

Western Australia Outlines Climate Change Blueprint

Western Australian Premier Alan Carpenter has unveiled a blueprint for fighting climate change which includes plans to cut water and energy consumption.

Carpenter says all new houses built after 1 September 2007 will be required to incorporate minimum Building Code of Australia 'Five Star Plus' energy and water efficiency measures that are estimated to result in a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of 129,000 tonnes, almost halve household energy and water bills and reduce consumption by about 50 per cent.

“To assist existing households that want to become more environmentally friendly, we have invested \$1.5 million to establish a household audit and education program which will provide practical information on how greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced at the household level,” Carpenter says.

The Five Star Plus scheme will build on WA's Five Star Building Standards which have recently come into effect. It will require new houses built in WA to incorporate measures such as solar or five-star gas (or heat pump) hot water systems.

“We don't want people to believe the policy on climate change is only about government, big business and industry. This is an issue in which [households] have a genuine, significant and valuable role to play,” says Carpenter.

The State Government will also work with large and medium-sized businesses to ensure they play their part in helping to fight climate change.

“We have committed to develop a nationally consistent mandatory energy efficiency program and will work with industry to deliver savings in greenhouse gas emissions,” he says.

Other key initiatives in the Premier's Climate Change Action Statement – designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 to 60 per cent of 2000 levels – include a 15 per cent renewable energy target by 2020 rising to 20 per cent by 2025.

A \$36.5 million low-emission energy development fund will be set up to promote the development of emission-reduction technologies, including the development of geothermal energy, and \$4.1 million will expand the government's solar schools program, increasing the number of schools using renewable energy from 100 to 350. A team of experts will also be established to prepare the State for a future national emissions trading scheme.

Recently the State Government committed to purchasing 20 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2010 and has invested an extra \$4 million in the Indian Ocean Climate Initiatives program.

“While we have led the nation in the adoption of natural gas and now produce the most greenhouse-friendly energy of any Australian mainland State, we have the capacity and obligation to achieve more,” says Carpenter.

“We have gone from one per cent renewable energy on the grid to six per cent in the space of five years without us as a State mandating,” says Carpenter.

Carpenter says that the implementation of any mandatory renewable energy or emissions trading scheme in WA “needs to be consistent with what the rest of the nation is doing and take into consideration what is happening in other States”.

“It is absolutely imperative that WA has got good engagement on the debate on the national emissions trading scheme,” says Carpenter.

[Source esaa news]