

ENVIRONMENT NETWORK WEEKLY (ENW)

AEBN National ENW e-news – 8 November 2023

FORTHCOMING AEBN EVENTS

[2024 AEBN Webinars to be released soon]

FEDERAL

Developing Australia's Guarantee of Origin scheme:

Comment sought

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is working to develop Australia's Guarantee of Origin scheme (GO scheme) - an internationally aligned emissions accounting framework.

The scheme is expected to help unlock economic opportunities for Australian industry to meet growing domestic and international demand for verified renewable energy and clean products. The GO scheme has been developed based on consultation, trials and international engagement.

This package integrates and builds on domestic stakeholder consultation from 2020 through to 2023. There are multiple documents included in this consultation. The Department is seeking feedback on the -

• Guarantee of Origin Emissions Accounting Approach – paper–

The paper provides the specific emissions accounting methodology for hydrogen including the necessary formulas and default factors to calculate emissions intensity for hydrogen.

[Emissions accounting approach](#) attachment – Closes 14 November 2023

[Further information](#) and details on how to provide feedback is now available.

Potentially Bass Strait for offshore renewable energy development:

Comment sought

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is seeking feedback on the suitability of an area within Bass Strait for offshore renewable energy development.

The area extends from Bridport to Burnie, Tasmania and the distance from the shore ranges from a minimum of 20km away, to well over 50km in many places.

The Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy will consider all issues raised through public submissions.

This survey is to raise region specific issues to help inform the Minister's decision when declaring whether the area is suitable for offshore wind development.

This proposal is a first step to seek public feedback before the area is declared. If the area is declared, there will be further opportunities for feedback when proponents begin studying the area and developing plans for offshore infrastructure. No energy projects can commence until the Minister has declared an area.

Any proposed offshore renewable energy project will need to seek environmental approvals under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) to proceed. Licence holders must provide financial security that covers the cost of decommissioning proposed

infrastructure. This will ensure the infrastructure will be responsibly removed at the end of the project's lifespan.

To provide feedback, please read the [consultation documents](#) and provide comment via the [online survey](#) by 31 January 2024.

CSIRO report on potentially lowering cost of sequestration technologies

The Climate Change Authority announced the release of a new CSIRO report, [CSIRO Sequestration Cost Reduction Workshops Report](#) that provides information on the potential to lower the costs of sequestration technologies, which in turn could lead to greater uptake. The report provides key findings.

The report synthesises a series of expert workshops held to test the potential for technical innovation to reduce costs and increase carbon sequestration uptake across various technologies and approaches.

Growth in carbon sequestration, complementing strong and urgent emissions cuts, is critical to achieving the global goal of net zero emissions by 2050 and net negative emissions in the second half of the century.

The report is part of a two-year project collaboration between the Climate Change Authority, the CSIRO and the Clean Energy Regulator to understand and unlock Australia's carbon sequestration potential.

More than 60 experts from industry, academia and government advised on innovation options for carbon sequestration approaches from planted vegetation and savanna fire management to direct air capture of

carbon dioxide.

Large-scale Renewable Energy Target Market Data for September 2023: Released

The Clean Energy Regulator has released the latest [Large-scale Renewable Energy Target market data](#) for September 2023.

The highlights include:

- 399 MW of capacity was approved for LGC generation in September, bringing the total approved in 2023 to 1,559 MW.
- Approvals in September 2023 included:
 - Rye Park Wind Farm in NSW with a capacity of 396 MW.

Quarterly Carbon Market Report for June Quarter 2023

The Clean Energy Regulator (CER) has released the [Quarterly Carbon Market Report for June Quarter 2023](#) (April 2023 to June 2023) to support the effective operation of Australia's carbon markets. Carbon markets play a key role in Australia's efforts to reduce emissions.

The report consolidates information across the three national carbon markets that the CER administers for the June Quarter 2023. It provides information on supply and demand trends, and opportunities that may inform market decisions.

In this quarter's report, the CER provides new insights on holdings of Australian carbon credit units (ACCUs), including cumulative holdings associated with Safeguard Mechanism entities.

Compliance Update for 1 July to 30 September 2023: Released

The CER has released the [compliance update for 1 July to 30 September 2023](#) that provides information on

activities related to CER's [compliance and enforcement priorities](#).

