

ENVIRONMENT NETWORK WEEKLY (ENW)

AEBN National ENW e-news – 14 February 2024

FORTHCOMING AEBN EVENTS



[AEBN WEBINAR]

- **PLAN FOR 2024: [2024 AEBN Annual National Environmental Compliance: 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.

Program

The [Program](#) is now available.

Date/Time:

14 March 2024
10.00am to 4.00pm

Details/Register:

Click for [Details and Register](#)

FEDERAL

Safeguard Mechanism emissions intensity determination applications:

Due by 30 April 2024

The Clean Energy Regulator has advised that a number of facilities will likely face material financial implications if they do not apply for an emissions intensity determination (EID) for the 2023-24 financial year. Applications must be submitted by **30 April 2024**.

The purpose of an EID is that it sets the facility-specific emissions-intensity values of existing production variables at current Safeguard facilities. These values will be used to calculate facility's baseline emissions number from 2023-24 – 2029-30.

When to apply: You should consider applying for an EID if your facility:

- existed before 1 July 2023
- produced products in commercial quantities in any year from 2017-18 to 2022-23
- requires a [standard baseline](#) and
- is likely to have covered emissions of more than 100,000 tCO₂-e ([the Safeguard threshold](#)) in the 2023-24 financial year.

You may also consider applying if you intend to claim [Safeguard Mechanism credit units](#) in the 2023-24 financial year.

If your facility will not exceed the Safeguard threshold in the 2023-24 financial year, you do not need to apply for an EID by 30 April 2024. If your facility exceeds the Safeguard threshold in a future financial year, you can apply for an EID by the 31 October following the first year the Safeguard threshold is exceeded.

If you don't apply: If you do not apply for an EID, all your existing production variables will be subject to best practice emissions intensity values in the 2023-24 financial year.

It's likely any best practice emissions intensity values will be materially lower than your facility-specific values. This may result in your baseline emission number being lower than it would be if the facility had an EID, and could result in you needing to buy and surrender more carbon units to meet your obligations.

EID application audits:

All EID applications must have an independent audit report. If you have not engaged an [auditor](#), the Clean Energy Regulator **recommends that you do this soon** to ensure you are able to meet the **30 April 2024** deadline.

[Further details](#) are now available.

Reviews of Climate Change scheme

The Federal government has announced reviews of Climate change schemes to ensure they remain fit-for-purpose in a rapidly changing emissions and abatement landscape.

The Climate Change Authority has recommended changes to improve the operation and transparency of key schemes for measuring and reporting greenhouse gas emissions and crediting emissions reductions.

In its reviews, the Authority says the targeted changes are required to ensure the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) Act 2007 and the Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011, including

the Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme, remain efficient and effective as Australia aims to meet its 2030 and 2050 emissions reduction targets.

The Authority is required to review the operation of the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007 (NGER Act) every five years. The Authority's review of the NGER legislation was required to be delivered to the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy by 31 December 2023, as is the Authority's 2023 review of the Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011 (ACCU Scheme Review) - which is reviewed every three years.

The Authority's 2023 review puts forward 25 recommendations for the government to consider, relating to the following key themes of the NGER scheme:

- NGER scheme coverage including reporting thresholds and sectoral coverage
- Transparency and confidentiality
- Estimation methods, with a focus on fugitive methane measurement, reporting and verification
- Administration and compliance of the NGER scheme.

The ACCU Scheme was recently reviewed through the 2022 Independent Review of Australian Carbon Credit Units chaired by Professor Ian Chubb (the Chubb Review). The Authority has built on this review, noting the government is still implementing many of the review's recommendations.

The Authority's review puts forward 15 recommendations for the government to consider, relating to:

- While ambitious and urgent cuts to emissions are the priority, the Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme can help smooth the transition to net zero emissions.
- The ACCU Scheme is fundamentally well designed and the time is right to make some changes to ensure it remains fit-

for-purpose.

- Greater transparency and more regular reviews of methods for calculating abatement will bolster integrity and instil more confidence in the scheme.
- There's more the ACCU Scheme can do to support First Nations, rural, regional and remote communities.
- It is in Australia's national interest to keep up with global carbon market developments.
- Australia is well-positioned to be a leader in the global effort to remove carbon from the atmosphere and store it long-term.

Safeguard Mechanism:

Updates to production variable, emissions intensities and international best practice benchmark

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water (DCCEEW) in mid December 2023 to mid-January 2024 had undertaken a consultation on updates to production variables, emissions intensities, and international best practice benchmarks under the Safeguard Mechanism.

