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Debate on “Building Energy Efficiency Disclosure Bill”

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Mr Deputy Speaker, you have been an example of intelligence, wit and also good government and good policy advice to the government, so I most certainly would exclude you from the description that I am putting down here. I must return to the issue before the House. Once again, you are making a lot of noise—not you, Mr Deputy Speaker, but the government—and are not giving a result. Is this going to reduce carbon? No, it is not. Please look at the polls out there. Listen to what people are saying in your electorate. Surely, you must know that the message is coming through loud and clear, but you are not getting it. You are sitting here again tonight imposing \$6,000 upon every poor beggar that has an office in Australia for no purpose whatsoever.

Do you think they are all going to race out after they have expended this \$6,000 and go around and put solar hot-water systems on their roofs? No, they are not. When I was minister for mines and energy in Queensland I did not have to be [Albert Einstein](#) to work out that I could save myself one huge coal fired power station if I simply put solar hot-water systems on all the roofs of all the government houses in Queensland. It was a really simple thing to do, and it worked out cheaper. The householder would save in electricity more than the annual cost for the solar hot-water system. I was at a sleep-out the other night with Dwayne, who has his own company, and he said, ‘We put to the state government that a mass purchase would mean that we could bring the cost of the solar hot-water systems down.’ That proposition will reduce the amount of carbon. Forty per cent of domestic consumption is the heating of water. If you put in a solar hot-water system you will not reduce it by the whole 40 per cent but you will most certainly reduce it by more than 20 per cent. As the minister in Queensland I would have saved a \$1,000 million power station. The interest and redemption on capital servicing was \$100 million a year and we were probably up for another \$60 million or \$70 million to run it, so I was going to save the electricity consumers of Queensland \$200 million a year simply by writing on a piece of paper in a cabinet submission that we put solar hot-water systems on all houses and call for expressions of interest.

We did not talk about it; we just went out and did it. **We designed a house that, by standing in the sun, became a static air-conditioner. It had a big, high, steep roof, so it sucked the air up from the verandas, and mister jets put a very thin film of water down on both verandahs so the air that would be sucked in**

over it would be cool, with the constant circulation of air through the house. These were not Albert Einstein solutions. I personally had a look recently at the Dulux product through [Jeffrey Knuth](#) company in Townsville. We decided that our roof had a number of rust spots on it but we could prolong the life of the roof by some 50 years. We knew a number of people who had put this coating on. I found out that we did not need air conditioning during midsummer in Queensland once we had this reflective coating on the roof. I am not saying they are all as good as this particular model, because they are not. Of course, the corollary of that was that I had to use a blanket if I wanted to watch television during winter. All the more credit—we did not need a heater in [North Queensland](#), though we probably did need a blanket. I am just saying how enormously effective a reflective roof is. But here we are adding \$6,000 to the cost of every single office in Australia instead of going to a solution which would reflect the heat out of the home and provide us with comfortable living, with no cost to the environment or the atmosphere in any way, shape or form—and, quite frankly, at no cost to the person in the house or the office either because the heat is being reflected.

Having said all of those things and returning to the issue of the coating on the roof, there is a little sting in the tail here, because as [Northern Australians](#) we are just a little sick of being treated as second-class citizens. I am told that the golden boomerang operates under the golden rule. The golden boomerang is Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. Mr Deputy Speaker Sidebottom, being from Tasmania you would know that the golden boomerang gets it all, and Tasmania, North Queensland and to some degree [Western Australia](#) get absolutely nothing. We have a winner-takes-all system in Australia; we do not have the checks and balances that were put into the system in the United States. We do not have a multiparty system, which every country on earth, with the exception of Australia, now has. You can say that America has not, but they do not vote along party lines because they have a primary system even for their congressmen, and that means that a politician is answerable to his electorate, not to his party. To go back to the golden boomerang and the golden rule, I asked the person who referred to it what the golden rule is. It was explained to me that it is: he who has the gold rules. This person was saying it in connection with Woolworths and Coles. He said, 'It'll end up being decided along the lines of the golden rule—he who has the gold rules.' Mr Deputy Speaker, you would sympathise with me interpreting the golden rule a different way. We would put a bit of a twist on it and say: he who rules gets the gold. That would be the golden rule as Tasmania and North Queensland would see it.

We are a little bit sick of this in Northern Australia, and very serious things will happen if we continue to be treated the way we are treated. Coming from Tasmania you would sympathise with us on this, Mr Deputy Speaker. The primitive two-party system we have in Australia, with no system of primaries as they have in the United States, is just crippling this country in every respect. In this case, you get a tax deduction for putting heaters in your homes down in southern Australia, but you get no tax deduction for putting air conditioning in your homes in Northern Australia. The decision to put batts in was good if you have got a problem of cold. It is no good at all if you have got a problem of heat—the last thing in the world you want

to do is to trap the heat in, which is the effect of an insulation batt. It is fantastic in the southern states, but it is enormously counterproductive in the northern states. So instead of giving the northern part of Australian the reflective roofing, which should have happened at every point north of Byron Bay—for the five million of us who live north of Byron Bay—we got wiped like a dirty rag, but the batts went in down south. They went in, to everyone's shock, of course—and that is an unfortunate pun, because a very nice young man died in my electorate as a result of that scheme and the way it was misoperating.

The government is going to apply a charge of \$6,000 to every office in Australia. I have 142 towns in the Kennedy electorate. I suppose 20 of them are fairly sizeable, but in the other towns an office simply would not cost \$6,000. This shows the abominable nature of yet another stupid proposal. I am sure the honourable member for Wentworth, who up until recently was the Leader of the Opposition, would agree with me. I saw him on television recently most certainly asserting that there has been a lot of noise about but there has actually been no reduction in carbon emissions. We sat here for three years being preached to about carbon emissions by both sides of the House—it was not just the government's side of the House.

I was a minister in Queensland and I simply did what I did because I could see that it was going to save electricity consumers in Queensland \$200 million a year if they went to solar hot-water systems on their roofs. Has anyone done that most simple solution? No, nobody has done it and nobody intends to do it. **The simplest solution is to put some reflective coating on roofs in Northern Australia. Is anyone doing it? No, and no-one intends to do it.**