

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 724

asked on Thursday, 12 May 2005

MS MALE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POLICY (MR MICHEL)—

QUESTION:

Will he advise the House of the trends in relation to Queensland residents installing air conditioning in their homes and what his department is doing to manage the demand?

ANSWER:

The rapid uptake of air conditioners in Queensland highlights the need for greater energy efficiency. I am advised that in November 2001, 36.3 percent of householders had air conditioning. I am further advised that the latest estimates indicate that more than 50 percent of Queensland households now have air conditioning.

Amendments to the *Electricity Regulations 1994* in October 2004, set Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS) for single-phase and three-phase air conditioners. These amendments mean that the most inefficient air conditioners (below the set standards) are no longer able to be sold in Australia. It is also important to note that MEPS are regularly reviewed in consultation with stakeholders, in particular, the manufacturing industry, to further improve the energy efficiency standards of appliances. Air conditioning standards will be reviewed again in 2006.

The Queensland Government, as part of its EnergyWise message, is providing information to householders on how to be more energy efficient when using an air conditioner, or any electrical appliance. Queenslanders could save 10 to 15 percent on the running costs of air conditioners by using them efficiently. An average air conditioner with a five kilowatt capacity running at 18 degrees could cost consumers around \$150 more than a unit running at 24 degrees. I encourage people who have air conditioners to run them at no lower than 24 degrees in South East Queensland and 25 degrees in other parts of the State.

The Queensland Government has endeavoured to progressively strengthen the energy efficiency provisions for new houses to reduce heat intrusion and improve ventilation, resulting in houses that are more comfortable to live in, particularly during extremes of hot and cold weather. For example, in September 2003, Queensland adopted the national energy efficient housing standard in the Building Code of Australia.

The Queensland Government has shown leadership at a national level and together with the Commonwealth and all States and Territories is working strongly towards the implementation of the National Framework for Energy Efficiency (NSEE). Queensland chairs the Energy Efficiency Working Group and the Consumer Information Working Group. Implementation of this strategy has the potential to save the Australian economy up to \$750 million a year in energy costs and create up to 1,000 jobs.

In late 2004 the Ministerial Council on Energy approved significant expansion of the existing program under the National Framework on Energy Efficiency. This expansion will result in mandatory minimum energy performance standards and labelling for gas products and the majority of lighting products for the first time. As a result, over the next three years we will see an unprecedented 50 new product categories being covered under the program. The benefits of the National Appliance and Equipment Energy Efficiency Program will continue to grow with inefficient appliance and equipment removed from the market. Queensland has overtaken Victoria as the second largest consuming state in the National Electricity Market and the Government is taking a lead in encouraging householders, industry and governments to change their habits when it comes to energy use.

Energy labelling and information will be made available to promote higher energy efficiency purchases for the home or business. Energy efficiency training and education will be provided to tradesmen (electrical, gas fitting), town planners, and architects, all with the aim of improving the energy performance of homes and buildings.

Queenslanders have an important role to play by ensuring they purchase appliances and equipment with a high star rating and which are therefore more energy efficient with lower running costs.

To assist industry achieves increased energy efficiency, champion best-practice and to achieve a better result for the environment by way of reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, the Queensland Government implemented a program called ecoBiz. This is an 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.