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MEDIA RELEASE

Senator the Hon Penny Wong

Minister for Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and Water

14 July 2010

NATIONAL SOLAR SCHOOLS PROGRAM RE-OPENS

Primary and secondary schools across Australia will have access to funding for solar panels and rainwater tanks from 15 July 2010, under new funding for the National Solar Schools Program.

Under the National Solar Schools Program, grants of up to \$50,000 (\$100,000 for multi-campus schools) are awarded to eligible primary and secondary schools to install solar and other renewable power systems, rainwater tanks and a range of energy efficiency measures.

The Minister for Climate Change, Energy Efficiency and Water, Senator Penny Wong, today announced \$51 million in funding would be available to schools in 2010-11. Applications for the new funding round will open tomorrow and close on 20 August 2010.

“More than 1000 schools across the nation have already installed solar systems under this program, and another 1500 schools have projects underway to become solar schools,” Senator Wong said.

“Since the program began in 2008, about 6 MW of renewable solar power has been installed in schools – the equivalent of meeting the electricity needs of 1200 average households each day.

“This program has been highly successful as it gives school students first-hand experience in renewable energy, and helps students to become more energy and water wise.”

The National Solar Schools Program was temporarily suspended in October 2009 when high demand for the program meant that annual funding targets were met earlier than anticipated.

Improvements have been made to the program, including:

- To help manage demand, funding will be capped each financial year and annual application rounds will be held.
- Applications will be assessed using merit-based criteria, meaning schools will have to demonstrate value for money, environmental and educational benefits in their applications.
- To address potential duplication, schools that have been approved to receive funding for solar power systems under any other Australian Government program since 1 July 2008 will now only be eligible for funding of up to \$15,000.

The \$420 million program will help schools across Australia to become more energy efficient. The Department will work closely with state and territory education agencies and with the Block Grant Authorities (for non-government schools), to ensure a smooth roll-out of the changes.

Further details on changes to the program will be available in new program guidelines at: www.climatechange.gov.au. Schools can also contact the NSSP hotline on 1800 703 831.