

Question on Notice
No. 487
Asked on Wednesday, 16 April 2008

QUESTION:

MR FENLON asked the Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation (Mr McNamara) —

With reference to the creation of the Office of Climate Change in October 2007 within the Queensland Government portfolio of Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation which has integrated and strengthened Queensland's ability to lead an effective climate change response —

Would the Minister provide further details of the role and responsibilities of the Office of Climate Change?

ANSWER:

The Office of Climate Change, established within the new Government portfolio of Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation, is leading the development of a whole-of-government policy framework to meet the climate change challenge.

The Office of Climate Change comprises specific climate change policy functions and the scientific expertise of the Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence (QCCCE).

The QCCCE provides information and science on climate change impacts, including the application of international research and science to the Queensland context, and works collaboratively with Australian and international research agencies, industry and all levels of government.

Combining both policy and scientific expertise enables the Office of Climate Change to utilise the latest research on climate change to provide a rigorous evidence base for new policy initiatives.

The Office of Climate Change has commenced a program of climate change policy development, program implementation and scientific research which will ensure the Government is well positioned to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as prepare our communities to adapt to the physical impacts of climate change. This program includes:

- Coordinating the implementation of the Queensland Government's climate change strategy, *ClimateSmart 2050*, and its 24 initiatives to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions;
- Analysing Queensland's greenhouse gas emissions projections out to 2050 and developing policy recommendations for achieving further cuts to our emissions profile;
- Administering the \$430 million Queensland Climate Change Fund, which will provide approximately \$30 million per year to priority climate change initiatives and assist Queensland householders transition to low-carbon lifestyles;

- Supporting the Premier's Council on Climate Change, which comprises 14 eminent individuals drawn from a cross-section of relevant areas of expertise including industry, environment, academic and community sectors across Queensland and Australia; and
- Coordinating the implementation of *ClimateSmart Adaptation 2007-12*, an action plan that contains 62 actions for preparing Queensland communities and industries for the 'built-in' impacts of climate change.

In recent months, the Office of Climate Change has delivered a number of significant achievements:

- In an Australian-first, the Office is implementing a new Government decision requiring Climate Change Impact Statements to be included in all relevant Cabinet submissions from 1 July 2008. Climate Change Impact Statements will allow the government to better consider the impact of its decisions on the State's greenhouse gas profile and to ensure that climate change adaptation issues have been appropriately addressed across all Government business;
- In early March 2008, the Office of Climate Change launched the Queensland Solar Homes Program, in which the Government will underwrite the bulk purchase of 1,000 one-kilowatt solar systems to provide solar power for households in South-east Queensland as well as the new regional council areas of Cairns, Rockhampton, Toowoomba and Fraser Coast.
- Following the launch of the Solar Homes Program, the Office of Climate Change worked closely with the Department of Mines and Energy to introduce the Solar Bonus Scheme (Feed-in Tariff), for which a bonus of 44 cents per kilowatt hour will be paid to households and small businesses whose solar systems feed excess electricity back into the grid. The scheme is available to all grid-connected solar photovoltaic systems owned by customers that consume no more than 100 megawatt hours of electricity a year; and
- In collaboration with the QCCCE, the Office of Climate Change is progressing one of the largest cloud seeding research programs in the Southern Hemisphere. The program will determine whether cloud seeding is able to increase the yield for rainfall in South-east Queensland, and aims to scientifically gauge whether this technology has the potential to increase the levels in our water storages, particularly Wivenhoe and Somerset dams.

In the six months since its inception in late 2007, the Office of Climate Change has also played a key role in developing and implementing a number of whole-of-government initiatives:

- With strong support from the Office of Climate Change, the Queensland Government has committed to reducing its vehicle fleet emissions by 50 percent by 2017 and offsetting 100 percent of emissions by 2020, offsetting all Government air travel, and making all Government buildings carbon neutral by 2020;
- The Office of Climate Change is providing input and support to the Garnaut Climate Change Review:

- The Review has been commissioned by the Federal Government, States and Territories to examine the impacts of climate change on the Australian environment and economy and recommend long-term mitigation and adaptation policies that will ensure sustainable prosperity in the context of a carbon constrained future; and
- In late March 2008, Professor Ross Garnaut released a discussion paper on the design of a national emissions trading scheme (ETS). The Office of Climate Change, in collaboration with relevant agencies, is currently examining a range of issues raised in the discussion paper, in preparation of a Queensland position on the Commonwealth Green Paper on Emissions Trading; and
- The Office of Climate Change is also committed to supporting the Commonwealth of Australian Governments (COAG) process in developing national climate change responses, including representation of the COAG Climate Change and Water Working Group, and sub-groups on:
 - The national expanded Mandatory Renewable Energy Target;
 - A streamlined set of climate change measures to complement an Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS);
 - Energy efficiency; and
 - Long-term adaptation to climate change, which Queensland is leading on behalf of COAG.

Finally, to take account of recent national and international developments in climate change, the Office of Climate Change is currently leading a review of Queensland's *ClimateSmart 2050* strategy. These developments include the signing of the Kyoto Protocol in December 2007 by the newly-elected Federal Labor Government, the initial findings and recommendations of the Garnaut Review of Climate Change, including the introduction of a national ETS, the policy directions of COAG Working Group on Climate Change and Water, and the latest assessments of the climate change science itself.

The Review aims to update and consolidate Queensland's climate change strategy in light of these latest developments, and will build upon the suite of greenhouse gas reduction measures in *ClimateSmart 2050*, outlining how these measures will contribute to achieving the national emissions reduction target of 60 percent on 2000 levels by 2050.