

# Green Jobs for Queensland



**New jobs in the energy sector**



# The Greens have a plan for new, green jobs...

The general public knows the Greens have excellent environmental policies but have not been as aware of the party's policies on employment. In fact, many people believe there is a contradiction between jobs and the environment and often it is a case of choosing between the two.

The Greens don't believe this has to be the case at all. We can grow jobs that do not have harmful environmental impacts; in fact, we can create jobs that help overcome some of our greatest environmental challenges. These are becoming known around the world as "green jobs".

Unfortunately, Queensland governments have built the state's economy on an extremely narrow base, with mining as the key component of that base. This would be fine except for several major factors:

- it is very dependent on the international economy and big job losses occur at every downturn;

- the rest of the world will, possibly very soon, will force us to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions, thereby reducing our ability to sell coal internationally and to use it in coal-fired power stations;
- so-called 'clean coal' is largely a myth and will be too expensive and will not work in many places.

Although locked into dependence on a carbon-intensive economy, the Queensland Government has initiated some energy efficiency programs. Under its Climatesmart Homes scheme householders receive:

- a home energy audit conducted by a licensed electrician and a customised plan on how to save energy and money, similar to the EASI-Q audit;
- an energy monitor supplied and installed to show how much energy is being used throughout the day;
- a water efficient showerhead supplied and installed to reduce water





consumption and significantly reduce the amount of water being heated by electricity; and

- up to 15 free energy efficient compact fluorescent light globes.

While this is not a bad start, it has serious weaknesses that will limit its effectiveness.

These are:

- the householder has to find \$50 for the audit;
- the householder has to be able to work out how to implement the recommendations of the audit and this is often not an easy process;
- the householder has to find the upfront money to pay for such energy-savers as solar hot water systems and insulation, severely limiting the take-up.
- there is no incentive for either a renter or owner of a property to access the service.

The job creation elements of the State Government's program are quite small while the employment spin-offs are negligible. On the other hand under our EASI-Q scheme by the fifth year over 3,200 people would be working on EASI-Q refurbishments across the state.

The Greens are calling for economic development and green job creation that widens the base of our state economy, creates new jobs for those that are lost and meets our international obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Queensland Greens are launching new initiatives in economic development and green job creation. The first of these is EASI-Q, Energy Efficiency Access and Savings Initiative – Queensland.

# The Energy Efficiency Access & Savings Initiative QLD

EASI-Q is an initiative developed by the Greens to substantially upgrade the energy efficiency of Queensland's existing homes, significantly reducing greenhouse emissions, creating jobs and reaping considerable economic benefits.

Over ten years, the EASI-Q program will roll out free energy audits in every home across the state and implement efficiency opportunities with a payback period of ten years or less.

EASI-Q will pay the up-front costs of efficiency upgrades, in an investment in Queensland's future. The expenditure would be recouped

through CPI-indexed repayments, either periodic or at the sale of the property. The scheme is designed to ensure that savings on energy bills will always exceed repayments so that no homeowner, renter or landlord will ever be 'out of pocket'.

Energy efficiency is the cheapest and fastest way to substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There is tremendous untapped potential in Australia, where the very high greenhouse intensity of our economy means that every gain in efficiency gives us a larger cut in emissions than almost any other OECD country.



# Energy efficiency options



Energy efficiency can be substantially improved by installing items such as:

- insulation of ceilings, wall cavities and floors;
- efficient lighting;
- solar hot water systems or instantaneous gas hot water heating;
- ceiling fans;
- water saving showerheads; and
- hot water pipe insulation.

In most instances these retrofitted products have a short payback period – in other words they would be a wise investment because savings on electricity and gas bills would quickly pay back the cost of the initial installation.

The Greens propose to overcome the barriers to uptake of energy efficiency measures by:

- funding energy efficiency audits in every home across the state
- funding the upfront costs of energy efficiency opportunities identified in the audit that have a payback period of ten years or better. This significant

expenditure would be recouped through a surcharge on electricity bills.

EASI-Q is just one of a number of vital policies needed to increase Queensland's energy efficiency. Others include:

- tightening regulations relating to the energy performance of new homes and buildings, including major renovations;
- introducing a requirement to disclose the energy performance standards for buildings on sale or lease;
- requiring the largest energy users to implement the energy efficiency opportunities identified by mandatory audits;
- further strengthening of Mandatory Energy Performance Standards for appliances.

Priority for rollout of EASI-Q would be given to public housing and low income homes in order to tackle energy poverty in Australia and to counter the impact on low-income householders from increased electricity costs due to carbon pricing. The second highest priority would be rented accommodation.

# Cheaper energy, more jobs

To tackle the rental sector, landlords will repay the energy efficiency investment at a similar rate to owner-occupiers but directly to the scheme administrator. As the details of the repayments will be publicly available, landlords will be in a position to transparently pass on this cost as a rent increase for the duration of the repayment period. As with owner-occupiers, the rent increase will be less than the savings on electricity and gas bills.

Aside from producing more comfortable homes, the EASI-Q scheme will lead to reduced greenhouse gas emissions, reduced energy costs, deferred investment in new power supply infrastructure and more stable energy supply networks AND increased job creation.

Assuming that each house would require five days of work, and each flat or unit one day of work, by the fifth year over 3,200 people would be working on EASI-Q refurbishments across the state. Further jobs would be created in associated manufacturing industries. Indeed, one of the main challenges EASI-Q would face would be a labour shortage.

One solution to a labour shortage will be to work with the trade, training and accreditation bodies around Australia to develop and introduce a streamlined training and accreditation program for the installation of specific products, such as solar hot water systems, thus further strengthening the industry.



## So what will it cost?

Excluding administrative costs, this scheme is designed as a government investment in the future to be fully repaid. At the householder level, no upfront costs will be borne and repayments will always be less than savings on electricity bills.

In calculating the upfront cost to government, expert surveys project that, on average, the installation of energy efficient technology, especially efficient hot water systems and insulation, would cost in the order of \$5000 for detached houses and \$3000 for flats and units. These cost estimates are for the average dwelling and take account of the extent to which these technologies have already been installed. While some dwellings, especially in colder climates, have a large range of cost-effective energy efficient refurbishment options, including double glazing, for example, homes in warmer climates are expected to be cheaper.

The amount spent on each home would be expected to vary. What is important, however, is that only efficiency refurbishments with a ten year or better payback period for each individual home are implemented. It will be the accredited energy efficiency auditor who makes that assessment. If the auditor misjudges the payback period, the repayment period could be extended, with repayments indexed to a proportion of savings on the bill, so that the householder is never out of pocket. This achieves both environmental benefits and consumer protection.





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