

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1379

asked on Wednesday, 1 November 2006

MS STONE ASKED THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND ENERGY (MR WILSON)—

QUESTION:

With reference to renewable and sustainable energy –

Will he outline some of the achievements of the Queensland Sustainable Energy Infrastructure Fund?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Sustainable Energy Innovation Fund was established seven years ago to provide targeted funding for innovative projects offering real solutions to reduce energy and water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The Fund is administered by the Environmental Protection Agency and falls within the Minister for Environment's portfolio responsibilities.

Partnerships forged between the government, industry and innovators, through the Fund, highlight the positive and supportive role that Government plays in nurturing future industries and providing tangible opportunities for Queensland ingenuity.

The government has committed more than \$5 million to over 50 businesses over the past seven years. Projects from the most recent funding rounds are still under way, and their benefits are yet to be realised. Projects that have been completed, accounting for \$3.2 million of Fund expenditure, have already injected over \$14 million of sales revenue and private and public sector investment into the Queensland economy.

The projects have attracted more than \$2 million in additional federal and state government funding, and about \$6 million in private investment.

Sales of innovative technologies developed through the Fund have now reached about \$6 million.

The Fund has spanned a broad range of applications, from educational initiatives in renewable energy, to water quality management, and the development of new product markets for the state's sugar industry.

The Fund contributed to an initial upgrade of the Birdsville Geothermal plant. The plant generates approximately 30 percent of electrical power used in Birdsville, one of the most remote towns in Australia, and has provided the town with more than 1.75 million kilowatt-hours of electricity. The plant has reduced the reliance on diesel and LPG generators to meet the town's power requirements, significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In October of this year, the Queensland Government announced the latest round of funding recipients. The following six companies were chosen for their innovative projects:

- Growcom Pty Ltd has received funding of \$199,758 to develop further their technology of converting waste bananas into bio-gas to fuel heavy duty equipment and vehicles.
- G James Australia Pty Ltd in collaboration with Queensland University of Technology is developing window panels to reflect daylight into buildings, to reduce the need for artificial lighting. This technology has the potential to reduce electricity bills while cutting greenhouse gas emissions. G James Australia received funding of \$200,000 for this project.
- Lumascope Lighting Industries Pty Ltd is developing technology to maximise the lifetime of energy efficient Light Emitting Diode lighting (known as LED), leading to greater energy savings. \$195,000 was provided to Lumascope Lighting Industries for developing this technology.
- A new cement manufactured mainly from iron ore tailings is the focus of Sunshine Coast company Iron Oxide Cement Pty Ltd. Unlike other forms of cement, iron oxide cement does not need to be fired at high temperatures, and contains no limestone which emits carbon dioxide during firing. With funding of \$200,000, the company aims to reduce waste, energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Based in Cairns, Rentbowl Pty Ltd (Rentbowl) is converting discarded grease waste into high grade boiler fuel for use in industrial operations requiring steam generation to power their production processes. This technology reduces both fossil fuel reliance and greenhouse gas emissions. Rentbowl has received \$108,560 to further develop this technology.
- Mulgowie Farming Company is building a gantry harvester platform based on 'smart wheel' technology to enable harvesting of fresh produce that is more energy efficient, causes less soil compaction and minimises crop damage. Smart wheels are steered and powered individually avoiding the use of gearboxes and drive shafts and provide greater manoeuvrability of the harvester platform, allowing it to be used on a range of crops. Funding of \$150,000 will support the development of this machinery.

Through its support for these innovative projects, the Queensland Government has demonstrated its commitment to reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions, while assisting Queensland businesses to be at the forefront of energy innovation and sustainable energy solutions.

Building on the success of the Queensland Sustainable Energy Innovation Fund, the government is promoting the adoption of innovative technology solutions through its support for the Townsville Solar City Trial and in Government Owned Corporation investments.

The Queensland Government will provide a \$5 million package to support the Townsville Solar Cities Trial. The trial, involving Government Owned Corporation Ergon Energy, will see the installation of energy efficient products and solar panels in selected homes, as well as the promotion of wider public awareness of the benefits of solar technologies.

Ergon Energy recently announced plans to invest \$2.5 million in a project to trial innovative solar power technology at Windorah in South West Queensland. The Windorah Solar Farm project will involve five sun-reflecting dishes concentrating sunlight by 500 times onto a high-capacity photovoltaic cell in front of each mirror. The project aims to generate about 360,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity a year by 2008, enough to provide all Windorah's daytime electricity needs. Ergon Energy expects the project to save up to 100,000 litres of diesel fuel a year, which equates to 300 to 350 tonnes of greenhouse gases not entering the atmosphere.