

PUBLIC HOUSING — SUSTAINABILITY

287. Mr I.M. BRITZA to the Minister for Housing:

Can the minister outline to the house what the Liberal–National government is doing to improve the sustainability of the state’s public housing stock?

Mr W.R. MARMION replied:

I thank the member for Morley for the question. This side of the house recognises the cost of living for public housing tenants and also that the sustainability of our housing stock is an important issue. I am very pleased to announce in the house today that we are undertaking a solar panel installation pilot program that will install 400 photovoltaic systems on 400 public houses. It started in March this year and will finish in July.

The pilot program will take advantage of the fact that the cost of solar panels has come down considerably in recent times. Hence, the timing is right. The important thing is that this \$1 million program will ascertain whether this is a better method to assist people in hardship in terms of the cost of living rather than other programs. We are trialling this program in 400 public houses. The systems will be one kilowatt. The successful tenderer was Solargain PV. It will roll out 400 PV cells to householders. The properties we have selected are family houses comprising three or more bedrooms because they are higher energy users. We made sure that about 15 per cent of the homes are households with disabilities. Those households with disabilities spend a bit more time in their houses and often have appliances that use a lot of electricity. We are trialling that side as well.

Mr Speaker and member for Morley, we anticipate that the expected savings could be anywhere between \$250 to \$350 per year per household depending on usage and also the orientation of the panel on the roof. This is an innovative program undertaken by the Department of Housing in conjunction with the Public Utilities Office. I look forward to the results. If the results are satisfactory, we could consider rolling out in due course more of these PV systems both in the metropolitan and regional areas.