

Question on Notice
No. 649
Asked on Wednesday, 30 April 2008

QUESTION:

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

Will the Minister provide details of government strategies to encourage renewable energy use?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Government has committed to a national target of 60 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and in mid 2007 launched *ClimateSmart 2050, Queensland climate change strategy 2007: a low carbon future*.

However, the Government was taking action well before that.

In March 2006 the Government introduced legislation - the Sustainable Housing Code – which required all new residential dwellings to install greenhouse efficient hot water systems, such as solar water heaters or heat pumps.

The Government is continuing to address the greenhouse gas emissions from households and is currently developing new initiatives in association with the construction industry that will address energy and water conservation within existing dwellings to help improve their energy efficiency and reduce both greenhouse gases and energy bills.

The reason that we are focussing on households is that approximately 23 per cent of the electricity generated in Queensland each year is used in homes. The typical Queensland household uses 10,900 kilowatt hours of electricity a year which equates to approximately 11 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year from electricity use alone.

As Australia's fastest-growing State, the number of residential dwellings is expected to grow from the current 1.6 million to 2.4 million by 2026. This will increase the greenhouse gas emissions from the residential sector from 17.6 million tonnes each year to 26.4 million tonnes by 2026.

The Government continues its focus on homes through the Queensland Solar Homes Program, announced by the Premier in March.

This is a Queensland Government initiative to deliver zero emission energy to residents of south-east Queensland and Toowoomba, Cairns, Rockhampton and Fraser Coast regional council areas.

The Queensland Solar Homes Program is focussed on areas of high population growth where solar power systems also provide some network benefits and reduce infrastructure augmentation costs.

The Solar Homes Program announcement was followed with the announcement of a Solar Bonus Scheme that will pay Queenslanders for the electricity generated from solar power systems and fed into the electricity grid.

Customers signed up to the scheme will be paid 44 cents per kilowatt hour of surplus electricity fed into the grid. This is about three times the current general domestic tariff.

Implementation of the Solar Bonus Scheme is being coordinated through the Office of the Minister for Mines and Energy, the Honourable Geoff Wilson.

The ClimateSmart 2050 strategy represents a total initial investment of \$1.4 billion, including \$844 million directly by the Queensland Government and includes ground-breaking initiatives to tackle climate change, secure a clean energy future for Queensland and position Queensland in a low-carbon future.

ClimateSmart 2050 makes a strong commitment to renewable energy.

Among the many forward looking initiatives contained within ClimateSmart 2050 are:

- The Queensland Climate Change Fund which provides \$30 million per year for climate change initiatives, particularly those that target measures to assist households and communities to prepare for a low carbon future.
- A \$2.5 million ClimateSmart Living education campaign which will raise community awareness about climate change, and highlight actions Queenslanders can take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.
- A \$50 million Queensland Renewable Energy Fund which will support the development of emerging renewable technologies such as geothermal and solar thermal technologies.
- A \$7.25 million ClimateSmart Homes Rebate program to provide rebates to remote area households for installing greenhouse-friendly hot water systems, replacing refrigerator seals, decommissioning second energy-inefficient refrigerators, and installing insulation and compact fluorescent light bulbs.

In an Australian first, from 2010, the Queensland Government will begin phasing out electric hot water systems in existing homes. This will mean that when an existing electric hot water system expires it can only be replaced with a greenhouse-friendly system.

A rebate scheme is being considered to assist householders to replace electric hot water systems as part of this phase out.

In partnership with energy providers, the Queensland Government has funded the Solar Schools program which has installed solar power systems in almost 100 schools and community-use buildings across Queensland since 2001.

I recently attended the celebration of the installation of solar energy systems on seven schools in Brisbane as part of a partnership with Origin Energy.

A similar partnership with Ergon Energy is contributing to installation of solar energy systems and community and schools-based energy efficiency education packages in four regional communities.

The Queensland Government is also doing its bit to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs.

The Government Strategic Energy Efficiency Policy for Government Buildings introduced in December 2007 establishes mandatory energy reduction targets for Government departments of 5 percent savings by 2010 and 20 percent savings by 2015.

The Government Energy Management Strategy has exceeded its targets and achieved cumulative savings of \$28 million against a target of \$20 million during the past five years.

The recently released Sustainable Office Building Rating Policy will target a minimum 4.5 star NABERS OFFICE energy rating for all new Government office buildings, refurbishments, fitouts and leases greater than 2000m².

The Queensland Government's efforts are also on a much bigger scale.

Most significantly, Cloncurry is set to become the first town in the State to use solar power for all of the town's electricity needs - 24 hours a day. The Government is investing \$7 million to build a 10 megawatt solar thermal power station. The technology to be used in Cloncurry will ensure the power station keeps generating electricity even when the sun is not shining.

Other largescale initiatives include:

- Bulloo Shire Council and the Queensland Government are partners in creating Queensland's first 'solar town' at Thargomindah.
- The Queensland Government is contributing \$5 million towards the Townsville Solar City Project for the installation of 500 solar panels and 2,500 smart meters, the delivery of 1,700 energy audits and the trial of new approaches to electricity pricing within selected homes and businesses on Magnetic Island and in the central Townsville area.
- Ergon Energy is installing a solar power station at Windorah to generate renewable energy to reduce the town's reliance on diesel generation.

The range of programs and financial support being provided by the Queensland Government indicates its strong commitment to providing and promoting a range of alternative energy sources, providing Queenslanders with options for how they can best meet the challenge of climate change abatement.