

For immediate release, Thursday 7 May 2015

Christians urge Labor to commit to solar for Kirribilli House

Opposition Leader Bill Shorten is being urged to demonstrate commitment to a clean energy future for Australia by accepting the gift of crowdfunded solar panels for Kirribilli House should Labor win the next federal election.

“We’ve given Prime Minister Tony Abbott two opportunities to accept the gift of solar for Kirribilli House. To be fair, we should give Bill Shorten at least one, after all, this is a gift for the future of our nation,” said **Jarrold McKenna**, Common Grace National Director.

“Christians want to see real leadership on a safe future. The solar panels are a symbol of this safe future. This isn’t about choosing political sides, but siding with future generations and the world’s poor who are most affected by this ecological crisis. You don’t have to be the Pope to know that putting your faith in fossil fuels is morally bankrupt” said McKenna

The 12 solar panels were originally crowdfunded by 142 Australians from the Christian movement Common Grace last December. In March, Common Grace were informed that gift was rejected by the Abbott Government, in a letter from Parliamentary Secretary for Finance Michael McCormack MP, citing concerns about Kirribilli House’s heritage listing and the cost of cleaning the solar panels.

When the Australian Solar Council advised that the Government’s reasons for not accepting the gift didn’t stack up, Common Grace delivered an open letter signed by almost 1000 Christians urging the Prime Minister to accept the gift. The Abbott Government has now rejected the gift of solar panels for Kirribilli House for a second time, informing Common Grace last week but offering no reasons for the rejection.

“As we’ve said before, the decision to reject our solar panels gift is symbolic of the Government’s lack of vision for a clean energy future. Investment in large-scale renewables has skyrocketed around the world, yet here in Australia, it has plummeted by 88%. Not only has the Government refused to invest in renewables, it won’t even take them as a free gift,” said **Jody Lightfoot**, Climate Justice campaigner for Common Grace.

In an email to its members, Common Grace wrote, “Obviously we are disappointed. We figure that if they are going to spend \$200,000 a year on keeping the gardens clean at Kirribilli House, why not accept the chance to clean up its energy too?”

Common Grace is encouraging Christians to tweet to Bill Shorten asking whether, if elected, he will #acceptthegift.

Media Contacts:

Jody Lightfoot – Climate Justice campaigner, Common Grace – 0404 491 494 (available from 9am onwards)

Jarrold McKenna – National Director, Common Grace - 0411 203 555 (available from 7am - 9am)

Attached:

Letter to Opposition Leader Bill Shorten

Letter to Opposition Leader Bill Shorten

Dear Mr Shorten,

Last December, 142 Christians crowd funded a gift of twelve solar panels for Kirribilli House to show support for a clean energy future. The Australian Solar Council offered to have the panels installed for free.

In March 2015, The Hon. Michael McCormack informed the Common Grace team that the Government had rejected the solar panels gift due to Kirribilli's heritage listing, ongoing costs of cleaning and maintenance, and security concerns.

But experts indicated that the Government had no satisfactory reason not to accept the solar panels. And over 1000 Christians signed an open letter urging PM Abbott to #acceptthegift and the solar gift was re-presented to the PM's office by local church leaders and the Common Grace team.

Last week, the Government rejected our solar panels for the second time – a symbolic gesture of their failure to invest in renewables.

We want you to be clear that Christians want to see real leadership on renewables. We are looking for a leader who will stand up for a clean energy future.

As the Opposition Leader, will you commit to install our solar panels gift on Kirribilli House if elected, as a powerful signal to the world that Australia's renewables industry is open for business?