This latest report includes:

- human-induced regeneration gateway audit framework
- soil carbon issuances
- importance of correct small-scale technology certificate (STC) assignment
- compliance and enforcement outcomes
- late reporters and audit outcomes.

Clean Energy Regulator Annual Report 2022-23

The Clean Energy Regulator (CER) has released its [Annual Report 2022-23](#) that was tabled in Parliament on 20 October 2023 by Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen.

The annual report describes the CER's activities and performance against targets set in CER's Corporate Plan and the Portfolio Budget Statements for the 2022-23 reporting year. It provides analysis on how the CER is achieving its purpose to accelerate carbon abatement for Australia.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: Reef Coastal Restoration Program

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is providing grants through the [Reef Coastal Restoration Program](#) to restore and rehabilitate the Great Barrier Reef coastal ecosystems.

The Reef Coastal Restoration Program aims to fund projects that:

- rehabilitate and/or restore degraded or previously destroyed Reef coastal habitats/ecosystems by implementing on-ground ecosystem rehabilitation and/or restoration activities
- encourage greater community participation and partnerships, including involvement with First Nations peoples

- improve the health and resilience of Reef coastal habitats/ecosystems, accelerating progress towards meeting water quality targets, while aligning to the objectives of the [Reef 2050 Plan](#), Work Area 5 (protect, rehabilitate and restore).

Grants are available to eligible organisations, businesses and government bodies. Details regarding eligibility is now available.

Applications are open until 5.00pm on Monday 20 November 2023.

New solar cell technology – cheaper for customers

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) will provide \$11m in funding to Australian solar technology company SunDrive solar to scale up its advanced production line to allow it to make enough copper metallised PV cells for around 15,000 household solar systems each year.

SunDrive has developed a solar cell metallisation technology that uses copper instead of silver in its manufacture. Copper is approximately 100x cheaper and 1000x more abundant than silver.

The technology has environmental benefits, copper is easier to recycle and is less carbon intensive than silver in the manufacturing process.

VICTORIA

Victoria's Container Deposit scheme commenced 1 November 2023

On 1 November 2023, the new [Victoria Container Deposit Scheme \(CDS Vic\)](#) commenced. Victorians will be able to exchange eligible drink containers for 10 cents through CDS Vic. which is intended to reduce Victoria's litter by up to half.

The scheme is expected to generate jobs statewide and turn used drink containers into new, recycled products.

Reverse vending machines, depots, over-the-counter sites, and pop-up

refund points will be the four ways people can return their eligible containers – and depending on the type of refund point, people can choose whether they want to receive the refund in the form of cash, a retail voucher, or an electronic refund.

Victorians can also choose to donate their refund to a charity or community organisation registered with the scheme.

There will be more refund points expected to open in 2024 – making the scheme more accessible to Victorians.

VicReturn is the Scheme Coordinator, while Zone Operators Return-It, TOMRA Cleanaway, and Visy will establish and oversee the refund points and refunds to customers, as well as ensuring proper recycling of the containers.

The operators are each responsible for the refund point network in their allocated scheme zones: north, east and west.

Within nine months of the scheme starting, the Zone Operators will be required to have a minimum of one collection point per 14,500 people in metropolitan areas, at least one per town of 750 people in regional areas, and at least one per town of 350 people in remote areas.

Review of methodology used to set 2024-25 Victorian Default Offer for electricity

The Essential Services Commission is reviewing the prices for the 2024-25 Victorian Default Offer for electricity and is seeking your feedback on these prices, and the methodology used to set the Victorian Default Offer prices.

The Commission is responsible for setting Victorian Default Offer prices each year. The default offer prices are designed to be simple, trusted and reasonably priced electricity options that safeguard customers that are unable or unwilling to engage in the market.

[Details](#) are now available and comment is sought by 14 December 2023.

2024 Review of water price

The Essential Services Commission is reviewing new prices and outcomes proposed by two water businesses and seeks your views.

The Commission is the Victoria's independent economic regulator and its role covers Victoria's energy, water and transport sectors, and it also administers the Fair Go Rates system and Victorian Energy Upgrades program. In water, the Commission regulates service standards and prices. It issues price determinations that approve the maximum prices water businesses may charge. The prices that the Commission approves reflects an assessment of the efficient costs water businesses need to recover to provide valued services to customers.

