



# THE HON PETER GARRETT AM MP

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

## TRANSCRIPT

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT  
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW  
LAUNCH OF THE JOINT AUSTRALIAN TSUNAMI WARNING CENTRE  
BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY  
MELBOURNE**

**31 OCTOBER 2008**

**SUBJECTS: Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre; CPRS Treasury modelling; Australian National Academy of Music; EPHC Meeting**

**GARRETT:** It's terrific to be here today at the launch of the Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre in Melbourne, with the cooperation between the two agencies, the Bureau of Meteorology and Geosciences Australia, and to recognise that those terrible events of 2004 which saw hundreds of thousands of people killed – including Australians, many injured – meant that we understood the incredible force of a tsunami. And now, Australia has its own capacity to detect these tsunami events so the country is much better prepared in the event that we do have another tsunami.

I want to acknowledge the fact that this Tsunami Warning Centre contains some of the best possible science that is available, that it will provide Australians with up to half an hour warning or notification of a tsunami event, that the provision of the deep water buoys and the other monitoring devices around Australia means that we now as a nation have an independent verification and monitoring capacity for tsunamis. That's really important. It comes on the back of a tragic event but it does show how well prepared Australia now is, and the fact is that we have much better coordination and understanding in place to deal with an event of that kind, should it happen again.

So, this is a good day for Australia because it says that we are in a position to be better prepared in the event of a tsunami. We hope it doesn't happen; the fact is that there is a history of tsunamis taking place around Australia producing tsunami events for Australia over the last 100 years or more. We understand that there is every possibility that some time in the future, those tsunami events can happen again. We are now very much better prepared and we have the

opportunity to provide Australians with the necessary information that they need in the event that a tsunami should hit the coastline.

**JOURNALIST:** [inaudible] with the cuts, there's only a slight impact on the economy, why can't the cuts be deeper than what's being forecast?

**GARRETT:** Well, the Treasury modelling is significant because it does show that the likely impact on the economy is negligible, in fact, I think probably of a lower order than most people expected. At the same time, it's critical that you get the trajectory right in terms of cuts to ensure that you have emission reductions over the long term which stabilises climate but particularly makes sure that you've got the sustainable economic growth to take place as well.

The 0.1 per cent that's referred to in some of the modelling is an indication of a lower order magnitude that we're likely to see in terms of economic impact but it remains the case that you want to make sure that you've got clarity about how you want to approach those reductions over time and that you build the trajectory so that you achieve the target that's been set for 60 per cent by 2050.

**JOURNALIST:** Why can't we go further, go beyond the 60?

**GARRETT:** Again, the Government's target is set on the basis of science that came about as a consequence of the IPCC review and others and we will continue to look very closely at the modelling that's been delivered, the feedback that we're getting from stakeholders, the responses that we've had to the Green Paper up to this point in time, and develop a White Paper as a consequence of all of that feedback and this modelling too.

**JOURNALIST:** With the 70 odd million dollars that we've spent on the tsunami activation system - can you justify that given that the hope is it would never be activated?

**GARRETT:** When we've had a number of tsunami events in our history, there's every likelihood that we'll have more. And given that we're a coastal nation where a large percentage of our population lives very near the coast, and we've got a lot of economic infrastructure near the coast as well, I think that Australians would expect the government to provide the best level of response and the best level of measurements for tsunamis in the future.

**JOURNALIST:** Back on the treasury stuff - the opposition is saying that with the global economic slow down it's irresponsible to push ahead and when we've had bad economic news from the US overnight - does their case not have increased merit?

**GARRETT:** The Opposition have always been at sixes and sevens on the issue of climate change generally, and specifically on the question of a carbon pollution reduction scheme.

This modelling is specific in that it recognises and feeds to the long-term economic prospects of the country. And whilst it is the case that there will be economic events which have to be responded to and which the government is responding to, at the same time, we have a strong economic interest in ensuring that we prepare and respond appropriately and prudently to climate change and getting a price mechanism in the market, in an orderly way, is the necessary first step to do that.

Business has said very clearly that they want the certainty in terms of responding to climate change, the community wants to know that the government is willing to act decisively and in an orderly way. The only people who don't seem to understand the need for this kind of decisive action is the opposition.

**JOURNALIST:** With regard to the National Music Academy in South Melbourne, is it correct that you're meeting with Melbourne University today to discuss keeping that afloat?

**GARRETT:** I certainly will be having meetings with Melbourne University and with people from ANAM and others this afternoon. I'm determined to see that we continue to deliver elite training capacities for our young musicians and I want to make sure that that happens in a way which is effective and delivers on what the needs are for that student community.

So I expect to have meetings not only with Melbourne University but with other stakeholders and with students today. On the basis of those meetings, we'll bring forward what I think are some really good and strong options for dealing with a strong need to provide effective delivery to these students. We want to see that continue to happen.

**JOURNALIST:** The academy of course will be putting the case for it to keep going in its current form. Are they wasting their time?

**GARRETT:** I'm happy to listen to everybody if they put their views to me this afternoon. I've made it very clear that I don't think that, given the track record, the academy is the most effective way for us to deliver this kind of elite training. But I'm determined to see that our students get the best possible music education and elite training that they can. And once we've had those discussions, we'll outline the ways we want to put that in place.

**JOURNALIST:** In the event of a tsunami in Australia, how would citizens be warned?

**GARRETT:** The communication of a tsunami event would take place in rapid time to emergency services and to the emergency coordination networks that are already in existence and in particular to those regions that are likely to be affected. What's incredible about this Tsunami Warning Centre is that we have the opportunity now to provide within a half an hour for Australians, the potential of a tsunami event. That means that we are much better prepared, it means that

local communities, that local emergency facilities will have more warning. It also means, as you may have heard from the presentation, the opportunity to identify which particular region may be affected. We won't be in the situation of having a national alert which sends everybody, in a way, to have to scurry around and start responding. It will be more specific and location focused. That means it's more effective, it also means it's more economical.

When you consider that by providing the information of a notice that there may be a tsunami event, that means that people and local authorities and businesses have to change their behaviour pretty quickly - so this is going to provide more effective delivery of information but will also be more economic because it won't be so broad-brushed, it will be specific and tightly focused.

**JOURNALIST:** [inaudible]

**GARRETT:** Australia is much better prepared for a potential tsunami as a result both of us opening this centre today and also the work that has been undertaken with emergency services since the terrible events of 2004.

**JOURNALIST:** the EPHC is meeting in Adelaide next week - what do you hope it will achieve?

**GARRETT:** I want to bring forward those issues that we identified in the communiqué from the other states that we want to have a look at. We've got a number of matters on the agenda, some of which you're probably aware of. We'll be looking at issues relating to waste, we'll be looking at issues relating to guidelines in respect of wind farms, we'll be looking at issues in relation to the vexed question of kangaroo culls and how we treat our kangaroo population.

But what I hope we'll achieve is the recognition that we need to have a stronger and more focused approach right across the federation to dealing with the environment issues that we face. Advancing the work that's been identified in the EPHC in the past - we'll be doing that. I'm happy to talk about that once we've actually concluded those discussions and had that meeting.

**[ENDS]**