



Heather Butler, MP

Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier

Wednesday, 25 March 2009

Switch Off and Look Up for Earth Hour 2009

Tasmanians are urged to take positive climate change action by switching off their lights this Saturday and taking a different look at the night sky without light pollution.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, Heather Butler, said Earth Hour encouraged everyone to switch off lights between 8.30 and 9.30pm this Saturday 28 March.

"Earth Hour is a powerful way for all Tasmanians to show their commitment to addressing climate change. Switching off the lights will help reduce Tasmania's carbon footprint and raise awareness of the need to reduce our energy use," Ms Butler said.

Earth Hour is an initiative of the global conservation organisation WWF (formerly known as the World Wildlife Fund.) Originating in Sydney in 2007, it is now a global event, with 50 million people switching off their lights in 2008. This year, the goal is for one billion people to switch off lights across the globe.

This year is also the International Year of Astronomy, and Manager of the Launceston Planetarium Martin George said it is a timely reminder to consider the issue of light pollution.

"Astronomers have long been concerned about the impacts of light pollution from urban sources," Mr George said.

"The brilliant lights illuminating our buildings and streets send a portion of their energy upwards, where it is not needed. This artificial illumination of our night sky also reduces the contrast between stars and galaxies in the sky and the sky itself, making it more difficult to detect faint objects, and impacting our capacity to make accurate observations."

"City dwellers easily become used to this "sky glow" and the naturally dark night sky with clear views of stars and other celestial phenomena, when rediscovered, often comes as somewhat of a surprise."

Ms Butler said Earth Hour provides the perfect opportunity for communities to switch off, look up and appreciate the beautiful Tasmanian sky.

"There are long term steps that can be taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from light sources and to improve lighting quality, thus reducing energy use and lowering costs," she said.

"These include using energy efficient light sources, turning lights off using a timer or occupancy sensor or manually when not needed, and improving lighting fixtures, so that they direct their light more accurately towards where it is needed."

Lights will be switched off in Government buildings and facilities where it is safe and practical to do so for one hour from 8.30pm on March 28.

Reducing energy use every day will help Tasmania meet its greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 60 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050.

For more information visit the Earth Hour website: www.earthhour.org

For more information about The International Year of Astronomy and light pollution, contact Martin George on (03) 6323 3777 or 0437-688824.