The Commission is now reviewing under the PREMO pricing framework submissions from Goulburn-Murray Water and Greater Western Water covering their proposed prices and key service outcomes to apply from 1 July 2024.

The Commission must assess proposals against a legal framework established by the Victorian Government. The Commission welcomes feedback at all times throughout this price review to inform its decision-making process. In particular, the Commission seeks feedback from customers and stakeholders of the water businesses upon receiving their price submissions and upon releasing the Commission's draft decisions. Following consultation, the Commission issues determinations that set the maximum prices that these water businesses may charge customers.

[Details](#) are now available to assist you to provide feedback by 15 December 2023.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Proposed additional action on plastic in NSW:

Comment sought

NSW EPA is proposing to take further action on plastics in NSW and has released a new paper - [NSW Plastics: Next Steps](#) for your feedback, in particular on –

- Reducing plastic litter
- Action on harmful chemicals and microplastics
- Keeping pace on plastic action.

In 2022, NSW began to tackle problematic plastics by phasing out the supply of items such as lightweight plastic bags; plastic single-use cutlery, bowls (without spill-proof lids), plates, stirrers and straws; and plastic microbeads in some rinse-off personal care products.

NSW EPA is seeking to build on its work by targeting additional problematic and unnecessary plastic items.

The paper identifies some plastic items that:

- are frequently littered
- release microplastics into the environment
- contain harmful chemical additives
- are proposed to be regulated in other states and territories.

Submissions are to be emailed to plasticsconsultation@epa.nsw.gov.au by 4 February 2024.

Amendment to Waste Regulation: Commenced 27 October 2023

In NSW, the [Protection of the Environment Operations \(Waste\) Amendment \(Mixed Waste Organic Outputs\) Regulation 2023](#) (Amending Regulation) amended the [Protection of the Environment Operations \(Waste\) Regulation 2014](#) (Waste Regulation) to extend the repeal date of clause 21A of the Waste Regulation from

1 November 2023 to 1 September 2024.

The Amending Regulation enables NSW EPA to extend, until 1 September 2024, exemptions from the waste levy contributions otherwise payable under section 88 of the *Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* for approved alternative waste disposal facilities (AWTs) processing specified amounts of mixed waste organic outputs.

The Amending Regulation commenced on 27 October 2023. By publication in the NSW Government Gazette No 509 of 1 November 2023, NSW EPA approved waste levy exemptions for four AWTs.

Amendment to Radiation Control Act:

Commenced 24 October 2023

In NSW, the [Radiation Control Amendment Act 2023](#) (the amending Act) amends the *Radiation Control Act 1990* (the Act) to implement the recommendations of a 2021 statutory review of the Act. [Changes to radiation protection laws](#) are now available.

The amending Act introduces reforms to ensure that radiation is managed safely to protect human health and the environment, and that the people who deal with radiation are more accountable for its safe management. The amending Act:

- Amends the title of the Act to now be known as the [Protection from Harmful Radiation Act 1990](#) and the Radiation Control Regulation 2013 (the Regulation) to the [Protection from Harmful Radiation Regulation 2013](#).
- Improves life cycle management of radiation sources, including requiring licensing for transport and end-of-life management.
- Increases penalties for certain offences and EPA powers to recover costs.
- Introduces a specific commitment to the principles of ecologically sustainable development to the

objects of the Act.

- Modernises the governance and membership of the Radiation Advisory Council.

Most of the amendments to the Act commenced on 24 October 2023, with new licensing requirements commencing 6 months from that date and new court powers, offences and EPA cost recovery provisions commencing on proclamation.

The [Radiation Control Amendment Regulation 2023](#) amends the Regulation, making the following changes:

- Reinstates the offences relating to disposal of regulated material and transport of radioactive substances until the equivalent offences (sections 33C and 33D) commence under the Act via proclamation. Once sections 33C and 33D of the Act commence, the Regulation offences will be removed.
- Amends the table in the Regulation that sets out penalty notice offences (Schedule 7) to reflect the changes to the offences in the Act.

