



**Media release**

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## **City makes bid to shine as site for solar energy trials**

Townsville's abundant sunshine and proven record on sustainability could bring big solar energy dollars to the city.

The Townsville City Council tonight agreed to join a consortium headed by Ergon Energy which is seeking Government support for a major innovative solar energy trial in the Townsville area.

Sustainable Development Committee spokesman Cr Les Walker said Townsville was an ideal location for solar energy and the city was preparing a strong case to secure a share of the Federal Government's \$75 million Solar Cities program.

If successful with its application, Townsville is also in line for up to \$5 million in State Government support.

Cr Walker said the project could attract between \$10 and \$30 million in investment funding over nine years for the city and provide innovative business and job opportunities.

The Solar Cities program was announced earlier this year to fund major trials of sustainable energy for urban Australia.

The aim of the program is to provide a model of how solar energy and energy efficiency can deliver economic and environmental benefits in a specific trial area.

In Townsville, households in the trial area would utilise solar panels to generate energy and solar hot water systems to reduce power consumption.

Trial participants would also be supported with educational information and assistance on how to use energy more efficiently.

Cr Walker said Ergon Energy was finalising an Expression of Interest submission to the Australian Greenhouse Gas Office (AGO) which administers the Solar Cities program, due 22 July 2005. The Expression of Interest is the next step in a long process and assessment.

Ergon Energy and the Townsville consortium will investigate the most appropriate locations in the city for the trial, which can best meet AGO's stringent guidelines and assessment criteria.

Cr Walker said that as a key stakeholder the council would support the city's bid with in-kind support through existing sustainability initiatives and future financial contributions.

"Townsville must satisfy a range of criteria to be successful with our submission and senior staff at Ergon Energy and the council are confident that our track record on sustainability and energy efficiency and our plentiful supply of sunshine place us in a strong position," Cr Walker said.

Townsville is already taking a leading role in sustainable practices through waste water recycling at the city's sewerage treatment plants, Greening Townsville projects, biofuel trials; eco-efficiency, sustainable housing, and the wind turbine project on the Strand.

**Media information: Cr Les Walker 4778 2394 or 0418 747 870.**