

ENVIRONMENT NETWORK WEEKLY (ENW)

AEBN National ENW e-news – 6 December 2023

FORTHCOMING AEBN EVENT



[AEBN WEBINAR]

- **PLAN FOR 2024: [2024 AEBN Annual National Environmental Compliance for Business Conference: New Laws, Developments and Funding from across Australia for Business in 2024](#)**

About this Webinar:

This annual AEBN Conference Webinar is designed for industry, business and councils to assist you to PLAN FOR 2024. This Conference Webinar will focus on the key **EXPECTED CHANGES IN 2024** on environmental and climate change laws & funding from across Australia for business in 2024 – to assist you and your organisation to remain compliant.

Date/Time:

14 **March** **2024**
10.00am to 4.00pm

Details/Register:

Click for [Details](#) and [Register](#)

FEDERAL

Australia's pledge at COP28 Climate Summit to triple renewable energy capacity by 2023

The Australian Government, at the COP28 climate summit, has pledged to triple its renewable energy capacity by 2030.

Australia is one of 118 countries that are signatories to the pledge, which also includes the doubling of energy efficiency by the start of the next decade.

Australia's expanded Capacity Investment Scheme (CIS) is expected to help deliver 32GW of new renewable generation and storage, providing cleaner energy for households, businesses and industry.

Australia's first National Health and Climate Strategy:

Released

On 3 December 2023, the Federal Government released Australia's first [National Health and Climate Strategy](#) that outlines a whole-of-government approach to the health and wellbeing impacts of climate change and addresses the contribution of the health system to climate change.

The Federal Government is making these current and future challenges, a national health priority.

The Strategy sets out a plan to:

- decarbonise the Australian health system
- build health system and community resilience to the impacts of climate change on health and wellbeing.

The Strategy was launched at the 28th United Nations Climate Conference (COP28) in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Australia's 2nd Annual Climate Change Statement:

Released

The Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy, Chris Bowen, tabled the Australian Government's [second Annual Climate Change Statement](#) in Parliament on 30 November 2023.

The statement outlines Australia's progress in 2023, detailing broader international context and the impacts of climate change - including on the regions, national security, and jobs. It also lays out this year's achievements and identifies areas for further action.

The Annual Statement is informed by [independent advice](#) from the Climate Change Authority. This year the Authority provided a wide-ranging set of 42 recommendations on climate action. The government has accepted the majority (39 of 42) of the Authority's recommendations.

The government agrees with the Climate Change Authority's advice that emissions need to decrease at a faster rate to meet Australia's 2030 target.

The [Emissions Projections 2023 report](#) and [National Greenhouse Gas Inventory Quarterly Update – June 2023](#) are available.

Proposed reforms on Australia's environmental laws:

Comment sought

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water continues with proposed reforms on Australia's environmental laws so they better protect the

environment and give faster, clearer decisions for business.

As a part of these reforms, the Department has to date:

- developed [the Nature Positive Plan](#), and
- [consulted with stakeholders](#).

The [Nature Positive Plan](#) delivers on the Federal Government's commitment to strengthen and streamline Australia's environmental laws in response to the [Independent Review of the EPBC Act](#).

The Department would like you to share your views on the proposed reforms by 30 March 2024. The Department will consider your feedback as it progresses the new Nature Positive laws.

The new Nature Finance Council

On 4 December 2023, the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water's Nature Finance Council met for the first time. Over the next three years the group will advise on how to shift private finance to benefit nature.

The Nature Finance Council (Council) has been established to increase private sector financial flows to benefit nature.

The Council will advise the Australian Government, through the Minister for the Environment and Water, on how to:

- increase finance into transparent and real benefits for nature,
- position Australia as a global leader in nature finance, and
- commercialise credible emerging nature markets.

The Council is expected to meet quarterly to discuss matters related to nature finance.

The Council's first work plan will be available in early 2024. The Council will look to engage with government departments and agencies across several portfolios. The Council will be chaired by Dr. Ken Henry AC and will include 13 members from finance,

business, environmental science, and First Nations experts.

Development of a Renewable Diesel Fuel Quality Standard for Australia:

Comment sought

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has released, for comment, a [consultation paper](#) on establishing a paraffinic diesel fuel standard for Australia. The Department seeks your views on the paper to enable the supply of renewable diesel in Australia.

Renewable diesel is an alternative to normal diesel that produces lower greenhouse gas emissions.

Your views will assist the Department with the development of a renewable diesel fuel quality standard.

Please read the consultation paper and provide a submission with your response, and/or provide feedback via the [online Survey](#) by **2 February 2024**.

Reef Trust Water Quality Achievements report:

Released

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has released a new report – [Reef Trust Water Quality Achievements report](#) that provides highlights from projects that are improving land management, farm productivity and the quality of water flowing to the Great Barrier Reef.

The report demonstrates how collaboration and innovation is helping to improve water quality, by reducing sediment and nutrient runoff to the Reef.

Poor water quality impacts the health of the Reef. It also affects the Reef's ability to resist and recover from the impact of climate change, natural disasters, and other threats.

Improving water quality is critical to protect the Reef.

