



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

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SOLAR TESTING CENTRE OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Australia's capacity to develop advanced solar thermal technologies took another step forward today with the opening of a testing centre in Adelaide.

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett, officially launched a solar testing facility at the University of South Australia's Sustainable Energy Industry Support Centre.

"This cutting-edge testing centre is now available for industry use and to support the research and development of solar hot water, solar heating systems and other solar technologies," Mr Garrett said.

"This Australian facility will encourage industry innovation and improve our solar technologies, delivering better quality products to Australians sooner.

"This comes at an opportune time, with the Government's \$3.9 billion Energy Efficient Homes Package set to assist more than 300,000 households to install solar hot water systems, bolstering the solar hot water industry."

Minister Garrett said the Sustainable Energy Industry Support Centre's key focus is on solar hot water applications in Australia through independent testing, product development and monitoring services to support local manufacturers and suppliers of solar hot water systems.

At the facility, solar thermal technologies are put to the test in a range of ways, including measuring thermal performance of solar collectors, checking the impact of rainfall and large hail stones, evaluating safety and performance during extended periods of no hot water draw-off and protection against freezing temperatures.

"By contributing \$410,000 towards the development of this testing centre, the Australian Government is investing in research facilities that directly benefit our solar industry, which in turn is delivering a major component of the Energy Efficient Homes package, supporting jobs at this critical time" Mr Garrett said.

The Solar Hot Water Rebate was increased to \$1,600 on 3 February 2009 and will run until 30 June 2012. The rebate is available for people who replace an existing electric hot water system with a solar or heat pump hot water system between 3 February 2009 and 30 June 2012. This includes owner-occupiers, landlords or tenants.

Since the announcement of the Energy Efficient Homes Package the Government has received more than 10,000 applications for the solar hot water rebate and more than 7,000 applications for insulation components that will eventually see ceiling insulation installed in around 2.7 million homes across the country. The package is a critical component of the Government's Nation Building – Economic Stimulus Plan, and will support thousands of jobs in manufacturing, distribution and installation during the global financial crisis.