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MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

TRANSCRIPT

**E&OE TRANSCRIPT
INTERVIEW WITH FRAN KELLY
ABC RADIO NATIONAL BREAKFAST**

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SUBJECTS: RET legislation; next weeks meeting of the International Whaling Commission

FRAN KELLY: It's a stoush that comes around every year, the annual meeting of the International Whaling Commission, and this year Australia is set to renew its push for more formal supervision of scientific research on whaling at next week's meeting in Portugal.

Today the Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, will release the *Global Cetacean Report*, that is the state of whales and dolphins in our oceans, with the report concluding that there is inadequate information to assess the risk of extinction for half of all species.

The Minister joins you now. Peter Garrett, welcome to *Breakfast*.

PETER GARRETT: Morning, Fran.

FRAN KELLY: We'll come to whales in a moment, Minister. But could we just start with the delay to the Government's renewable energy legislation we were just discussing with Michelle. Has the Government been too clever by half here? You linked it to the Emissions Trading Scheme, that was always going to fail, the Opposition was never going to fall for that.

PETER GARRETT: Look, Fran, that's not the case at all, and I'm just amazed that we once again have the Coalition held hostage effectively to the Nationals and to Barnaby Joyce.

I mean as recently as two or three days ago we had the Shadow Minister, Mr Hunt, saying that they're very predisposed to pass the RET laws. He said they'd seek to amend the bills. And the opportunity was there for that discussion to be undertaken.

And then suddenly at the last minute they've decided to support putting back consideration of the RET to a Senate inquiry.

So this is really a reflection of the fact that within the opposition there are still clear differences of opinion about moving forward, not only on climate change but on renewable energy as well, and I think that...

FRAN KELLY: There's no doubt about that, but if the Government had agreed to split the bill from the Emissions Trading Scheme, didn't make those two, sort of, co-dependent, then the Opposition would have supported it, wouldn't it?

PETER GARRETT: Well look, the co-dependence, as you call it, the linkage between them, has always been there. And, I mean, that announcement was made clear by the Government. The Government's position has always been specifically clear on this.

And the fact of the matter is that Mr Hunt and others in the Coalition have always said that they would support renewable energy legislation.

We now face a situation where not only are they unwilling to talk about it, to discuss it with the Government at all, but they've actually flicked it back to a committee that will decide some time in August what their view would be.

Now, it's just more delay, more division, and frankly more difficulty for people trying to work out where the Opposition actually are going on any of these issues around climate change and renewable energy.

FRAN KELLY: And, perhaps more importantly, it's a complete shemozzle for industries like the Australian solar industry. Here is what Adrian Ferraretto - he's the managing director of Australia's largest solar company, the Solar Shop - said yesterday.
[Excerpt from earlier interview]

ADRIAN FERRARETTO: Well I suppose we've been let down twice now: firstly when the rebate was pulled early, secondly now the solar credit is being delayed without a firm time line around it. I mean, for us that just creates, you know, further uncertainty and further confusion. And if we're confused, imagine how our customers must feel.
[End of excerpt]

FRAN KELLY: And we know how the customers are feeling because they keep emailing us on this issue. What's your response to the anger from the sector and those potential solar - solar energy customers?

PETER GARRETT: My response is to make Opposition members, but particularly senators and the Opposition Leader and the Shadow Minister for the Environment, aware of the fact that this industry is entitled to

know whether the Coalition will come forward and support a renewable energy target, which will provide for the delivery of solar credits and ensure the sustainable growth path for this industry.

I would say one thing though, Fran, and that's simply this, there's over a year's worth of work - of installations yet to be undertaken for the solar industry.

We've put more panels, this government, more solar panels on the roofs than at any time in our history, and to provide for the transition for solar credits there is the opportunity there for the solar industry to have a sure and steady path into the future, and that's what the intention was for the Government. And it's non-means tested.

FRAN KELLY:

What about people who are stuck in between though? We've had plenty of emails to the program saying I had my orders in, they got rejected after you changed the subsidy deadline, and now they're left high and dry.

PETER GARRETT:

Well, the Government made it clear that a transition to solar credits would permit people to make an application from 9 June forward, and on that basis solar credits would be available to them.

So it's really in the hands of the coalition. They always said that they'd pass a RET. That was their position.

