



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts
and

Senator The Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change and Water

June 9, 2009

GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO GROW RENEWABLE ENERGY INDUSTRY

The Australian Government will today release the final legislation for the expanded Renewable Energy Target (RET) which will allow for the creation of new 'Solar Credits' to replace the existing Solar Homes and Communities Plan (SHCP) from today onwards.

Solar Credits will build on the largest ever investment in solar panels in the nation's history under the Solar Homes and Communities Plan, with more than 80,000 solar systems set to be installed on Australian rooftops since the Rudd Government came to office.

"This Government has overseen more installations of solar systems in 18 months than we saw over the previous eight years, transforming the sector from a cottage industry to part of a productive and growing green-collar workforce," Mr Garrett said.

The Government will bring the application period for rebates under the Solar Homes and Communities Plan to a conclusion today, with Solar Credits to be provided upon passage of the RET legislation for systems installed from today onwards.

Mr Garrett said the Government had committed over \$700 million to the SHCP – more than four times the Government's original commitment - and would ensure all existing eligible applications would be funded to ensure a smooth transition to Solar Credits.

"There are currently more than 63,000 solar installations still in the pipeline, including rebates either pre-approved or applications received.

"This means that not even accounting for Solar Credits, there is about 12 months work based on the industry's current rate of installing around 1,000 solar PV systems a week, still in the system as a result of the Solar Homes and Communities Plan."

Homes, businesses and community organisations all over Australia installing renewable energy systems on or after today will receive Solar Credits following passage of the Renewable Energy Target legislation.

"With Solar Credits broadening the availability of solar technology to all homes irrespective of income, as well as businesses and community groups, plus the ongoing rollout of the \$480 million Solar Schools program, now is the time to let industry get on with the job of meeting these record levels of demand and for Government to provide a new kind of support to build this industry further," Mr Garrett said.

Senator Wong said commencing Solar Credits from today would provide the industry with a solid platform for long-term growth, enabling the solar industry to continue increasing its efficiency, reduce costs and become more competitive with other forms of renewable energy over time.

“Solar Credits under the Renewable Energy Target will provide the solar industry with the support and certainty to grow and invest beyond annual budget cycles,” Senator Wong said.

Senator Wong said the Renewable Energy Target legislation would be introduced to the Parliament next week.

Senator Wong said the market for renewable energy technologies in Australia would be fundamentally transformed, with a price on carbon through the Government’s Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, and the four fold increase in renewable energy provided by the Renewable Energy Target.

“The legislation released today will support unprecedented growth in Australia’s renewable energy sector,” Senator Wong said.

The expanded Renewable Energy Target would be delivered in addition to the Government’s \$4.5 billion Clean Energy Initiative, including \$465 million to establish a new body to promote the development, commercialisation and deployment of renewable technologies and \$1.365 billion for the Solar Flagships program, helping establish Australia as a world leader in solar technology.

Completed applications for the Solar Homes and Communities Plan which have already been sent, or are sent by today, Tuesday 9 June, will be accepted for assessment, while all new installations of small-scale solar, wind and hydro systems will be eligible for Solar Credits from today.

More information regarding the new Solar Credits program is available at www.climatechange.gov.au, and information on the Solar Homes and Communities Plan is available at www.environment.gov.au/rebates