These updates are part of reforms to the [Safeguard Mechanism](#) and are expected to:

- insert new and amended production variable definitions
- insert new and updated default emissions intensity values
- introduce the first tranche of international best practice emissions intensity values for facilities that are new or creating new products
- make technical adjustments to the [Safeguard Rule \(National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting \(Safeguard Mechanism\) Rule 2015\)](#) to ensure it functions as designed.

The Department was consulting on the exposure draft which would amend the Safeguard Rule to establish these changes.

The reforms to the Safeguard Mechanism commenced on 1 July 2023. The reforms to the Safeguard Mechanism that commence on 1 July 2023 and continue, are expected to reduce emissions at Australia's largest industrial facilities.

New Fuel Quality Standards: Announced

The Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts has announced that they will introduce new fuel quality and noxious emission standards, stating that it is to save \$6.1 billion in health and fuel costs by 2040.

The Department is responsible for managing policy and standards development on vehicle safety, emissions, vehicle noise and fuel consumption labelling.

Two changes to fuel quality will occur from December 2025.

- The first change is expected to reduce the level of aromatic hydrocarbons (aromatics) to a maximum of 35% in 95 Research Octane Number (RON) petrol. Aromatics are a natural component of crude oil that aids engine performance, but at high levels can cause operability issues.

All vehicles will be able to use the new 95 RON petrol. The existing 91 and 98 RON petrol grades and diesel will be unaffected.

- The second change will align the previously announced reduction of sulphur allowed in all petrol grades (91 RON, 95 RON and 98 RON) with the start date of the new aromatics limit. This will simplify the transition for fuel suppliers and consumers.

The changes will also allow Australia to adopt Euro 6d noxious emissions standards, which will apply to:

- new light vehicle models introduced to the Australian market from December 2025
- new vehicles from existing lines in 2028.

The improvements are expected to:

- increase access to cleaner, more fuel-efficient vehicles in Australia
- strengthen our fuel security
- lower noxious emissions for light vehicles, saving \$6.1 billion in health and fuel costs by 2040
- remove almost 18 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector by 2050.

Further information is now available on [Euro 6d standards](#).

Australia's first New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (NVES):

Comment sought

The Federal Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts is introducing a New Vehicle Efficiency Standard (NVES) and is seeking feedback on the proposed design and implementation of Australia's New Vehicle Efficiency Standard, so that Australia can incentivise global vehicle manufacturers to send cleaner, cheaper-to-run cars to Australia.

Vehicle efficiency standards are common around the world to encourage vehicle suppliers to sell cleaner cars. Vehicle efficiency standards help by:

- saving you money at the petrol pump
- giving you more choice about the cars that you can buy
- reducing transport emissions, improving the air that you and your family breathe.

Most advanced economies around the world have introduced vehicle efficiency standards. Australia currently does not have such a standard.

On 4 February 2024, the Department published the *Cleaner, Cheaper to Run Cars: An Australian New Vehicle Efficiency Standard Consultation Impact Analysis* which sets out the options the Department have considered for the design of the New Vehicle Efficiency Standard, as well as the Government's preferred design.

This paper is available - [New Vehicle Efficiency Standard—Cleaner and Cheaper to run Cars for Australia](#).

Please provide [feedback](#) by 11.59pm, 4 March 2024.

Amendment to Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act Water Trigger

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) regulates impacts to matters of national environmental significance, these include consideration of significant impacts from actions on water resources, in relation to a coal seam gas or large coal mining development (the water trigger).

On 15 December 2023, the EPBC Act Water Trigger was amended to include consideration of likely significant impacts on water resources in relation to all types of unconventional gas, e.g. shale and tight gas related developments.

This means actions relating to all types of unconventional gas developments with potential significant impacts on water resources may need to be referred to the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water for assessment under the EPBC Act.

The [Significant Impact Guidelines 1.3: Coal seam gas and large coal mining developments - impacts on water resources](#) provide detail about impact criteria. These will be updated shortly

to reflect the application of the EPBC Act to all unconventional gas developments, along with additional advice to help guide proponents who are considering if they need to refer a proposal. In the interim, if you think your proposed development may be affected, please contact the Department via the [online enquiry form](#) or call 1800 920 528 between 9am and 5pm AEST/AEDT.

Update Climate Change Consideration Chapter in Australian Rainfall and Runoff Guidelines:

Comment sought

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water (DCCEEW) is seeking [feedback](#) on the updated Climate Change Considerations chapter in [Australian Rainfall and Runoff: A Guide to Flood Estimation \(ARR\)](#).

