

**Question on Notice
No. 190
Asked on 21 February 2007**

QUESTION:

MR WEIGHTMAN asked the Minister for Environment and Multiculturalism (Ms Nelson-Carr)—

Will she inform the people of the Cleveland Electorate what the Queensland Government is doing to promote sustainable business practices in Queensland and any substantial outcomes resulting from any such strategies?

ANSWER:

The Queensland government recognises the need to attain more sustainable levels of resource consumption by assisting Queensland business to invest, compete and profit sustainably.

The Environmental Protection Agency's ecoBiz program is a voluntary industry partnership program that will invest \$6 million over three years into improving the take-up of eco-efficient practices and technologies by Queensland business. Eco-efficiency means producing more goods and services while using fewer resources such as valuable energy, potable water, and reducing waste and pollution.

Redland Shire Council was the first council to form an ecoBiz alliance with the EPA and ran a very successful program with seven businesses from different industry sectors. The Good Guys Capalaba, Stradbroke Ferries, and Redlands Nursery were three of the first businesses in Queensland to complete the program and become official ecoBiz Partners.

In the second year of their program, Redland Council have coupled delivery of ecoBiz to their Water Efficiency Management Plan program to present an integrated service for improved business sustainability. Fourteen additional companies have now joined and are working through the ecoBiz six-step program. This is an excellent example of government agencies working together with the private sector to achieve sustainable business practices.

The Good Guys Capalaba discount warehouse has shown outstanding commitment to making environmental savings through their ecoBiz program. They have developed an innovative training and information program that has equipped staff to inform customers about the benefits of water and energy efficient appliances. As a result, sales of eco-efficient front-loading washing machines have increased by 90 percent, equating to between 17 million and 24 million litres of water savings every year. The store has also made savings in energy use and has slashed wastage by implementing recycling of paper, toners and polystyrene foam packaging.

Expanded polystyrene foam is a lightweight cellular plastic material consisting of small hollow spherical balls, commonly recognised as the white foam used for packing fruit and vegetables. Approximately 30,000 tonnes of expanded polystyrene is manufactured each year in Australia, of which around 30% is used in packaging and 67% in building and construction. Polystyrene foam is 98% air and 2% polystyrene, and therefore dumping waste polystyrene uses up valuable landfill space and is a waste of resources.

The Good Guys' efforts to find a solution for their waste polystyrene led to a regional recycling trial, the latest in a range of initiatives coordinated and funded by Redland Shire Council and the ecoBiz program.

Redland Shire Council, the EPA, the Good Guys and a group of Capalaba businesses (Target, Capalaba Park Shopping Centre, Barbecues Galore, JB Hi Fi, Super A-Mart, BCF Australia, and OfficeWorks) joined recycler Leo Sines from the Carton Warehouse to conduct a three-month trial. As a result of the three-month trial nearly four tonnes (11 large truck loads) of polystyrene have been diverted from landfill and transformed into picture frames, CD cases, coat hangers, plant pots and building materials.

The ecoBiz philosophy of 'doing more with less' and 'turning waste into resources' is smart business.

In terms of sustainable housing, the EPA officially launched its new GreenSmart partnership with the Housing Industry Association (HIA) Queensland in the new Rushwood estate at Thornlands on 23 February 2007. The launch took place in a new GreenSmart accredited house designed and constructed by Civic Steel Homes, a strong supporter of GreenSmart. There was an impressive representation of over 40 leading industry practitioners who attended the event, including four Members of Parliament, local councillors, as well as the President of HIA Queensland, Mr Alex Milne, and HIA's Regional Executive Director Queensland, Mr Warwick Temby.

The EPA is also a program partner with Queensland's Sustainable Homes program which is promoting up to 30 houses for public display across the state. One of the projects is Sustainable Home Redland at 111 Parklink Drive, Redland Bay. The project developer is Fox and Bell and the designer/builder is Begbie Bentham, both local businesses. The home will use a range of climate smart design features appropriate for Redland Shire.

Passive design, including shading, cross ventilation and natural lighting, is central to the design of the home. The house will also include energy efficient lighting, a gas hot water system and rainwater tanks. The garden will be designed and planted to be waterwise. Using a project home template, the home is being designed for affordability and flexibility so that it can be easily modified to suit varying budgets or to allow for future expansion. It is envisaged that after visitors have seen Sustainable Home Redland they will be inspired to incorporate similar features into their own dwellings; either new houses or existing homes.

The EPA is currently developing *ClimateSmart Living* - a holistic and voluntary information, education and community engagement program to increase consumers' awareness of how they can make their homes and lives more sustainable. The mass media and the internet will be used to convey these messages, as well as provide opportunities for Queenslanders to actively participate in some initial simple actions. It is envisaged that increased consumer awareness will subsequently drive demand for sustainable products and services, thereby enhancing greater business opportunities. Given the existing support of Redland businesses for the EPA's ecoBiz program, such local opportunities should be even greater given increased consumer awareness.