

MEDIA RELEASE

31 NOVEMBER 2007

SMART METERS TO MONITOR WATER USAGE

The *Townsville: Queensland Solar City* project is about to shine even brighter with a plan by the Townsville City Council to give selected participating households 'smart water meters' that allow them to monitor their exact water usage.

Conventional water meters will be upgraded in about 500 homes on Magnetic Island through the addition of remote frequency technology which will communicate with Ergon Energy's power meters.

As well, Ergon Energy will upgrade all electrical meters on Magnetic Island as an initial step in its transformation of Magnetic Island into a Solar Suburb.

The *Townsville: Queensland Solar City project* is led by Ergon Energy on behalf of the State Government, Townsville City Council, Delfin Townsville, HIG Riverway and Cafalo.

City Infrastructure Committee Chair, Cr David Mather, said this means selected residents who are given an in-house display (IHD) as part of the Solar City project can see how much water they're consuming, along with electricity and the production of greenhouse gas emissions.

IHD meters will be provided to selected residents participating in the Solar City project following the completion of an energy assessment designed to help people reduce electricity use and greenhouse gas emissions.

"This is an ideal way to promote power and water conservation by changing consumer behaviour," Cr Mather said.

"Ideally, the effect of these meters is that they'll make residents conscious of their power and water consumption and lead to habits being changed for the better.

"Based on preliminary studies conducted elsewhere, Citiwater estimates the project has the potential to save roughly 66 kilolitres of water per household each year, which is about 12 per cent of an average household's consumption."

Cr Mather said the smart water meters will also prove to be a valuable tool for Citiwater in collecting and analysing accurate data about water use in the dry tropics.

"Unlike conventional meters which are physically read twice a year, the smart water meters will send electronic data back to Ergon Energy and then to Citiwater every half hour.

"This means Citiwater can collect accurate figures about water consumption in an urban dry tropical environment, and make decisions based on real data rather than on estimates from statistical analysis.

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“We’ll also be able to judge the effectiveness of smart water meters in encouraging households to reduce their water consumption.

“At the moment, there’s very little information on the use of smart water meters in Australia, so this trial will not only prove valuable for Townsville but for other local councils seeking to achieve real water savings.”

Cr Mather said the remote frequency technology will be added to conventional meters in the Magnetic Island trial area by early next year at a cost of \$205,000.

“The Solar City project already gives Townsville an exciting opportunity to be at the forefront of sustainable energy use, and this will add even further value to the entire initiative,” Cr Mather said.

The project will complement other Council water saving initiatives on Magnetic Island including the recycling of wastewater which is used to irrigate the Picnic Bay golf course, a Dry Tropics Rainforest and the Horseshoe Bay Sports and Recreation Area.

Townsville: Queensland Solar City - further information

Magnetic Island residents and business owners now have the chance to join the Solar Suburb transformation by completing the survey they should have received and returning this by November 16, 2007.

Once Magnetic Islanders have completed and returned their surveys, Ergon Energy will contact them to arrange a free energy assessment of their home or business and discuss with them the suitability of their property to host a solar photovoltaic (PV) system.

The *Townsville: Queensland Solar City* project will run for seven years and will showcase a number of initiatives across Townsville, including Ergon Energy’s ‘Solar Suburb’ on Magnetic Island, Townsville City Council’s Citisolar program and sustainable property initiatives led by Delfin Townsville, HIG Riverway and Cafalo Pty Ltd.

Ergon Energy will focus on Magnetic Island, which will become the ‘Solar Suburb’ within the Solar City. About 500 solar PV systems and 1700 smart meters will be installed and 1700 energy assessments conducted on homes and businesses on Magnetic Island.

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