

Bid for solar city

By KYLIE STOCKDALE

TOWNSVILLE'S scorching sun could soon be put to good use to attract sizeable solar energy dollars to the city.

Townsville hopes to secure a share of \$75 million to take part in an innovative solar energy trial.

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

Funds for the trial are on offer through the Federal Government's Solar Cities Program.

Heavy supply of sunshine puts region in running for energy-saving trial

Townsville City Council agreed last night to join an Ergon Energy-led consortium to seek a share of the funding.

If the application is approved, Townsville is also in line for up to \$5 million in State Government support.

Townsville's Sustainable Development Committee spokesman Cr Les Walker

said the city was a ideal for a solar energy trial.

"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," he said.

He said the project could

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

The Solar Cities Program aims to provide a model of how solar energy and energy efficiency can deliver economic and environmental benefits in a trial area.

Trial participants would

also be supported with information 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.

The Expression of Interest process, which closes on July 22, is the next step in a long process of assessment.

Ergon Energy and the Townsville consortium will investigate the most appropriate locations in the city that best meet the AGO's assessment criteria.