

Media Release

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Conference congratulates City of Sydney, pushes efficiency into the spotlight.

The Energy Efficiency Council today held their annual conference where industry, business, academics and politicians universally agreed that energy efficiency provides around half the solution to any carbon reduction targets for Australia.

“Energy efficiency is no longer a debutante,” said Energy Efficiency Council CEO Robert Murray-Leach. “We’ve heard today from a range of players in governments and marketplaces, that energy efficiency is essential to addressing climate change, it reduces bills and helps usher in new forms of clean and low-carbon technology.”

The day proceeded with support for action and a national approach to reap the benefits of a national approach to energy efficiency.

International Guest, Dr Eoin Lees, Vice President, European Council for and Energy Efficient Economy, spoke about the massive surge in investment in efficiency in the UK, thanks to their national scheme.

Speaking at the conference, Dr Lees explained how “Belgium, Italy, France, Denmark and UK, all put obligations on energy companies to save energy in the homes or premises of their customers. This is a measure that works.”

In the UK energy retailers are now investing AUD\$1.3 billion a year to keep energy prices low and help homes and businesses become more efficient. “Experience shows that for every pound invested in energy efficiency, long term benefits of nine pounds flow directly back to consumers,” said Dr Lees.

Australian Carbon Trust and ClimateWorks Australia released a report which identifies the significant carbon emission reduction opportunities and energy and cost savings achievable by making Australia’s commercial buildings more energy efficient.

The report, *Commercial Buildings Emissions Reduction Opportunities* says that investment of \$13bn in greening buildings is needed to deliver least-cost emissions reductions of 16.3 MtCO₂e by 2020. Meg McDonald, CEO of Australian Carbon Trust, said “Australian Carbon Trust is working with businesses to develop and co-invest in new sources and types of finance for energy efficiency projects nationwide.”

Coinciding with the conference was one of the most exciting proposals in clean energy this year as the City of Sydney released their “Trigeneration Master Plan” for public scrutiny.

Murray-Leach said “big visions need to be combined with smart policies and sound engineering. And the only way we’re going to get the details right is by putting clear proposals out into the public so that we can look over them with a fine tooth comb.”

We should applaud the City of Sydney for doing just that. The City is being bold not because they will definitely get every detail right, but because they’re putting out a big proposal, for people to examine and improve. This will move the debate forward in Australia by years.”

Also at the conference, representatives of the Prime Minister’s Task Group on Energy Efficiency explained their recommendations to government, primarily of simplifying governance by replacing the three state-based energy efficiency schemes with a single, national energy efficiency scheme. They also recommend national target setting, to improve primary energy intensity by 30% by 2020.

Specialists in how people use energy at home, from CSIRO and Monash University explained how much we are learning about what motivates behaviour. Dr Phil Blythe, Research Advisor in Energy Efficiency from Monash University said “Schemes for more efficient appliances are important, but we also need to combine them with personal consumption targets for people to make sustained savings. Our studies here and overseas indicate show that target-setting is very effective for people and business to reduce costs over the long term.”

Rob Murray-Leach concluded “We know energy efficiency can actually help lower electricity prices. The Prime Minister’s Task Group on Energy Efficiency found that energy prices would be 6 per cent lower if we had a national energy efficiency scheme, primarily by offsetting spending on expensive electricity infrastructure.”

“What’s more, energy efficiency actually helps to grow the economy while it cuts emissions – ClimateWorks Australia have previously estimated that if we improved the energy efficiency of our economy, by 2020 Australian homes and businesses would save \$5 billion a year and cut greenhouse gas emissions up to 50 Megatonnes a year.”

The EEC members are already providing huge benefits to the Australian economy, but they are poised to take on a much greater task, the provision of 50% of the national carbon emission reduction targets.

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The Energy Efficiency Council is the peak body for energy efficiency in industry and commercial buildings. For more information visit www.eec.org.au.

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