

QUESTION ON NOTICE

No. 1804

asked on Thursday, 27 October 2011

MR HOOLIHAN ASKED THE MINISTER FOR ENERGY AND WATER UTILITIES (MR ROBERTSON)—

QUESTION:

Will the Minister outline the current level of solar photovoltaic installations across Queensland and whether all projected benchmarks (or projected targets) have been met?

ANSWER:

Solar power technologies have been truly embraced by Queenslanders with a continued increase in uptake of this renewable energy source.

In April 2010, the Queensland Government set a challenge to double Queensland's use of solar energy in five years. The target, measured through the Queensland Government's Virtual Solar Station Power initiative, was to double Queensland's solar energy from solar hot water and solar panels to 500 megawatts (MW) by 2015. The rate of uptake of small-scale solar technologies in Queensland has exceeded expectations and in July this year, the target was reached more than three years ahead of schedule. Queensland now has more than 612 megawatts of installed solar power capacity.

The number of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems installed in Queensland has increased significantly since the Queensland Government Solar Bonus Scheme commenced.

Prior to the commencement of the scheme, Queensland had just 3.2 MW of installed PV capacity. As at 30 September 2011, there were a total of 126,314 customers, with a total generation capacity of 294 MW, connected to the network and participating in the Solar Bonus Scheme. These customers have supplied 96,871,865 kilowatt hours of electricity to the network since the scheme commenced.

Since the scheme began, the cost of installing a solar power system has reduced by around half, making solar power more affordable for Queenslanders. As the price of installing solar power continues to fall, the payback period of a system will continue to decrease.

The number of accredited solar installers in Queensland also increased from 78 in March 2008 to approximately 1,000 in August 2011, with thousands more employed in the industry in support roles, administration and manufacture. The strong demand for solar panels has also assisted in attracting new manufacturing capacity to the state.

The Queensland Government is also investing in solar technology which is an important component of our long-term strategy to develop a resilient renewable energy industry in Queensland. We have committed around \$180 million over six years for solar technologies and large-scale solar power projects, the single largest funding commitment for solar deployment in Queensland's history.

We are delivering on many solar programs and projects, including solar farms in Hervey Bay and Cloncurry, installing solar at Hervey Bay hospital, the solar array at the University of Queensland, the Kogan Creek Carbon Reduction Project, a Solar Stadium at Carrara on the Gold Coast, the Solar Sports and Community Group Grants program, and the Solar Kindergarten program.

In July this year, I officially opened the Solar Array at the University of Queensland—Australia's largest flat panel PV solar array. This will produce about 1,750 megawatt hours of clean renewable solar energy each year and provide about five per cent of the university's peak demand power requirements.

In 2010, the Queensland Government committed \$4.4 million for a fully integrated 200 kilowatt solar PV roof for Australia's largest solar stadium at Carrara on the Gold Coast. The solar roof is now fully operational and it is estimated that the solar system will generate approximately 275,000 kilowatt hours of electricity per annum, or more than 20 per cent of the stadium's electricity needs.

The Queensland Government's Solar Sport and Community Group Grants encourage community groups to install solar on community and sporting facilities throughout the state. Up to \$10 million will be directed to community solar projects over the three-year program. As at 31 October 2011, four rounds have been announced, with a total of \$3.5 million awarded to 368 organisations.

Under the Queensland Government's Solar Kindergarten initiative, funding of \$5.76 million has been provided for up to 240 new and 180 existing not-for-profit kindergartens. On 21 March this year, the Minister for Education and Industrial Relations announced that, under Round 1 of the program, 166 successful community kindergartens would be retro-fitted with solar power from April 2011. As at 25 October 2011, a total of 50 kindergartens have had solar panels installed through this program.

The Queensland Government is committed to a clean energy future, powered by renewable energy like solar alternatives.