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*Elizabeth Ampt is available for interview on 0438 554 197.*

## Water and fuel saving choices can be applied to an energy sector facing spiralling demand

Strategies that have succeeded in encouraging people to save water and reduce car travel can be applied to conserve household electricity and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, according to behaviour change specialist Elizabeth Ampt.

She told a major energy conference in Melbourne today that voluntary behaviour change should be a key driver in cutting energy consumption as Australia faces a spiralling peak demand to drive air conditioners and new household technologies.

“Australia’s peak electricity demand is growing much faster than the base energy demand,” Ms Ampt said today.

“It has been estimated that up to 30 per cent of electricity sub-stations in Australia are suffering some degree of over-stressing due to demand peaks.

“The current regulatory regime for electricity distributors requires major new investment in infrastructure to support increased demand. Network augmentation to meet growing demand includes building new sub-stations and distribution lines.

“Modification of consumer behaviour by either a reduction in overall demand or by shifting consumption away from peak demand periods has the potential to defer some of this investment and achieve carbon emission benefits for the community.”

Ms Ampt, a behaviour change specialist with Sinclair Knight Merz, was speaking at the Energy 21C conference at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The major electricity and gas transmission and distribution conference in the Southern Hemisphere, Energy 21C has attracted around 2,000 delegates to address key themes of customers, climate change, networks and competencies.

“Voluntary behaviour change programs are increasingly recognised as playing an important role in addressing the sustainability challenge,” Ms Ampt said.

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“It has been successful in reducing car travel and water consumption by up to 23 per cent. Importantly, addressing consumers on a one-on-one basis about key sustainability issues leads to long-term change.

“Voluntary behaviour change is characterised by helping people to make their own choices without regulation or a feeling of external compulsion. For example, people have been willing to pay for water saving devices because they see it as their personal responsibility.

“Finding ways to cope better with less water is congruent with the values of people.”

Ms Ampt said trials involving motorists in the western region of Adelaide and householders in city and regional Victoria had shown the value of engaging with people about voluntary behaviour change with vehicle use and water consumption.

“It begins with a letter advising people of an opportunity to participate, then follow-up calls before a final assessment to measure change.

“It appears to be not only well accepted in the community, but also influential in bringing about long-lasting change that fits in with people’s lives.”

**Interview:**

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