Then they wanted to delink it from the CPRS, and then they said they were, you know, willing to have a discussion with the Government about that, and they talk about amendment. That then went out the door; and a day later they've actually put it back to August.

So if they're serious about renewable energy and about the solar industry, they would have had those discussions with the Government about bringing a renewable energy target legislation through the Parliament. They are not prepared to do that.

And why is that? Because Senator Joyce has come out and now he's said not only doesn't he think that there should be a carbon pollution reduction scheme, he doesn't like the idea of emissions trading, he's also predisposed to vote against Renewable Energy Target Legislation.

So it's all about the divisions within the Coalition, where you have had consistent aggressive views about climate change action, consistent aggressive views about renewable energy.

I mean, after all, we've had evidence come forward of the possibility for generating some 26,000 jobs in the renewable energies market. I mean, that's of identified projects that are out there waiting to be undertaken if the Coalition will get out of the way and let renewable energy do the job that it can do.

And this is a commitment that we had for 20 per cent of renewable energy by 2020. It's a four times increase on where the Coalition had it and they weren't prepared to take it any further. It's really in their hands, Fran.

FRAN KELLY:

Minister, I'll get to whales in just a second. But just finally on this, there is been - there has been a lot of confusion in the renewable energy sector about where things are heading. A simple way that the Greens say to address that is to introduce a national gross feed-in tariff for all renewable power: solar, wind, wave, tidal, geothermal, whatever. Is that on your agenda?

PETER GARRETT:

Well look, COAG has already said that a national feed-in tariff isn't in contemplation, and the Greens know that very well, at this point in time. That's always been the position, Fran.

But look, here we are, we provided record levels of support for solar panels, solar credits is there, and the renewable energy legislation provides for that opportunity for solar credits to build not only solar, but wind, and also for hydro as well.

It's non-means tested. And it will deliver not only to families but to communities, to businesses, to farms, fish and chip shops. Right around Australia people have the opportunity to continue on that renewable energy path, but the Coalition simply stands in the way.

FRAN KELLY:

Okay. It's 13 to eight on *Breakfast*. Our guest this morning is Environment Minister Peter Garrett.

Minister, you leave this weekend for the annual meeting of the IWC. With no compromise on the table from Japan on its so-called scientific whaling program, how do you propose to get the Commission to take more responsibility for whaling science and framing whales conservation plans?

PETER GARRETT:

Well, Fran, we brought forward the most constructive policy reform agenda into the IWC that it has seen, certainly in my memory and my knowledge. No question about that. And we've got good support from it, incidentally, from other countries.

It's a reform proposal that does put properly determined, peer-reviewed and accepted scientific methodology at its heart. Because if we're going to have a discussion about so-called scientific whaling then we believe that the science needs to be robust and there needs to be processes in the Commission to make sure that that happens.

We've had support for that proposal. We've also had support for our Southern Ocean Research Partnership. I mean, this would be the largest research partnership of its kind anywhere in the world.

We're providing support for it and we've had a really good buy-in from other countries to that extent.

And I think the argument here, in the IWC, is really around these terms. We very strongly believe that you don't need to kill whales in order to understand them. We're committing ourselves to research, cooperative research, and we're inviting other nations to join us in that research, and they're already starting to.

In fact, yesterday we saw the New Zealanders agree with Australia that a vessel, a New Zealand vessel, will go down into the southern oceans in 2010. I think that's a fabulous initiative.

And we're also saying, for us to get out of the entrenched arguments and the very difficult and sometimes acrimonious debates that have characterised the IWC in the past, we must agree the way in which these scientific issues are actually going to be resolved.

Now that's a very solid and constructive reform agenda. I've had very positive feedback from other countries who have indicated their willingness to support us.

But I'm under no illusions that this will be an extremely difficult meeting, they always are. Some of the positions are entrenched, and it may be that we just are simply there putting our case very strongly and continuing our reform agenda, not only through the IWC but in the work that we want to do with other countries, particularly in the Southern Ocean.

FRAN KELLY: Okay, Peter Garrett, thank you very much for your time.

PETER GARRETT: Thanks, Fran.

FRAN KELLY: Peter Garrett is the Federal Environment Minister, off this weekend to the 61st Annual Meeting of the International Whaling Commission, in Portugal.

[ENDS]