



Less power for parliament

Federal parliament is taking up the challenge to reduce the hot air it produces.

Since the opening of Australia's Parliament House in 1988, it's turned a shade of green, cutting its power consumption by nearly 60 per cent and reducing its environmental impact and carbon footprint.

This ongoing drive for energy efficiency continues today, with Parliament House committing to the 10% Challenge.

The 10% Challenge is a pledge to lower power consumption by a further 10 per cent, minimising the house's environmental impact and promoting sustainability and energy efficiency.

The program is being undertaken by a number of high-profile organisations including Toyota, Sensis, the University of Canberra and News Limited.

Parliament House is aiming to reduce its power consumption by 14 terajoules (TJ), equivalent to the energy consumption of 250 homes.

Former Greens Senator Bob Brown called on federal parliament to undertake the challenge in 2011, noting that a 10 per cent reduction in parliament's \$3 million power

bill would save the public purse \$300,000 annually.

A parliamentary motion to embrace the challenge was passed on 21 June 2011 in a multi-party agreement across both the House of Representatives and Senate. It was a show of support from the whole parliament for the promotion of environmental sustainability and a reduction in waste.

"This will provide some real leadership from this parliament to Australians about the benefits of cutting their electricity bills through energy efficiency," Adam Bandt (Melbourne, Vic) said.

"It is estimated that somewhere between 30 and 40 per cent of savings can be made on energy bills simply through energy efficiency measures."

As part of the challenge, research was undertaken at Parliament House to examine its energy usage and areas of consumption. It found 54 per cent of energy was consumed by air-conditioning, 20 per cent by lighting and 13 per cent through the use of IT and office appliances – all areas where substantial savings

could be made through changed processes and habits.

Parliament House has taken a number of initiatives to reduce power consumption including reducing temperature settings on air-conditioning units, implementing more efficient lighting and promoting awareness about energy consumption and reduction.

Habitual changes can achieve significant energy reductions and can be fostered in households, businesses and organisations. For example, power used in running appliances can be significantly reduced by altering computer usage.

Forty per cent of the power used by appliances such as computers is consumed while the appliance is idle during the night and over the weekend. Substantial reductions in power consumption can be achieved by placing idle appliances on standby or turning them off.

All these changes are having an impact, with energy consumption at Parliament House reduced by one per cent since the start of the challenge. •