

**Question on Notice
No. 1083
Asked on 9 June 2006**

QUESTION:

MS STONE asked the Minister for Environment, Local Government, Planning and Women (Ms Boyle)—

Will she outline the EcoBiz Program?

ANSWER:

Since the Government launched the ecoBiz program in 2004 to assist the State's business sector to implement energy and resource saving measures, over 150 companies have joined the program.

EcoBiz enables businesses to identify waste such as raw materials, water, and energy. Savings on energy, water and waste disposal bills can offset the costs of improving environmental performance and ultimately make Queensland companies more competitive.

Participating businesses receive an "ecoBiz Toolbox" which sets out clearly what they need to do at each stage of the six-step program. Businesses who join the program report results and progress to the EPA on a regular basis.

Businesses can also access a rebate to implement water, energy and resource efficiency projects measures. The \$1.1 million that has been awarded to date has stimulated over \$7 million of private sector investment into eco-efficiency upgrades. By showcasing what can be achieved, each ecoBiz success story can inspire other businesses to follow.

EcoBiz dividends are most likely to be seen when businesses cut potable water use, use more recycled water, and find ways to save energy and resources. EcoBiz can help them do more, with less, and while the Government pursues long-term solutions in water management and energy generation, ecoBiz is successfully tackling the vital issue of reducing demand by high-volume users.

What sets ecoBiz apart from other eco-efficiency strategies is that the program gives the user a breakdown of resource costs per production unit. It also delivers measures of production or process efficiency, helping businesses prioritise areas for improvement or development, and calculate pay-back periods.

The EPA is forging strong partnerships with councils under the ecoBiz banner. Since my statement to the House on 6 June, Logan City Council and Townsville City Council have joined with Redland, Mackay, Toowoomba and Gold Coast Councils, in agreeing to work with the State Government to deliver the program to local businesses.

The Redland Shire Council was the first council to sign up as an ecoBiz ally and ran a very successful program with seven businesses from different industry sectors. Three of the businesses – the Good Guys (Capalaba), Stradbroke Ferries, and Redlands Nursery – should be congratulated as they have gone on to complete the program and have been accredited as ecoBiz Partners. In the second year of their program, the Redland Shire Council have coupled delivery of ecoBiz to their Water Efficiency Management Plan program to present an integrated service for improved business sustainability. Fourteen additional companies have now joined and are working through the ecoBiz six step program. This is an excellent example of government agencies working together with the private sector to achieve efficiencies in water use.

The Good Guys (Capalaba) discount warehouse have shown outstanding commitment to making environmental savings through their ecoBiz program. Since joining ecoBiz the store has made savings in energy use and have slashed wastage by implemented recycling of paper, toners and polystyrene foam packaging. But this company has gone one step further by developing an innovative training and information program that has equipped staff to inform customers about the benefits of water and energy efficient appliances. As a result, sales of eco-efficient front-loading washing machines have increased by 90 percent, equating to 17 to 24 million litres of water savings every year.

James Brockhurst, proprietor of the Good Guys (Capalaba), said, “We believe that the ecoBiz philosophy should go further than just the individual business, and we’ve implemented a program to make the biggest impact on our community by encouraging our customers to think about their own water and energy use and how this can be improved”.

Working together with councils allows ecoBiz to align with local resource issues. For example my ecoBiz team are working with Toowoomba Water and large water users in the region that could make significant savings in water consumption. EcoBiz participant KR Castlemaine Foods, the biggest consumers of potable water in Toowoomba, are undertaking a raft of eco-efficiency projects which will cut potable water use by 25% or 70 megalitres a year, as well as saving significant amounts of energy and solid wastes.

Applying the benefits and principles of ecoBiz is reducing pollution, increasing production output and quality, improving staff morale, delivering greater market access through improved environmental credentials, and giving businesses a competitive edge in a world seeking higher environmental standards.