



Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

MEDIA RELEASE

Energy efficiency key to tackling rising energy bills

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A coalition of welfare, community and business groups including the Brotherhood of St Laurence has called for a national energy efficiency program to help households reduce their energy bills to complement the government's carbon price initiative.

John Thwaites, Chair of the Climate Change and Equity program at the Brotherhood of St Laurence, said:

'Low-income households, in particular, are already bearing the brunt of increasing power prices, and need assistance to reduce electricity bills and make their homes more comfortable during extreme weather. The best long-term protection against electricity price rises is energy efficiency.

'Electricity prices are being driven by the need to build more power generators and more poles and wires to meet the growing demand for energy. By being more efficient we can reduce the need for new infrastructure and reduce price rises.

'Energy efficiency will not only help manage energy bills in the light of carbon pricing, it will also help manage price rises from other factors as well.'

The coalition of welfare, community and business groups has called on the federal government to adopt a two-track strategy to increase uptake of energy efficiency in households:

Track 1 - Targeted support for approximately 50,000 high-needs households per year. This would include home visits to provide energy efficiency retrofits, and financial assistance for purchase of more efficient appliances such as fridges and water heaters. This would cost approximately \$100 million a year and be funded from revenue from the carbon price.

Track 2 – A National Energy Savings Initiative – This would be a broad-based program that would require electricity retailers to facilitate energy efficiency projects across all sectors of the economy: households, business and industry. A proportion of the energy efficiency programs would be delivered in low-income households. The initiative would fund itself by the reduction in new energy infrastructure costs and the reduction in wholesale electricity prices as a result of reduction in demand. The national scheme would take over from separate schemes running in three states (NSW, Victoria and South Australia) thereby cutting compliance costs.

The Prime Minister's Task Group on Energy Efficiency estimated that a National Energy Savings Initiative would deliver an annual reduction in household electricity expenditure of between \$87 and \$296 by 2020.