

RENEWABLE ENERGY SOLUTIONS AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS REDUCTION

1236. Hon Jim Scott to the Minister for Local Government and Regional Development representing the Minister for Energy

- (1) Did the Government promise to facilitate renewable power solutions especially for rural communities?
- (2) What has the Government done to honour this commitment?
- (3) Did the Government promise to support national initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?
- (4) What has the Government done to honour this commitment?
- (5) Did the Government promise to promote demand management and end use efficiency through programs targeted at both domestic and industrial users?
- (6) What has the Government done to honour this promise?

Hon TOM STEPHENS replied:

- (1) Yes. This was part of the Government's 2001 election policy on the environment.
- (2) The Government continues to facilitate renewable energy in general and provides specific support for renewable energy in rural areas.

A key part of the Government's commitment to renewable energy has been the establishment of a dedicated sustainable energy agency – the Sustainable Energy Development Office. This office was established in November 2001 and is focussed on increasing the use of renewable energy and efficient energy management practices and developing a sustainable energy industry sector which contributes to the States economy. The Sustainable Energy Development Office facilitates renewable energy in numerous ways, including through the Renewable Remote Power Generation Program (RRPGP).

The Renewable Remote Power Generation Program provides rebates of up to 50% of the cost of renewable energy systems replacing diesel generation in off-grid areas. The program is funded by the Commonwealth from diesel excise paid for electricity supply in regional areas of WA and other States. The program is administered by the State through the Sustainable Energy Development Office in partnership with the Commonwealth.

In July 2001 the Government introduced the Remote Area Power Supply Program, which provides rebates for small renewable energy power systems serving pastoral stations, Aboriginal communities, tourist operations and households in off-grid areas of WA. Since the programs introduction through to August 2003, rebates totalling \$7.5 million had been committed for 226 renewable energy power systems. The RAPS program is jointly funded by the Commonwealth, through the RRPGP, and by the State.

In February 2002 the Government introduced the Renewable Energy Water Pumping Program as part of the RRPGP. This program provides rebates for renewable energy pumping systems serving pastoral stations, communities and farmers in regional areas of WA. Through to August 2003, rebates totalling \$2.4 million had been committed for 679 renewable energy pumping systems.

Through the RRPGP the Government has also committed \$5.3 million to a new wind farm at Esperance, \$1 million to a wind turbine on Rottne Island and \$1.3 million to a wind turbine at Hopetoun.

The Government is currently working with the Commonwealth to increase the effectiveness of the RRPGP.

The Government's Solar Water Heating Subsidy also specifically supports renewable energy in off-grid areas by providing an additional \$200 per subsidy for eligible systems installed in off-grid areas.

- (3) Yes. This was part of the Government's 2001 election policy on the environment.
- (4) The Government supports a range of national initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as initiatives aimed at better understand climate change issues, including the following:

The Ministerial Council on Energy's Energy Efficiency and Greenhouse Group. This group coordinates and develops national energy efficiency policies and programs, including energy efficiency rating tools for commercial and residential buildings, national standards on appliance energy efficiency and the development of a National Framework on Energy Efficiency.

The COAG High Level Group on Greenhouse. This group is responsible for reviewing the National Greenhouse Strategy and making recommendations to COAG on the further development of a national approach on greenhouse, including the use of market based mechanisms.

The CRC for Greenhouse Gas Accounting. This Centre is researching issues relating to the organic sequestration of greenhouse gases. Western Australia is also involved in discussions at the national and international level in regard to geo-sequestration, including examining critical technical, jurisdictional and liability issues.

Natural Resources Management Ministerial Council sub-groups. These groups are addressing greenhouse issues in agriculture and the biodiversity impacts of climate change.

National Greenhouse Gas Inventory Committee. This committee commissions research and develops and approves accounting methodologies for developing greenhouse gas inventories for Australia.

The Government has also established the Greenhouse Task Force to develop a Western Australian Greenhouse Strategy. This Strategy will address a wide range of greenhouse issues and will develop a strategic approach for dealing with this complex matter.

- (5) Yes. This was part of the Government's 2001 election policy on the environment.
- (6) The Government is committed to promoting energy efficiency and demand management through a wide range of programs and activities.

Information on energy efficiency for domestic consumers is provided through the Sustainable Energy Development Office's Energy Smart Line, through its website and through the provision of brochures.

Energy efficient household appliances have been promoted through the Reach for the Stars program, which promotes high efficiency appliances at the point of sale.

Energy efficient house design continues to be promoted through the provision of information and tools such as the FirstRate House Energy Rating software.

The Energy Smart Government program was established in June 2002 with a target of reducing Governments non-transport energy use by 12 per cent by 2006/2007.

The Energy Smart Directory was established in December 2002. This web based service assists businesses wishing to improve energy efficiency by providing information on a wide range of sustainable energy product and service suppliers.

The Australian Building Greenhouse Rating software tool has been implemented and promoted in Western Australia. This tool assesses the energy performance of commercial buildings and assists building owners, managers and tenants in better understanding the energy performance and energy costs of commercial buildings.

The Sustainable Energy Development Office encourages energy efficiency in small and medium sized businesses through the provision of web and print based information resources on a wide range of energy efficient technologies.

Demand management is also being addressed as part of the electricity reform process. The new competitive electricity market is being designed to facilitate demand management participation in the various parts of the market. This will effectively allow demand management to compete as an alternative to generation and will provide commercial incentives for businesses to pursue demand management options.

The member can advance the cause of renewable energy by supporting the Government's electricity reform legislation.