. This three-year, \$6 million industry program will help Queensland industries adopt world leading, eco-efficient innovations and technologies. EcoBiz Queensland will provide technical and monetary support to assist industry champion best-practice, and to achieve a better result for the environment and for its bottom-line. As part of EcoBiz, the EnergyWise Industry Grants Program provides funding to industry and businesses to conduct activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase energy efficiency.

Under the Remote Power Generation Program administered by the EPA, the Renewable Energy Diesel Replacement Scheme and the Working Property Rebate Scheme are joint initiatives of the State Government and Commonwealth Government.

The aim of these two schemes is to encourage the use of renewable energy technology and reduce the use of diesel in off-grid areas of Queensland. However, with the Commonwealth Government’s newly announced energy policy effectively making running a diesel generator cheaper, solar generators are now less financially attractive.

These initiatives of the Environmental Protection Agency are part of a whole of government commitment to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.