ARR is one of the most used references to help engineers and policy makers manage flood risk for the built environment.

In early 2023, [a consultation was held](#) to ensure the updates reflect user needs. The feedback revealed overwhelming support for the update. The update incorporates the most recent climate science research, projections and observed data.

The Department now seeking comment on the draft updated Climate Change Considerations chapter. Your input will ensure the update reflects user needs before the document is finalised in mid-2024.

Please provide feedback by 12 February 2024.

Nature Repair Committee members sought

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water (DCCEEW) is seeking applicants to join the Nature Repair Committee.

The Nature Repair Committee is expected to provide independent, expert advice to the Federal Minister for the Environment and Water on compliance and key elements of the biodiversity market established under the *Nature Repair Act 2023*. The committee supports the integrity and transparency of the Nature Repair Market.

The Department is looking for highly experienced, technical experts and professionals to form the committee. This will include a part-time chair and 4 to 5 part-time members. Committee members will be appointed by the Minister and must have substantial experience or knowledge and significant standing in at least one of the following fields:

- agriculture
- biological or ecological science
- economics
- environmental markets
- land management
- Indigenous Knowledge.

[Details](#) are now available.

Community Engagement Review:

Federal Government accepts all recommendations

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water (DCCEE) has released the [Community Engagement Review](#) and the Federal Government accepts in principle all recommendations.

The Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, Mr Andrew Dyer, completed the independent Review into community engagement in renewable energy infrastructure projects at the end of December 2023.

The Review identified opportunities to ensure community support and participation in Australia's renewable energy transition.

The recommendations are expected to improve community engagement practices for new renewable energy zones and major transmission lines, which will maintain our energy security and expected to deliver cheaper and cleaner energy.

The Federal Government has responded to the Review and accepts in principle all 9 recommendations. While implementing some of the recommendations will be shared across all levels of government in Australia, many fall within the responsibility of state and territory governments.

The Federal Government's Climate Change and Energy Minister is expected to work with the relevant state and territory government climate change and energy ministers to progress the recommendations. This will occur through [the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council](#).

The Review acknowledged the work the Australian Government has been doing with state and territory governments, industry, peak bodies and communities to progress:

- national guidelines on community engagement and benefit sharing in the development of transmission infrastructure
- a First Nations Clean Energy Strategy to ensure First Nations peoples have a say in renewable energy policies and programs
- a Nationally Significant Transmission Projects Framework to help accelerate project delivery
- Renewable Energy Transformation Agreements to align Australian Government and state and territory government approval processes.

The Review made recommendations in the following areas to improve engagement with renewable energy infrastructure developments:

- encourage best practice and selecting reputable developers for new projects
- reduce unnecessary and onerous community engagement by selecting project sites

- make engagement more efficient by revising planning and approval processes
- improve complaint handling processes
- keep communities informed about the transition, including its goals, benefits and requirements
- equitably share the benefits of the transition.

Draft revised water quality guidelines:

Comment sought

The Water Quality team at the Federal Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water (DCCEE) had released the following two documents on Water Quality Guidelines:

- [Picloram in freshwater DGVs technical brief](#) - Published as final; and
- [Draft revised Irrigation Guidelines](#) - Published for public comment.

To access the draft and make a submission for the Irrigation Guidelines draft, please visit [Draft revised Irrigation Guidelines](#) and provide feedback by 12 April 2024, at which point they will become final unless new peer-reviewed scientific or technical information justifies a re-examination.

Please note, these guidelines are a revision of the guidance contained in the [ANZECC & ARMCANZ \(2000\)](#) for irrigation water, which should be used and referred to until the updated guidance has been published.

SRES Installer and Designer Accreditation Scheme update

The Clean Energy Regulator (CER) will announce a [new Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme \(SRES\) installer and designer accreditation scheme operator \(ASO\)](#) in late

As an accredited person, you **must** transfer to the new ASO within 3 months of the CER's announcement to maintain your accreditation and small-scale technology certificate (STC) eligibility.

The Clean Energy Council (CEC) will [cease their accreditation services](#) when CER's decision is announced.

Find out how to transfer and maintain your accreditation on the [new installer and designer ASO](#).

For enquiries, please email cer-sresreforms@cer.gov.au or call the CER Contact Centre team on 1300 553 542.

