

ENVIRONMENT NETWORK WEEKLY (ENW)

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FEDERAL

New Net Zero Agency commences July 2023 and its Advisory Board appointed

The Federal Government has announced the Chair and Advisory Board of the Net Zero Agency.

The Hon Greg Combet AM has been appointed as Chair of the Net Zero Agency. As Chair, Mr Combet will guide the Agency to ensure that the workers, industries and communities that have powered Australia for generations, can seize the opportunities of the net zero

transformation. The Chair will be supported by an Advisory Board to design and establish the legislated Net Zero Authority.

Advisory Board members were appointed for their significant expertise across a range of areas including workplace relations, energy markets, regional development, First Nations engagement and economic development.

In addition to the Chair and Advisory Board, stakeholder reference groups will be established to guide the Agency's work with representatives to include regional experts, to engage with workers, industry and communities about the transition to net zero.

The national Net Zero Authority will work with state, territory and local governments, existing regional bodies, unions, industry, investors and First Nations groups to help key regions, industries, employers and others proactively manage the transformation to a clean energy economy.

To start the Authority's responsibilities immediately the Net Zero Agency will start work from July 2023.

Solar panel and inverter product listing body application round – opens end of June 2023

The Federal Clean Energy Regulator (CER) has released information on the Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme (SRES) solar panel and inverter product listing body application round.

Potential applicants should read the [application round information](#) on the CER website including the

downloadable [guidance document](#) and [application form](#) in order to start preparing an application.

The application round will open at the end of June 2023, and applicants will have three months to submit their application. At the end of the process, the CER will nominate one product listing body to publish and maintain a list of approved solar panels and inverters eligible for use in the SRES.

The Clean Energy Council will continue to publish approved solar panel and inverter product lists while these processes are undertaken.

The CER will work with state and territory regulators, the Australian Energy Market Operator and Distributed Network Service Providers who use and rely on the approved solar panel and inverter product lists to ensure they are aware of and are prepared for the upcoming changes.

New gas code to secure gas at reasonable prices for Australian users

The Federal Government has completed the design of the Mandatory Gas Code of Conduct (Gas Code), following close engagement with gas users and producers.

The Gas Code will ensure Australian gas is available for Australian users at reasonable prices, give producers the certainty they need to invest in supply, and ensure LNG producers meet their export commitments.

Producers have already offered indicative domestic supply commitments under the new framework of at least 260 PJ to 2027. These indicative commitments will reduce the risk of shortfalls as assessed by the ACCC and AEMO.

The final design of the Gas Code places a greater emphasis on:

- Securing additional domestic supply commitments in the short term to anchor prices at \$12/GJ and shield east coast gas consumers from volatile international gas prices.
- Facilitating certainty for investment in new supply to avoid projected shortfalls and sustain reasonable domestic gas prices over the medium term.

The full Gas Code will be released in coming weeks once legal drafting has been completed and the Federal Executive Council has ratified the instrument.

It will ensure domestic prices are reasonable by establishing a price anchor, a mechanism to drag prices down - through the combination of:

- A price cap, which is to be set at \$12/GJ (with a review commencing by 1 July 2025);
- A process for qualifying for exemptions from the price cap on the basis of making satisfactory ACCC and court enforceable supply commitments to the domestic market; and
- Allowing small producers of gas to be exempt from the price cap if they supply only the domestic market.

Webinar for auditors on new quality standards

The Clean Energy Regulator has announced a [webinar](#) on getting ready for the new quality management standards.

The webinar will cover the quality management standards which were implemented in 2022 and which will apply to firms and engagements performing Part 6 audits under the Emissions Reduction Fund

The session will cover:

- the new and revised standards – ASQM 1 and ASQM 2, and
- new requirements around engagement leader and peer reviewer responsibilities, including cooling off periods.

New guidance to support petroleum activities and Australian Marine Parks published

The National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) and Parks Australia (PA) have produced a [guidance note](#) to assist petroleum titleholders to understand their obligations in managing risks and impacts to Australian Marine Parks and to also support consultation with the Director of National Parks.

VICTORIA

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: Round 4 of Circular Economy Infrastructure Fund: Hazardous Waste opens

Applications for funding are now open for [Round 3 of the Circular Economy Infrastructure Fund: Hazardous Waste](#).

Total funding of \$4.5 million is available to industry (including for profit and not-for-profit organisations) and local government to fund infrastructure projects focused on safe management and high value recovery (where possible) of low-level contaminated soils, Reportable Priority Wastes (RPW) and specified priority wastes.

