



Media Release

PETER GARRETT MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

BILL SHORTEN MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction

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BENEFITS FOR BUSHFIRE COMMUNITIES AMONGST SOLAR HOT WATER ADJUSTMENTS

The Australian Government has opened up its \$1,600 solar hot water rebate to people who lost their homes in the Victorian bushfires in February 2009.

Environment Minister Peter Garrett said the rebate is not usually available for people building new homes, but the Government had made an exception for homes destroyed in the fires.

“This is another leg up to help these communities as they rebuild and it will have long-term environmental benefits as well,” Mr Garrett said.

“Solar hot water can save a family up to \$700 on their energy bills and help cut down their impact on climate change – it’s one of the most simple and effective ways to make your home more energy efficient.”

Mr Garrett said the special arrangements target the 2,000 homes estimated to have been destroyed in the February 2009 bushfires, as well as the 1,400 that were left uninhabitable.

Parliamentary Secretary for Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction, Bill Shorten said: “This is a common-sense decision which will benefit residents in bushfire-affected towns who are rebuilding their homes.”

“The efforts of residents on bushfire-hit areas in the wake of the fires have been inspirational, and we are determined to keep standing by them as they move forward with their lives.”

The bushfire change is part of adjustments made today to the Australian Government’s solar hot water rebate. From tomorrow, the rebate on heat pump systems will be reduced from \$1,600 to \$1000. This provides a fairer balance between the gap householders pay for a heat pump or solar hot water system. The \$1,600 rebate on solar hot water systems is unchanged.

“Today’s changes will allow even more people to access the Government’s solar hot water rebate, maximising the benefits for households and the environment,” Mr Garrett said.

“Heat pumps are typically a lot cheaper than solar hot water systems, so this change provides a fairer balance between the gap that householders have to pay.

“We’re offering \$1000 back on heat pump systems which can start at around \$3000, and a \$1,600 rebate on solar hot water systems which start at about \$4,200.

“We know there will be some people affected by the transition - people who can show they bought their heat pump prior to 5 September 2009 can apply for the higher rebate.”

The special arrangements for Victorian bushfire communities require that households:

- are rebuilding a home they lost in the fires,
- are installing a solar or heat pump hot water system that is eligible for at least 20 renewable energy certificates, and
- are also installing a rainwater tank at the property that meets the criteria for the Victorian five star building standards.

Guidelines will be available from the website at www.environment.gov.au/energyefficiency or by calling the hotline on **1800 808 571**.