Restoring Murray-Darling Rivers

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water (DCCEEW) is seeking feedback on the Restoring our Rivers: Draft framework for delivering the 450 GL of additional environmental water.

The draft framework outlines three new programs that the Federal Government will establish to deliver the 450 GL target.

The programs are:

- **Resilient Rivers Water Infrastructure Program (RRWIP)** - delivers options for water recovery infrastructure projects, rules changes, land and water partnerships, and other ways to recover water. This program is now open.
- **Voluntary Water Purchase Program** - purchase of water entitlements from willing sellers by the Commonwealth.
- **Sustainable Communities Program** - provide community adjustment assistance for Basin communities impacted by voluntary water purchase.

[Comment is sought on the draft framework](#) by 4 March 2024.

Gas Market Code to secure the supply for domestic market

The Federal Government has announced that *'over 260 petajoules (PJ) of gas will be made available between now and 2033 through two new enforceable supply commitments under the Gas Code of Conduct exemptions framework.*

This would be sufficient to power east-coast gas-fired power stations for around two and a half years.

Gas is critical to supporting reliability and affordability of the increasingly renewable grid, by providing peaking and firming.

'Peaking' power is extra power that can be called upon during times of peak demand for electricity. 'Firming' refers to maintaining the output of intermittent energy sources such as wind and solar.

The Gas Market Code ensures households and industry can increasingly benefit from downward pressure on wholesale electricity prices that solar is already bringing.

The supply commitments announced will directly feed into southern demand centres previously identified as being at particular risk of seasonal shortfalls. They will also ensure there is sufficient domestic supply to keep the downward pressure on gas prices.

For further details, please refer to the [Conditional Exemptions - Mandatory Gas Market Code](#)'.

Review of the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan

A [review](#) of the Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan (Reef 2050 WQIP) is currently underway to develop a new plan.

The Reef 2050 Water Quality Improvement Plan guides how industry, government and the community work together to improve the quality of water flowing to the Great Barrier Reef.

Like coral reefs worldwide, the Great Barrier Reef is facing a range of threats. Aside from climate change, one of the most significant threats is sediment and nutrient run-off from Reef catchments. Sediment can smother coral and restrict the growth of light-dependent plants like seagrass. Increased nutrients can create algal blooms, which are harmful to the Reef ecosystem.

The Reef 2050 WQIP review involves several key components delivered by experts in consultation with stakeholders through a staged process. The first stage has engaged the agricultural industry, natural resource management and conservation stakeholders in reviewing the land management practice adoption targets for agriculture. Broader stakeholder engagement on the other components is planned.

You are encouraged to provide feedback via the online [five-minute survey](#) on how you would like to engage in the review process and what type of activities and topics would be of interest to you and your community. This will assist the Federal and Queensland Governments to tailor the engagement process.

Feedback closes on 16 February 2024.

New Reef 2050 Wetlands Strategy

The Federal and Queensland Governments have released the [Reef 2050 Wetlands Strategy](#) that outlines plans for wetland science, planning, coordination and management in Reef catchments.

Wetlands are critical to the health of the Great Barrier Reef. They support marine species by improving water quality and act as biodiversity hotspots.

Five key areas have been identified to protect wetlands in Central, North and Far North Queensland. These areas are:

- Improving wetlands information for decision making and action,
- Wetland planning,

- On-ground activities to protect, manage, rehabilitate, and restore wetlands,
- Engagement, education, communication and capacity building,
- Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement.

The strategy supports the objectives and outcomes of the [Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan](#).

Australia provides progress report to UNESCO on protecting and restoring the Great Barrier Reef

The Federal Government has provided to the UNESCO World Heritage Centre a [Great Barrier Reef Progress Report](#) on how Australia is protecting and restoring the Reef.

The report is an update on the implementation of commitments Australia made to UNESCO in May 2023.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: Community Energy Upgrades Fund for Local Government

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water (DCCEEW) has grants available, through the [Community Energy Upgrades Fund](#) for local governments to improve their energy efficiency.

The Community Energy Upgrades Fund is a merit-based grant program that aims to help local governments to deliver energy upgrades and lower their greenhouse emissions and energy bills.

Local governments can apply for grants to make a range of improvements, such as:

- replacing gas heating systems in council pools with electric heat pumps

- installing energy efficient lighting or battery storage at sporting fields, libraries and community centres
- installing solar panels
- installing electric vehicle chargers for council fleets
- upgrades to air-conditioning controls in community buildings.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: Energy Efficiency Grants for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

The Federal Government is providing grants to small to medium sized businesses (SMEs) for energy efficiency grants of between \$10,000 and \$25,000 through Round 2 of the [Energy Efficiency Grants for Small and Medium Sized Enterprises](#).