The fund aims to build the capacity, capability, and resilience of Victoria's resource recovery sector to increase local reprocessing of hazardous waste and improve the use and quality of recycled materials to make new products.

The grant is funded through the government's circular economy policy [Recycling Victoria: a new economy](#).

Projects must meet 2 or more of the fund objectives:

- Increase the recovery and local reprocessing of hazardous waste, and to manage those materials in line with the waste hierarchy.
- Increase the use and quality of recycled materials for remanufacturing and to make new products.
- Increase economic development opportunities such as jobs, economic performance, and growth of precincts.
- Reduce the amount and impact of waste going to landfill.

The application deadline is 25 July 2023. Information sessions are being held and information is available on the Sustainability Victoria [website](#).

EPA released guides to assist industry with Noise laws

EPA Victoria has published a series of [guides](#) to assist commercial, industrial and trade businesses to comply with noise laws.

EPA's Applied Noise Framework Guidance Series is designed to help businesses understand their responsibilities with explanations on which parts of the laws are more relevant to different business sectors and practical examples of businesses achieving compliance to protect the community and environment.

The guidelines include:

- [Unreasonable noise guidelines](#) explains the concept of unreasonable noise, what makes noise unreasonable and how to assess compliance, and provides examples to show how to comply.
- [Commercial, industrial and trade noise guidelines](#) explains the noise framework and limits that apply to factories, stores and shops, depots and other sites. It includes links to industry-specific advice, for agriculture, construction, manufacturing, mining/quarrying,

retail, waste/recycling and wind farms.

- [Assessing and controlling risk: a guide for business](#) explores how a business can assess and control risks under the GED and minimise risk of harm before it occurs. This includes assessing risk from noise.

Information on [practical guides](#) to noise prevention methods is also available on the EPA's website, along with a [guide](#) to the General Environmental Duty (GED); the part of the Environment Protection Act 2017 that requires Victorians to understand and minimise their risks of harm to human health and the environment from pollution and waste.

QUEENSLAND

Significant investment in renewable energy

The Queensland government has announced in the 23-24 Budget a total capital investment of \$19 billion over 4 years to support new wind, solar, storage and transmission to deliver on the Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan to ensure the state meets its renewable energy targets.

The Budget included:

- A commitment of \$5.465 billion in 2023-24 for the state's six publicly owned energy entities to strengthen their capability to lead the sector's transition to cleaner sources of supply.
- \$1.483 billion for additional electricity bill support to Queensland households and small businesses facing cost of living pressures.
- Publicly owned transmission titan Powerlink will invest \$594 million to start the CopperString 2032 high voltage link to assist minerals mining in the North West Minerals Province and significant new renewables around Hughenden.
- Powerlink will invest \$193.8 million in 2023-24 to support the connection of major renewable projects to the grid, including the proposed 2GW Borumba pumped hydro energy storage and

Australia's largest onshore wind project, the 1GW MacIntyre Wind Precinct south-west of Warwick.

- Energy Queensland's \$2.042 billion capital program will focus on network reliability and renewable hosting capability and includes \$150 million to continue the roll-out of network batteries, decarbonise isolated networks, and support renewable generation across Queensland, as well as \$99.9 million for network replacement in the Mackay region.
- Investment by Stanwell Corporation of \$221.2 million towards the development of the 252MW Wambo Wind Farm and \$200 million to commence construction of its 100% owned and operated Tarong West Wind Farm, as well as \$251.8 million for new grid-scale batteries within Queensland's southern and central Renewable Energy Zone regions.
- CleanCo will continue to grow its renewable portfolio with a \$171 million down-payment on the \$500 million announced to support the development phase of new wind and solar projects in Central Queensland, as well as \$41.5 million to build and install a 250MW big battery at Swanbank Power Precinct near Ipswich, which is transitioning into a Clean Energy Hub with the potential for onsite solar and green hydrogen production facilities.
- Queensland's three publicly-owned generators will invest around \$384 million for upgrades and maintenance at existing state-owned power stations, safeguarding supply while renewable generation ramps up.
- Queensland Hydro will invest \$183.7 million to progress the 2GW Borumba Pumped Hydro Energy Storage project near Gympie, at the same time as undertaking the detailed feasibility study into the Pioneer-Burdekin Pumped Hydro Energy Storage project west of Mackay.