Highlights in the report include:

- projects that are preventing thousands of tonnes of sediment from reaching the Reef by managing erosion
- delivery partners and growers working together to minimise losses of nutrients and pesticides from the land
- sugarcane farmers using GPS data to better inform on-farm decisions and reduce nitrogen runoff
- farmers changing land management practices to reduce their use of nitrogen fertiliser.

Renewable Energy Target surrender update

The Clean Energy Regulator has updated the [certificate shortfall register](#) that provides a list of liable entities that have incurred shortfall in all assessment years.

This follows the 2022 assessment year surrender by liable entities under the Renewable Energy Target (RET).

Waste Emissions Projections 2023:

Released

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has released the [Waste Emissions Projections 2023](#) report.

The report provides advice on improvements to the methodology used to project greenhouse gas emissions from Australia's waste sector. The report contributes to [Australia's Emissions Projections 2023](#)

Australia's emissions projections 2023:

Released

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water released [Australia's emissions projections 2023](#) report that provides the latest estimates of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions to 2035.

The report shows how Australia is tracking against its 2030 emissions reduction commitments by examining the potential impacts of policies and measures to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions.

This report includes a baseline scenario and a 'with additional measures' scenario. The baseline scenario includes federal, state and territory policies and measures which have been implemented.

The 'with additional measures' scenario builds on the baseline. It provides insights into the impact of some policies that have been announced but where design and consultation are ongoing.

As reflected in [Australia's Nationally Determined Contribution \(NDC\)](#) under the Paris Agreement and the [Climate Change Act 2022](#), Australia is committed to:

- a single year target to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 43% below 2005 levels by 2030
- a multi-year emissions budget from 2021-2030.

Based on a 43% reduction by 2030, Australia's emissions budget for this period is 4,353 Mt CO₂-e.

Independent Review into the Future Security of the National Electricity Market - "Blueprint for the Future":

Released

As Australia's electricity system is transitioning, in support of this, the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and

Water has released a report and recommends a way forward.

The report - [Blueprint for the Future Security of the National Electricity Market](#) delivers a plan to maintain security and reliability in the National Electricity Market in light of the significant transition underway, including due to rapid technological change.

The report focusses on four key outcomes for the National Electricity Market (NEM):

- increased security,
- future reliability,
- rewarding consumers, and
- lower emissions.

These outcomes will be underpinned by the three pillars of an orderly transition, better system planning and stronger governance.

An [Executive Summary](#) and the [recommendations](#) are now available.

National Greenhouse Gas Inventory Quarterly Update June 2023:

Released

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has released its [Quarterly Update of Australia's National Greenhouse Gas Inventory reports](#) on the latest greenhouse gas emissions.

The update provides estimates of:

- national emissions up to the June quarter of 2023, and
- preliminary national emissions up to the September quarter of 2023.

This update also includes a special topic focusing on the methodology used to develop the Quarterly Updates of Australia's National Greenhouse Gas Inventory.

VICTORIA

NEW GUIDELINES: Hydrogeological assessment guidelines for groundwater quality

EPA Victoria has released the [Hydrogeological assessment guidelines for groundwater quality](#) that provides the preferred practice for hydrogeological assessment (HA) to understand groundwater quality and the risks of harm to human health and the environment.

EPA advises that HAs are complex and should only be undertaken by qualified and experienced hydrogeologists.

EPA expects that a HA will be undertaken whenever an activity poses a risk of harm to groundwater. This includes past, current or proposed activities. A HA should also be undertaken to decide how to clean up groundwater contamination.

EPA's guidelines provide information on:

- how contamination moves in groundwater
- the hydrogeological assessment process
- undertaking hydrogeological field studies
- how to use environmental values in hydrogeological assessment
- considerations for groundwater modelling and risk assessment
- dealing with uncertainty
- what a hydrogeological assessment report should contain.

NEW SOUTH WALES

NSW Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill passes in Parliament

The NSW Government's landmark Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill has passed both Houses of Parliament that paves the way for a sustainable future for the people, economy and environment of NSW.

The Bill legislates ambitious emissions reduction targets and sets up a strong and independent Net Zero Commission to keep the current NSW

government and future governments on track to Net Zero by 2050.

The effects of climate change are already apparent from the severity of extreme weather events which pose a risk to health, environment and economy. This Bill is essential to NSW playing its part to minimise harm, while building resilience and maximising opportunities from new technologies and industries.

The Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act will:

- require New South Wales to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 50% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels
- require New South Wales to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 70% by 2035 compared to 2005 levels
- require New South Wales to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2050
- establish an independent Net Zero Commission to monitor, review, report on and advise on progress towards these targets
- establish guiding principles to address climate change
- commit to New South Wales becoming more resilient to climate change.

This legislation will act as the platform and driver for action across the whole of government in NSW.

After passing both Houses of Parliament, the Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Bill will soon be signed into law by the NSW Governor.

Updated software by NSW EPA for small waste facility operators:

Released

NSW EPA has developed the Environmental Risk Assessment and Mitigation Package (E-RAMP) [software](#) to help small waste facility operators assess and manage potential issues at their sites.