Grants open on 22 February 2024 and applications will be staggered over 5 consecutive business days to provide you with ease of access to apply for a grant using the portal.

The grants can fund a range of activities to help reduce pressure on energy bills and lower emissions, including:

- upgrading inefficient technologies, such as replacement of display fridge cabinets with more efficient models, or gas cookers with electric equivalents
- improving space and water heating systems
- conducting energy audits
- installing energy monitoring systems.

[DETAILS](#) are now available.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY: Solutions to reduce livestock emissions

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and

Water (DCCEEW) is providing funding for projects under [STAGE 3.2 OF THE METHANE EMISSIONS REDUCTION IN LIVESTOCK \(MERIL\) PROGRAM](#) to support the development of methane reducing solutions for grazing livestock.

Around 95% of Australia's beef cattle, dairy cows, and sheep graze over large areas and have limited contact with farmers. This presents challenges for the uptake of methane-reducing solutions such as feed supplements.

Stage 3 of MERiL aims to address this problem by supporting the development of cost-effective feed supplement delivery technologies and other solutions.

The [MERiL program](#) includes three stages:

- Stage 1 (2020-21 to 2024-25) provided \$4 million in grant funding to 6 projects researching methane-reducing feed supplements and forage feeds.
- Stage 2 (2022-23 to 2023-24) provided \$5 million in grant funding to 11 projects to determine the feasibility of different technologies to deliver feed supplements to grazing animals.
- Stage 3 Round 1 (2023-24 to 2025-26) provided \$ 6 million in grant funding to 3 projects to support later-stage development of technologies to deliver feed supplements to grazing animals.
- Stage 3 Round 2 (2024-25 to 2026-27) is the current grant opportunity.

The grants will be open until 20 March 2024.

VICTORIA

Fire compliance inspections of waste recycling facilities by EPA Victoria

Fire compliance inspections of waste recycling facilities are currently underway by EPA Victoria.

Please ensure your facility is up to date with Fire Rescue Victoria standards and EPA Victoria's requirements.

NEW GUIDELINES: Wind Energy Facility Turbine Noise Regulation Guidelines

EPA Victoria has released the [Wind Energy Facility Turbine Noise Regulation Guidelines](#) that provides an overview of the requirements that apply to wind turbine noise emissions under the Environment Protection Regulations 2021 (the Regulations) made under the [Environment Protection Act 2017](#) (EP Act).

It is intended to assist wind energy facility (WEF) operators to implement their obligations and to manage the risks of wind turbine noise emissions to prevent harm to human health and the environment.

This guide provides and forms part of the state of knowledge about the general environmental duty (GED) relating to noise pollution from WEFs. It is not a substitute for legal advice about the effect of the Regulations. WEF operators should obtain legal and acoustic advice about their specific circumstances.

A guide for local government to administer their powers under the Environment Protection Act 2017

EPA Victoria has developed the [Administering your powers under the Environment Protection Act](#) (EP Act) - a guide to support local government (councils) and other litter authorities to prepare for their role as joint regulators of the new *Environment Protection Act*

2017 (the Act) and Environment Protection Regulations 2021 (the Regulations).

Its purpose is to assist and inform executives, managers, legal departments and those who are involved in corporate governance of councils and litter authorities.

Victoria's Container Deposit Scheme –

Progress update

The Victorian Government is currently excited with the success of the Victoria's [Container Deposit Scheme](#) (CDS) as they report approx. over 100 million containers have been returned in just a short time of its commencement.

With approx. 400 convenient refund points across the Victoria, Melton has been identified as Melbourne's best-performing refund point, having returned over 3.9 million cans, glass and PET plastics, followed by the Hallam depot with more than 2.6 million.

Of all the containers returned since the scheme commenced, aluminium cans have been the most popular making up 53% of returns, followed by PET (26%), glass (18%).

Returned drink containers can be transformed into a variety of new things, including material for roads, furniture, construction, textiles and more – creating new economic opportunities and will support more than 600 jobs across Victoria.

facilitators and coordinators has been confirmed to June 2025. As is the case with previous funding rounds, future investment will be considered as part of future State Budget processes.

The program is an important part of supporting Landcare and environmental volunteers around Victoria. Landcare facilitators are highly valued by the community. Networks and other organisations employing facilitators play a crucial role in enabling community support. To ensure the program continues to deliver effective and efficient, the Department seeks your views on what makes the program great, and what can be improved.

