



THE HON PETER GARRETT AM MP

MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, HERITAGE AND THE ARTS

Opening of the BluGlass Production Facility

Silverwater, Sydney

July 17, 2008

[CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY]

Thank you to Giles Bourne and Dr Mike Taverner for your kind words and your invitation to be here today. It is a real pleasure to be here to open a facility that is taking home grown innovation and technology out into the world.

Yesterday, the Government took a critical step in rising to the challenge of climate change, with the release of the Green Paper on Australia's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. This is a significant milestone, as we roll our sleeves up in earnest and set about tackling the greatest social, economic and environmental challenge that this and subsequent generations of Australians will face.

Every day, we get a better understanding of the importance of taking action – for the future of our economy, for our farmlands, our rich tourist areas – from our cities to our Antarctic Territory - the consequences of climate change inaction are potentially devastating. And meeting this challenge will take every ounce of innovative and creative capacity that we as a nation and as a global community can bring to bear.

It's a very great pleasure to be here today to congratulate Australian innovators, BluGlass, on the opening of their Silverwater facility. This in itself is an important milestone in taking an Australian technological innovation – low-emissions technology – and turning it into a commercial success.

We don't need to look any further to appreciate that Australians are an innovative people, and that challenges, like climate change, bring out the best in us. BluGlass is at the forefront of energy-efficient lighting technology. And what they're doing here, at Silverwater, is a great example of the innovation that is so important as we transition to a carbon-constrained world.

A decade ago, few would have believed that compact fluorescent lamps would be on their way to becoming mainstream in Australian homes. And from Macquarie University research today, we see the potential of another technology, LEDs – light emitting diodes – an emerging technology that is expected to be the future of household lighting.

It's when we appreciate the innovation happening right here that we understand the kind of transformations required to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions are not only possible – they're already happening now.

LEDs are far more efficient than traditional incandescent light bulbs. They're currently used in countless applications including lighting displays in household appliances, mobile phone screens, traffic signals and street lighting.

Some lighting companies are developing LED lamps for direct replacement into normal fittings, and these are expected to be available for some uses in the near future. However one of the key barriers restricting the uptake of LEDs has been their cost. What BluGlass are doing here, with advances in semiconductor technology - an Australian innovation – will help reduce the cost of LEDs.

And up-front cost is an important issue when it comes to deploying energy efficient technologies. The Federal Government is committed to taking energy efficiency mainstream.

We understand technologies already exist to help Australians take practical action to reduce their energy use and save on energy bills. And we understand the critical need to get these technologies into the community, because energy use is the dominant source of greenhouse gas emissions in Australia, contributing 71 per cent in 2005 of the nation's total emissions.

In Australia lighting currently represents around 12 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions from households, and around 25 per cent of emissions from the commercial sector.

The Government is committed to the phase-out of inefficient lighting, and on World Environment Day – June 5 – I announced that the planned phase-out will be brought forward to November 2008 when the import of inefficient incandescent bulbs will be restricted.

Our focus right now is on encouraging Australians to switch to existing efficient alternatives, like compact fluorescent lamps, but it's also on fostering innovation, and that's why the work of companies like BluGlass has the potential to become part of taking energy efficiency mainstream.

Switching to high efficiency lighting around the world will see energy savings of 800 terawatt hours and greenhouse gas abatement of 470 million tonnes – equivalent to 118 million cars off the road or 470 million new trees planted per year.

This means there is going to be a huge demand for efficient lighting here and around the world in the near future. Australian innovation as represented by BluGlass is well placed to help in meeting this demand – helping to both drive our economic growth and our efforts to reduce the levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

The Australian Government is committed to working cooperatively with industry. You saw proof of that commitment yesterday, when we announced the Climate Change Action Fund, which will be set up to assist business transition to a cleaner economy.

The CCAF will provide partnership funding for a range of activities, including:

- Capital investment in innovative new low emissions processes.
- Industrial energy efficiency projects with long payback periods; and
- Dissemination of best and innovative practice among small to medium sized enterprises.

This is a commitment that will light the path to more innovation, of the kind we've seen here today.

So I wish BluGlass the best of luck in continuing to develop and refine their technology. And I say again, when it comes to tackling climate change, we have the innovation and the creativity – now let's get down to business.

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