E-RAMP was developed, after consulting with council waste managers across NSW, to provide guidance in undertaking a risk analysis and prioritising mitigation plans for smaller waste facilities, and to support councils' decision-making processes. The software was first developed in 2008 and updated in 2014 and in 2023 to incorporate relevant changes.

Water Sharing Plan for NSW

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment seeks your feedback on the Water Sharing Plan for the NSW Border Rivers Unregulated River Water Sources 2024.

The Water Sharing Plan establishes rules for water management that includes the limit of the total volume of water that can be extracted from the water sources in the NSW Border Rivers Unregulated River Water Source areas.

Water sharing plans are subject to review every 10 years under the [Water Management Act 2000](#). The current Water Sharing Plan for the NSW Border Rivers Unregulated River Water Sources will expire on 30 June 2024.

The consultation will provide the opportunity for water users, stakeholders and other interested parties to learn more about proposed changes in the draft plan, and to provide comment on the draft. All comment will be considered when finalising the plan.

The finalised replacement plan is proposed to commence on or before 1 July 2024.

Please provide [feedback](#) by 17 December 2023.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Comprehensive report cards on condition of key SA climate themes:

Released

The SA Department for Environment and Water (DEW) has released comprehensive [report cards](#) on the condition of key climate themes. The research includes climate projections to provide insight on emerging challenges, such as drier and warmer conditions.

The release of the evidenced-based assessments coincides with the start of the UN's COP28 Climate Change Conference in Dubai on 30 November 2023.

The research supports the state government's commitment of at least a 50% reduction in net greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 (from 2005 levels) and to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050.

Key findings from SA's Environmental Trend and Condition Report Cards include:

- South Australia's average temperatures are currently 1.1C warmer than in the 1970s.
- Average daily maximum temperatures across the state are projected to increase by a further 1.4C to 2.2C by 2050, compared with 1986-2005.
- The frequency of days reaching 40C in Adelaide has tripled to 5.1 days a year in the past decade (2013-2022), compared with an average of 1.7 days a year in the previous 4 decades.
- Average annual rainfall across SA is projected to decrease by between 4% and 23% by 2050.
- In the Hills and Fleurieu landscape region, a reduction in average annual rainfall of between 8% and 12% is projected by 2050.
- Sea levels along the state's coast have been rising at an average rate of 2mm a year between 1966 and 2022.

- SA's greenhouse gas emissions reduced 42% between 2004-05 and 2020-21, while renewable energy use increased from 1% to 69% in the past 20 years.

The Department has also released a new online tool to give businesses, government agencies and the community access to climate projection maps and data.

The interactive maps display projected changes to temperatures and rainfall across South Australia for a range of future time periods.

The climate data can be displayed in 10km and 50km grids or for individual SA landscape regions or local health network areas.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WA Climate Change Bill 2023 introduced to Parliament

On 30 November 2023, the WA Government introduced the Climate Change Bill 2023 to Parliament to contribute to national and global goals for decarbonisation, provide certainty for businesses, and attract the investment required to transition to net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

That legislation formalises several major climate action commitments, including a net zero emissions by 2050 target, and a requirement to develop strategies and plans to reduce emissions and enhance climate resilience.

The Bill will ensure state government accountability through a requirement for annual progress reporting to Parliament and the setting of interim targets.

It will also provide a clear and consistent framework for action and long-term certainty that enhances investor and business confidence, and accelerates investment.

The WA Department of Water and Environmental Regulation received more than 260 submissions which were considered in development of the legislation.

The legislation complements several other actions undertaken by the WA Government, including:

- The Climate Adaptation Strategy released earlier this year;
- Sectoral Emissions Reduction Strategies, which will be launched in December;
- Removing all State-owned coal-fired power from the South West Interconnected System - Perth's main energy grid, by 2030; and
- Reducing State Government emissions by 80 per cent by 2030.

A [fact sheet and audio translations](#) is available in plain English and three Aboriginal languages – Kriol, Martu and Ngaanyatjarra – have been published to help explain the legislation.

- Duty to comply with the scheduling requirements: this applies where an industrial chemical and its end use is listed in a schedule of the IChEMS Register.
- Exemption: the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation may grant an exemption from a scheduling requirement with conditions.
- Compliance notices: inspectors and authorised persons may issue compliance notices for breaches of the duties prescribed in the Regulations.

The consultation draft has been developed for public consultation and comment is sought by 5.00pm (WST) 5 February 2024 to chemicals@dwer.wa.gov.au.

Consultation draft of Environment Protection (Industrial Chemicals) Regulations 2023:

Comment sought

The WA Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is seeking your feedback on the [Consultation draft of the Environmental Protection \(Industrial Chemicals\) Regulations 2023](#).

Regulations are required to implement the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard (IChEMS) in Western Australia to minimise environmental risks from industrial chemicals and provide a streamlined and nationally consistent approach.

Key elements of the consultation draft of the Regulations -

- General duty: there is a general responsibility to minimise the risks of environmental harm and pollution from the use of the industrial chemicals (or a product or article containing an industrial chemical). The new general duty will apply to scheduled and unscheduled industrial chemicals.