Your feedback is sought by 20 March 2024.

Port Phillip Bay's Coastal Hazard Assessment:

Release

The Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action has released a report on [Port Phillip Bay Coastal Hazard Assessment](#) to assist coastal land managers and the community understand, plan for, and manage the increasing impacts of climate change to Port Phillip Bay.

The hazard assessment is the first of its kind to look at the likely extent of flooding, changes in groundwater, and the impact of erosion for Port Phillip Bay in the decades to come.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Proposed additional action of NSW plastics

NSW EPA had recently undertaken a consultation on their paper, **NSW Plastics Next Steps**, that outlines further proposed action on plastics for NSW.

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 seeks to further build on its work by targeting additional problematic or unnecessary plastic items.

The *Plastic Reduction and Circular Economy Act 2021* provides the tools to do this by allowing NSW EPA to:

- phase out the supply of problematic or unnecessary plastic items
- set design standards for plastic items, including requirements for the way an item must be made, packaged or labelled
- make brand owners responsible for regulated products across their life cycle, from product design to recycling or disposal.

In the consultation paper, NSW EPA identified 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.

Power stations licence review identifies areas for change

Work will begin on implementing a range of improvements for four coal-fired power stations in NSW following NSW EPA's [recent community consultation](#) and review of environment protection licences.

The statutory 5 yearly review, which received over 100 submissions, is the first step to ensure the licences reflect best practice and enables the community to provide feedback.

NSW EPA has considered community's feedback and will now work with the operators of Eraring, Mount Piper, Vales Point and Bayswater power stations to

progressively vary their licences over the next 12 months to:

- review air emissions limits for some metals,
- review the frequency of air and water monitoring,
- review and improve monitoring and public access to information,
- increase community and stakeholder engagement by power stations.

Along with licence variations to address pollution concerns and improve community engagement, the EPA will continue to support the power stations to prepare, implement and report on climate change mitigation and adaptation plans as part of NSW EPA's [Climate Change Action Plan 2023-26](#).

NSW EPA progresses climate action with new advisory groups

NSW EPA has established two new advisory groups dedicated to shaping climate action in the mining and agriculture sectors.

The two [Climate Change Advisory Groups](#) are part of NSW EPA's *Climate Change Policy and Action Plan: 2023-26* launched in early 2023, outlining a roadmap to guide NSW towards achieving net-zero emissions by 2050.

EPA Executive Director of Strategy and Policy Nancy Chang said the groups, who held their introductory meetings this week, will advise how both industries can work with NSW EPA to better protect the environment and build resilience.

Radiation Advisory Council annual report 2022-23:

Release

The Radiation Advisory Council has released their [annual report for 2022-23](#).

The Council advises on matters in relation to the management of radiation in NSW under the *Radiation Control Act 1990 (the Act)* and the *Radiation Control Regulation 2013 (the Regulation)*.

The Council provides advice to the NSW Minister for Climate Change, NSW Minister for Energy, NSW Minister for the Environment, and NSW Minister for Heritage, and NSW EPA.

Special Activation Precincts Information Package

NSW EPA has released the [Special Activation Precincts Information Package](#) that aims to help people within Special Activation Precincts understand environment protection licence (licence) requirements.

It summarises the assessment pathway for developments in Special Activation Precincts using the complying development pathway that require a licence under the Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997 (POEO Act). It also outlines the process to apply for a licence within Special Activation Precincts, provides sample environmental assessment requirements, and includes a list of NSW EPA guidance materials.

This information is intended as a guide only and should be read in conjunction with the *Guide to Licensing (2022)*, which provides more detailed information to help you decide if you need to hold a licence and contains information on how to apply for one.

This document is for anyone who intends to carry out an activity in a Special Activation Precinct which may require a licence where the proposal will be going through the complying development pathway. It will also be of interest to local and state government, including land-use planners, consent

authorities, and development assessors.

QUEENSLAND

Draft landfill siting, design, operation and closure guideline:

Comment sought

The QLD Department of Environment and Science (DES) is seeking feedback on [proposed changes to the Landfill siting, design, operation and closure guideline](#).

Waste disposal sites form an important part of waste and resource management infrastructure throughout Queensland, however, they are associated with many short- and long-term environmental and social risks.

This revised guideline sets out environmental management expectations for Queensland's waste disposal industry, with a focus on managing any potential impacts to the environment as a result of siting, designing, operating and closing a waste disposal facility.