QUEENSLAND

\$69.2m grant to develop Central QLD Hydrogen Hub

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is providing a \$69.2 million grant to help develop the Central Qld Hydrogen Hub (CQ Hydrogen Hub) in Gladstone, QLD.

The funding is part of the Federal Government's [Regional Hydrogen Hubs program](#) and is part of the government's \$40 billion investment to transform Australia into a powerhouse of green energy generation and innovation.

The Hub could produce up to 292,000 tonnes of hydrogen a year by 2031 - equivalent to fuelling more than double Australia's current heavy vehicle fleet.

This investment is intended to build infrastructure including:

- a hydrogen electrolyser
- pipeline
- underground hydrogen storage.

The hub infrastructure is expected to support hydrogen production and use in Australia and overseas.

The consortium will be led by the Stanwell Corporation, with industry matching the Commonwealth's contribution. This will bring total investment to at least \$138 million.

Construction will begin early next year, with the project operational in mid-2027.

For enquiries, please contact hydrogenprograms@dcceew.gov.au

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Amendments made to Environment Protection Act 1993

The *Environment Protection Act 1993* has been updated to include specific reference to climate change to provide certainty and transparency in this key area of societal risk.

The changes will not introduce new requirements for business or the community but rather clarify the role of the Act and SA EPA's role in climate change regulation including assisting SA to achieve a net zero future.

In turn, it will clarify responsibilities of industry, government and the community. The changes will also help to better position SA EPA board to address climate change when administering the Act, with a new addition the range of expertise required on the board of practical knowledge and experience of climate change adaptation and mitigation.

It will also support the development of a climate change focused Environment Protection Policy, which is currently being scoped.

The amendments are expected to commence in the first half of 2024.

SE QLD Region groundwaters environmental values and water quality objectives: Comment sought

The QLD Department of Environment and Science (department) is seeking submissions on the [consultation materials](#) for the South-East Queensland region groundwaters environmental values and water quality objectives.

The consultation materials include the following documents:

- Regional groundwater chemistry zones: South East Queensland Region. Summary and results. Draft for Consultation, October 2023
- Environmental Protection (Water and Wetland Biodiversity) Policy 2019: Draft Schedule 1 Document, South East Queensland groundwaters. Environmental Values and Water Quality Objectives, October 2023
- Environmental Protection (Water and Wetland Biodiversity) Policy 2019: Draft groundwater and environmental values plans for South East Queensland, October 2023.

Please provide [feedback](#) by 24 November 2023.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Five organics recycling facilities to share \$850K to implement best practice in their operations

In WA, five operators of organics recycling facilities will share \$850,000 in funding under the [WasteSorted grants - Organics Infrastructure Program](#)

The grants are intended to assist organic recycling facilities to improve environmental sustainability and implement better practice in their operations

The projects have been selected to fast-track infrastructure upgrades, and support the processing of Food

Organics Garden Organics (FOGO) collected by local governments.

This infrastructure is intended to support many of the 18 WA councils that already have FOGO and increase support for the further 12 committed to the rollout by 2025.

Applications open to join WA ChemCentre Board

WA's ChemCentre is looking to recruit a new Board Director to replace a Board member.

ChemCentre is encouraging applications from candidates with a proven track record in Board roles and a skillset that includes business data analytics, relevant STEM expertise, or finance/commercial proficiency coupled with technology or commercialisation experience.

[Details](#) are now available.

GRANT OPPORTUNITY: Expand EV charging infrastructure for WA

WA's Energy Minister Bill Johnston has launched [Round 2 of the 'Charge Up Workplace Grants'](#) program that provides \$12.5 million to expand EV charging infrastructure throughout WA.

The grants target not for-profits, small and medium businesses, and local government authorities, with funding up to 50% of the cost to purchase and install an EV charger. The funding includes AC chargers and faster DC chargers ranging from 7kW to 350kW.

The Charge Up Workplace Grants are designed to maximise daytime EV charging, promote off-peak charging, support the conversion to EV fleets, and over time, stimulate a second-hand EV market.

Around \$2.4 million in grants has already been approved to install 403 chargers in 221 locations from Karratha to Albany, and around the Perth metropolitan area.

Applications close on 3 May 2024.

Renaming of WA Energy department

From 1 December 2023, the WA Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety will be renamed the WA Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DEMIRS).