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MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

TRANSCRIPT

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW
ATRAA CONFERENCE, MELBOURNE**

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SUBJECTS: Solar Homes & Communities Plan

Garrett: These figures on solar panels show that the governments decision in the budget was absolutely spot on and that these rebates are going to Australian families that need them most and that demand for this program is very, very strong.

It is also the case that the Rudd Labor Government will put more solar panels up around Australia than any government has in our history so I am really pleased that these figures show the decision we took at the budget was the right decision and I have always said that I would wait until we had a comprehensive set of figures, reliable data to be able to determine what the best steps forward are for renewable industries and for this solar industry and the figures we released today show very clearly we made the right decision, these rebates are going to families that need them most and I now want to have an extensive consultation with stakeholders, with the industry as we begin to deliver a framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions over the longer term within the context of a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and recognizing for Australian Households that they need the opportunity to have access to energy efficiency and solar power at least cost.

Journalist: What happens when the money that has been allocated runs out?

Garrett: We will continue to meet demand for the program and we will engage comprehensively with the industry as we begin to bring forward and consider those measures that we will bring forward in the light of the CPRS.

Journalist: *inaudible*

Garrett: Well demand is strong and I think that is an absolute vindication of the position that the government took and I have got to say that for the Opposition that ran around saying the sky was going to fall in they played Chicken Little on this and they got it wrong. We need to be economically responsible, we need to be environmentally aware and I am absolutely committed to making sure that we make decisions on the basis of reliable and accurate information, we made the right decision in the budget on these solar panels, they continue to be applied for by Australians who need them most and I know want to begin a range of extensive discussions with the industry in the light of the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme and also pointing out to them under the existing programs the Rudd Labor Government brought down at the budget we will be providing the most significant support for the solar industry that has ever been seen in this country.

Journalist: Is it sustainable given that industry feels that people have been rushing to take advantage of the rebate not knowing when the money is going to run out and are looking for assurances that the money will be there?

Garrett: Well I have given assurances that we will meet demand in the program and I have said that I will continue to monitor it closely and I will get more relevant information overtime and that we will sit down and meet with them and discuss their issues, I think that is a prudent and responsible way to address this program and I have also pointed out that to them that they have at least 40% earmarked under the National Solar Schools program, that's an investment of nearly half a billion dollars in solar panels in water efficiency, in energy efficiency measures for our schools, there are many, many opportunities for this industry to grow itself in the medium and the long term and this government is committing absolutely to make sure we have a framework to enable that to happen.

Journalist: Can you rule out a change to the means test ceiling?

Garrett: This policy remains in place, it was the right policy at the right time and today's figures show it, solar panels are going to families that need them most.

Journalist: So does that mean that families that earn over \$100,000 don't need solar panels as much as others, doesn't that seem unjust?

Garrett: Well those families have an opportunity, this government has got some comprehensiveness in it's kit bag here I've got to say when it comes to energy policy, dealing with Climate Change and renewable energy, I mean we have low interest loans program which will enable Australian households to take low interest loans and choose from a suite of measures including solar panels as they go about the really important and urgent task of reducing greenhouse gas emissions saving themselves a bit of money in their pockets and building an

industry over time that will contribute greatly to us addressing dangerous climate change.

Journalist: Doesn't send the wrong message to those families who do earn over \$100,000 though I mean the environmental message isn't that positive to them?

Garrett: This Government made the right decision at the budget and I think that all Australians would recognize that when you have a rebate that sits at this level, it is good public policy to make sure that it goes to families that need it most, that's we said we would do, and that's what we delivered on, that's what these figures show that more solar panels are going on more roofs around Australia and in the case of this rebate those panels are going on the roofs of families that need it most.

Thanks very much.