The proposed changes set clear, minimum expectations for higher-risk elements of conducting a waste disposal activity, while continuing to outline outcome-focused objectives.

These proposed changes align with the principle of 'regulating proportionate to risk' in the department's [Regulatory Strategy 2022-2027](#).

Comment is sought by 23 February 2024.

Waste levies waived for Scenic Rim Regional Council and Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council

The QLD Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (DESI) has [announced](#) that it has waived waste levies for the Scenic Rim Regional Council in south-east QLD and the Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council in far north QLD.

Both local authority areas have been severely impacted by recent weather events, and waiving their council's levies will support community recovery efforts by preventing additional unforeseen costs during this critical time.

The waste levy exemptions follow similar exemptions provided to the City of the Gold Coast and Logan City Council on 3 January, and a further seven councils across Queensland in December including:

- Cairns Regional Council
- Cook Shire Council
- Cassowary Coast Regional Council
- Mareeba Shire Council
- Douglas Shire Council
- Tablelands Regional Council
- Brisbane City Council

DESI can waive levies for waste that has been generated because of a State-declared disaster (as in the case of Wujal Wujal) or following a serious local event (as in the case of the Scenic Rim).

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

SA Groundwater Guidelines:

Comment sought

SA EPA is undertaking consultation on the draft guideline, [Establishing baseline groundwater quality](#).

This guideline is the first to be drafted as part of the series *Guidelines for groundwater quality monitoring of regulated activities*. Other guidelines in the series will be progressively drafted and released for stakeholder consultation in the next few years.

The draft guideline outlines the key steps to establishing a baseline groundwater quality data set, which is an important requirement to enable the early identification of any new groundwater pollution resulting from a regulated activity.

Once published, the guideline will be applicable to all new and existing

regulated activities that are required to undertake groundwater quality monitoring.

Please provide feedback by 19 February 2024, that includes specific implications for you, your business, or your sector to [Email or Complete an online submission form](#).

Draft industrial chemicals environment protection policy:

Announced

SA EPA is intending to prepare a draft industrial chemicals environment protection policy. The purpose of the policy will be to implement the Commonwealth Industrial Chemicals Environment Management Standard (IChEMS) in SA including, but not limited to, giving effect to the IChEMS Register, established by the Industrial Chemicals Environment Management (Register) Act 2021 (Cwth).

At a later date, further information will be provided regarding the draft policy and the public consultation session.

SA Water regulatory determination 2024

The Essential Services Commission of South Australia (Commission) has made a [draft regulatory determination](#) to apply to the water and sewerage retail services provided by SA Water between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2028 and seeks your [feedback](#) by 6 March 2024.

The Commission will make a final regulatory determination in June 2024.

The draft determination includes:

- a price determination that sets four-year maximum revenue caps for the majority of SA Water's water and sewerage retail services
- a separate price determination, which sets out pricing-related provisions that SA Water must comply with in delivering recycled

water and other 'excluded' retail services, that are not covered by the maximum revenue cap, and

- service standards, reporting requirements and other customer service obligations as set out in the Water Retail Code - Major Retailers (Code).

People, businesses, and communities in South Australia use water and sewerage services as an essential part of their everyday lives. The essential nature of these services means it is important for SA Water to deliver value for money, both now and in the future.

The retail services provided by SA Water are subject to regulation by the Commission under the *Essential Services Commission Act 2002* and the *Water Industry Act 2012*.

Proposed single-use and other plastic products amendment regulations – 2024 and 2025 items

SA Government has undertaken a consultation on the proposed regulations to ban additional single-use and other plastic products from 1 September 2024.

SA Government is seeking to phase out additional single-use and other plastic products over a 3-year period. The first stage of these bans commenced on 1 September 2023.

SA Government then sought feedback, which has since closed, on the draft regulations to implement the 2 remaining stages of these bans from 1 September 2024 and 1 September 2025 respectively, including the proposed exemptions.

From 1 September 2024, the following products will be banned:

- Thick plastic/boutique plastic shopping bags and plastic-laminated paper shopping bags
- Plastic barrier bags for perishable goods
- Plastic bread tags

- Single-use plastic hot and cold beverage cups and single-use plastic lids
- Single-use plastic food containers, including bowls with lids
- Expanded polystyrene (EPS) trays
- Other expanded polystyrene (EPS) food and beverage containers
- Plastic confetti
- Plastic balloon sticks and ties.

