



Save the Nature of the Kimberley

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Environs Kimberley welcomes State Government Energy Rebate Scheme

Environs Kimberley welcomes the initiative announced by WA Energy Minister Francis Logan recently, to provide substantial regional subsidies to reduce energy consumption. Under the scheme, consumers will be able to claim rebates for buying energy-efficient electrical goods. They will continue to benefit from their wise purchases by using less power, leading to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and energy bills.

The incentives include: a rebate of up to \$150 on a refrigerator or freezer with an energy rating of four stars or above, 30% off ceiling insulation products and a \$50 rebate for controllers to monitor air conditioners.

“Worldwide, government intervention is proving the best way to effect reductions in energy usage,” said Environs Kimberley spokesperson Collyn Rivers.

“For example, changes to America’s automobile standards resulted in a doubling of vehicle fuel efficiency between 1974 and 1988. Similar policies resulted in a tripling of refrigerator efficiency between 1970 and 1994. This approach proved cost-effective to consumers and had little adverse impact on manufacturers.

“Refrigerators are of particular interest. They typically account for 14-15% of all domestic electrical demand and the technology lends itself to energy use improvement. Australia has Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS) that apply both to locally manufactured and imported refrigerators. However, we still lag behind the USA.

“Further substantial energy savings could be made to fridges by using vacuum technology for insulation. Unfortunately, this may increase the selling price marginally beyond that recoverable from energy saving. Hence manufacturers have been reluctant to introduce the change fearing that consumers may balk at increased prices.

“The practical solution to this problem would be to enforce strict standards that require all fridges sold in Australia to incorporate such energy-saving technology. However, some standards seem to promote energy wastage. For example, standards permit an allowance of an extra 120 kW/year (typically a quarter of energy usage) where a fridge has a ‘through-the-door ice dispenser’. That’s a lot of global warming for a very minor convenience,” Mr Rivers said.

“Of course, initiatives to encourage consumers to conserve energy cannot be expected to originate from privately owned energy suppliers. These companies have a duty to their shareholders to optimise profit and this is unlikely to happen by selling less energy.

“Hence, the WA government-rebated solar initiative, to assist the sale of surplus energy to the grid, addresses both the desire to maintain profits and the need to encourage renewable energy sources. Under this initiative, energy suppliers are able to on-sell this “green” power at a profit,” Mr Rivers said.

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