TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE - ADELAIDE

SUBJECT: CLIMATE CHANGE, COPENHAGEN ACCORD

E & O E – PROOF ONLY

WONG: Thanks very much for coming. Yesterday Mr Abbott announced publicly that he had written a letter to the Prime Minister in relation to climate change. The Prime Minister asked me to respond and today I am releasing that response. And yet again Mr Abbott has made a number of mistakes on climate change, mistakes that are simply unacceptable for someone in his position.

But this isn’t the first time Mr Abbott has failed to do his homework. He has made a range of serious mistakes in order to try and justify his view that we shouldn’t act on climate change; that Australia should simply not act.

First, he incorrectly claimed that global warming had stopped when it is actually accelerating. Secondly, he made a $250 billion blunder in some of his costings. Third, he claimed the Government hadn’t released the Treasury modelling which we had. Fourth, he claimed the Government’s assistance to Australian households and families was temporary when it is permanent. Fifthly, he has inflated claims about the impact of the CPRS and inflated claims about the impact on electricity prices.

But in his letter he repeated again his most commonly asserted mistake. Which is to claim that Australia is going it alone. Australia isn’t going it alone.

And let’s remember there are about 30 countries ahead of us. All of the nations of Europe, the US, Japan and New Zealand have either implemented a scheme like the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme or are in the process of doing so. Those are the facts.

The only way Australia would be going it alone would be if we took the path Tony Abbott is advocating. That’s the only way Australia would be going it alone is if we took the path Mr Abbott is advocating.

Every time Mr Abbott gets another rush of blood to the head he comes out and makes a new mistake on climate change. Frankly, Mr Abbott needs to do his homework before he starts shooting his mouth off when it comes to climate change.

Happy to take questions.

JOURNALIST: Minister, there are reports coming from the Indian Climate Minister in regards to Copenhagen that India... [inaudible] ...to create legally binding targets. From your experience can you confirm that that is the way the Indian delegates behaved?
WONG: Well it’s quite clear from what is on the public record that the position that Australia took, the position that the United States took, the position that Europe took, was different to that of China and India. That is on the public record.

But I do want to say this: when we went to Copenhagen there was no agreement from China or India to do anything on climate change, nor to be accountable internationally for what they were doing.

We now have an agreement whereby China and India are prepared to take action and are prepared to be accountable for it – to move from the domestic to the international. So that is an important step. As President Obama described it, it is an unprecedented step and Mr Turnbull I think has made a very good point, that the fact that India and China are agreeing to take action and to be accountable for it is a major step forward. Obviously we wanted more; Australia has made that clear. And the reason we wanted more is because we believe action on climate change is absolutely in our national interest.

JOURNALIST: Was it frustrating that those nations had that attitude at the talks?

WONG: There are a lot of things that are frustrating about negotiations and obviously people have a range of different positions. We believe that the Copenhagen Accord is a step forward. It is not as big a step as we would have liked, but it is certainly better than when we went to Copenhagen.

JOURNALIST: Do you get the feeling that India is really boasting that it has sort of put one over the larger nations?

WONG: I am reluctant to get into commentary about what people are doing. The Indians are articulating a position, that is their national position. We’ve made our position clear. We wanted more. We think what we got was a step forward and we are pleased that China and India have not only agreed to act but are willing to be accountable for their actions – that is an important step and a key step.

JOURNALIST: Minister on a different topic, there are 30 asylum seekers being taken to Melbourne. Is that contrary to the policy of processing them offshore?

WONG: Well look I understand Senator Evans made some comments about this and made clear that this was a situation of priority processing. The Australian Government position remains that irregular maritime arrivals are processed on Christmas Island. But there are priority processing arrangements for particular groups. But on any detail on that you’d have to go to Senator Evans.

JOURNALIST: Minister, just on the size of the Australian delegation in Copenhagen. I read today that you took responsibility for credentialing the state delegations…

WONG: That’s right.

JOURNALIST: Can you tell me, did you knock back any people from any of the states or was everyone from the states put up?

WONG: I don’t believe we did not credential any state officials who sought to go. We certainly did have to speak to a whole range of stakeholders about that fact that we were limiting the size of the Australian delegation. I did make a decision that we wouldn’t credential non-government representatives and I made that decision because my judgement was the size of the delegation would be too big. But given the importance of the negotiations, I thought it was appropriate that
government officials be credentialed. So we credentialed some state government representatives and also local government representatives.

**JOURNALIST:** Which were the biggest states?

**WONG:** Look I haven’t got those details in front of me. They are on the public record; in fact I think they were published while we were overseas. But all of that information, as I said, in relation to Commonwealth officials will be made available and tabled in the Parliament.

**JOURNALIST:** Minister, how do you view the Australian government managing the issue of Japanese whaling?

**WONG:** I’m not briefed on that I’m afraid. I assume Mr Garrett might make some comments about that. We’ve got a clear position on that, but I’m not briefed on the most recent developments.

**ENDS**