



THE HON PETER GARRETT AM MP

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

TRANSCRIPT

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
DOORSTOP INTERVIEW
FLYING FRUIT FLY CIRCUS SCHOOL
ALBURY**

1 May 2009

SUBJECTS: Flying Fruit Fly Circus; Murray River algal bloom; Renewable Energy Target; \$3.9 billion Energy Efficient Homes plan; Wonga Wetlands event

GARRETT: Thanks everybody for coming out this morning as we make a really important announcement here for support of some \$3.7 million for the Flying Fruit Fly Circus refurbishment and development of the facility here in Albury as part of the Government's infrastructure support and investment – some \$800 million of support of infrastructure projects right around Australia. These projects are important because in a difficult economic period we need to provide the opportunities for local employment and for local projects which have not only benefits to community immediately but also, with this particular facility, benefits for the longer term.

I have always very much appreciated the work that is done at this circus school and the work the Fruit Flies do generally. They are a national and internationally renowned performance outfit in circus arts and we see providing this kind of support for this great organisation as being not only absolutely essential in a time of economic difficulty but also provide a significant boost to the region and continue to build the reputation and the use of this facility by people who engage with the Flying Fruit Fly Circus.

This is a really good day for the region. I do want to acknowledge the very constructive roles that have been played by both the Albury Council and also the Wodonga Council. I think that you have got a community here which recognises that this is a terrific institution. It provides the opportunity for local kids to learn circus arts. It also provides the opportunity for kids from other parts of Australia to come and have that learning as well.

It adds to the cultural richness of the region and by investing some \$3.7 million, this will enable the Fruit Flies to do what they do even better in the future.

Happy to take questions.

JOURNALIST: Minister, are you going to be taking a look at the Murray River while you are here?

GARRETT: I won't specifically be going to the Murray, although I have got another event later on.

We remain very, very aware of the kind of challenges that are faced along the river system, including through the Basin. Like everyone else I think I would have loved to have seen more spring and summer rain. But we didn't get as much of it as we would have liked in the lower end of the Basin – we did get some at the top end of the Basin. And it will continue to be a focus for the Government.

JOURNALIST: One of the issues which a lot of people in the community feel has been overlooked with relation to the River is it is currently contaminated, 600 kilometres, with blue-green algae, and so far we have had a hotline set up with the New South Wales government and that is it. You can't drink it, you can't swim in it.

GARRETT: The blue-green algae is an event which is of concern – there is no doubt about that. And I know communities would be aware of it here. The Government has, as you know, established a specific committee to make sure that whatever measures can be taken to address that particular outbreak, that you are witnessing at the moment, will be happen in an appropriate way.

Let's not gild the lily at all here when we answer a question like this. Our river system is in a state of significant stress. We desperately need substantial regular long-term, as well, rainfall. We are not getting it. We are not getting the precipitation into the system. These outbreaks, I am confident, are being effectively monitored and managed but we will continue to see them so long as the system continues to bear the brunt of both the drought, likely climate change impacts, and the long-term stresses that it is experiencing.

JOURNALIST: So just waiting for rain?

GARRETT: It is very much the case that we need rain more than ever before.

JOURNALIST: A renewable energy target of 20 per cent – there has been some concerns raised that households will have to foot the bill while industries just continue on their merry way. Your response to that?

GARRETT: I think it is important to note the really significant assistance that we are providing for individual households through the fiscal stimulus package that was announced early in the year, where we actually had the largest ever roll-out of ceiling insulation and solar hot water for Australian homes. That is about a nearly \$4 billion investment for householders. And we will see more solar panels on more roofs around Australia in this year of government activity than we have ever seen in the past.

And we do want to see, as well, significant additional investment in renewables by larger industries; and that will happen as a consequence of the renewable energy

target. So the renewable energy target provides the opportunity for significant investment in things like wind, potentially wave, and solar thermal in the longer term.

But at the same time, right now, Australians have access to what are the most cost-effective energy efficient measures and the Government's providing them with significant support to do that. So a \$1600 rebate for ceiling insulation; \$1600 assistance for solar hot water – that gives you the opportunity not only to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but also to lower your energy costs. And that will be one of the most significant roll-outs that we have ever seen. We have already got record applications, both for the solar hot water systems and for the insulation panels. And I think that shows that people recognise that there is a very good program that we have brought forward that helps them take action in their own homes.

JOURNALIST: But does it go far enough with industry given, I guess, that they are largely the problem?

GARRETT: Well again, everybody is going to take their share of meeting the responsibilities we have for addressing climate change.

By having a 20 per cent renewable energy target, we provide a significant uplift to renewable energy in the country. And the kind of investment that we want to see come through, the jobs that will be created over the longer term – these are very, very positive steps.

They are the kind of steps that our opposition, when they were in government, didn't take. They were the kind of steps that we said we would take, and we are starting to take them. And I think Australians will see things happening not only in their home with access to the Energy Efficient Homes plan but also greater provision of renewable energy around the country.

JOURNALIST: Minister, you are off the Wonga Wetlands. Can you tell us what you are going to be doing there?

GARRETT: Come along and you will get an opportunity to see. But one of the things that we are very mindful of is that we have got fantastic community initiatives of different kinds where people are getting out onto country and looking after the kinds, part of nature that they experience themselves in their own communities. And we will go out and have an opportunity to participate in an event out there as well.

JOURNALIST: They surprised you with a happy birthday song in there. You are not tempted to show us some moves on the trapeze?

GARRETT: I think I'll leave the fantastic work that we are seeing on the trapeze and in other places to these very, very talented kids. It has been a wonderful morning.

[ENDS]