

Question on Notice
No. 958
Asked on 23 August 2023

MR M BERKMAN ASKED MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND MINISTER FOR RACING (HON G GRACE)

QUESTION:

With reference to rooftop solar installed at Queensland state schools under the Advancing Clean Energy Schools (ACES) program—

Will the Minister advise (a) how many faults were present in solar systems installed under ACES as of today, (b) of the total solar capacity installed at schools, how many KW of generating capacity were offline each month from July 2022 to date, (c) the total estimated additional cost to Queensland schools for energy consumption due to offline solar capacity in the 2022-23 financial year and (d) how much state schools with solar installed have saved on their quarterly power bills in the 2022-23 financial year (i) in total across Queensland and (ii) on average per school?

ANSWER:

The Palaszczuk Government's \$168 million Advancing Clean Energy Schools (ACES) program was completed in July 2022 and installed nearly 200,000 solar panels across 912 Queensland state schools, exceeding our original commitment to deliver 180,000 panels for 872 schools.

Close to 200,000 solar panels were installed at 912 schools through the ACES program, estimated to be able to generate in the vicinity of 280 MW of renewable energy each day.

It is not possible to calculate a savings amount for each school due to a number of factors, including changes in the price of electricity in recent years, construction of additional infrastructure and higher student numbers creating higher consumption. This creates complexities in terms of providing a specific financial figure for individual sites to accurately reflect the savings on the program.

Furthermore, the Palaszczuk Government's Cooler Cleaner Schools Program installed air conditioning to approximately 10,000 classrooms, staff rooms and library spaces within 649 state schools, which changed the consumption patterns for a variety of schools.

There were three delivery partners supporting the ACES program, which used different methods of monitoring to track the electricity consumption, solar generation, solar consumption and the export from solar PV systems. On completion of the solar installation project, the monitoring of the system was handed to the school to manage. The Department of Education does not centrally monitor all systems across the State; however, all schools are set up to individually monitor the performance of their systems, including consumption and any faults.

Any ability to provide data for the entire program across Queensland would require the department to engage the services of a third party to provision a state-wide monitoring platform.

A system can be offline for a variety of reasons, including damage to the panels due to weather, such as hail damage, or there could be works occurring on site where the system has been turned off by a contractor and will be turned on again. There have been minor instances where the panels have been damaged due to vandalism and require replacing.

Offline systems do not necessarily indicate that the systems are not contributing to energy production, but rather the communications component may require attention.

Annual safety inspections are carried out for all ACES solar PV systems. As part of the inspections, minor maintenance work that can be carried out on the day of inspection is undertaken, with works above \$2500 managed centrally at a later date.