From 1 September 2025 the following products will be banned:

- Plastic produce stickers
- Plastic soy sauce fish
- Attached straws and cutlery
- Pre-packaged EPS containers (e.g. noodles)

What are the next steps?

Green Industries SA will review and collate the feedback which will inform any changes that need to be made to the draft regulations and publish a summary of the feedback.

Green Industries SA will then submit the revised draft regulations for approval prior to being gazetted, with a view to the regulations for 2024 bans coming into effect on 1 September 2024. While the regulations for the 2025 bans will be gazetted at the same time, they will not come into effect until 1 September 2025.

First SA Biodiversity Act to be introduced

The SA Government is seeking to introduce a Biodiversity Act, the first of its kind in SA, and your [feedback](#) is sought to help shape its development.

The SA Government is seeking to understand your expectations around biodiversity conservation and the priorities for a new Act. Biodiversity touches all our lives, so you don't need to be an expert to provide your feedback.

SA does not currently have a dedicated Act to safeguard

biodiversity, instead provisions exist across multiple laws, which has led to gaps in protections.

Developing the new Act and increasing the effectiveness of this legislative framework will allow SA to do things differently. The new Act will be an important tool in ensuring SA's long-term future through a resilient and sustainable economy, while safeguarding nature for future generations.

All [feedback](#) will be reviewed and use to help guide the development of a draft Biodiversity Bill.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Climate Change Bill 2023 introduced to Parliament

The WA Government is taking action on climate change by introducing the Climate Change Bill 2023 to Parliament.

The 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 also strengthen accountability through a requirement for annual progress reporting to Parliament and the setting of interim targets.

It is expected to 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 other actions undertaken by the WA Government, that includes:

- 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.

Commercial logging ends in WA's native forests from 1 January 2024

From 1 January 2024, commercial logging in WA's native forests came to an end. A 10 year plan - [WA Forest Management Plan 2024-2033](#) has been released to support this that sets out the latest framework for managing more than 2.5 million hectares of native forest throughout WA's south-west.

The Plan that came into effect on 1 January 2024, includes:

- An end to commercial-scale timber harvesting in native forests;
- Commitment to add more than 400,000 hectares of karri, jarrah and wandoo forests as nature reserves, national parks and conservation parks;
- Support for Traditional Owner involvement in forest management, consistent with the intent of the South West Native Title Settlement;
- Promotion of healthy forests that are more resilient to climate change.

The Plan was developed through extensive consultation, assessment and analysis by the Conservation and Parks Commission, which received more than 3,500 submissions when it released the draft plan for public comment.

Pathway to net zero set with sectoral emissions reduction strategy

The WA Minister for Climate Action, in partnership with the Ministerial Taskforce on Climate Action, has overseen the development of the

[Sectoral Emissions Reduction Strategy \(SERS\)](#), a core commitment of the WA Climate Policy.

The [Sectoral Emissions Reduction Strategy \(SERS\)](#) lists pathways towards emissions reduction throughout WA's economy, including in the electricity, transport, building, waste, and agriculture sectors.

These actions include:

- Unlocking additional investment in renewable energy in the South West Interconnected System (SWIS), WA's main energy grid;
- Facilitating decarbonisation of mining in the Pilbara through common-use infrastructure and the creation of renewable generation hubs in consultation with affected communities, including Traditional Owners;
- Expediting approval of priority electricity transmission infrastructure through dedicated resourcing within the State Government's green approvals team;
- Developing a Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage action plan;
- Increasing the public sector electric vehicle (EV) target to at least 50 per cent of all new fleet purchases; and
- Funding installation of additional EV charging stations at new METRONET train stations.

Extensive consultation has informed the development of these initiatives that complements WA's *Climate Change Bill 2023*, which will legislate WA's target of achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

Extra funding available to boost WA's e-waste projects

Grants are now available to support WA's electrical and electronic waste collection and recycling network as a ban on e-waste disposal to landfill is set to come into effect later this year.

E-waste, or waste electrical and electronic equipment, includes items

with a plug, battery or cord that are no longer working or wanted.

Grants are available for projects which either:

- support facilities to collect, manage and store e-waste, before reuse or onward reprocessing; or
- focus on reprocessing and recycling, including assisting businesses to purchase and install relevant equipment.

WA's e-waste ban will be introduced later this year, and includes most electronic consumer goods, such as large household appliances, mobile phones, televisions, and computers.

Grants are open to businesses, local governments, regional councils, and registered charities, with applications, which will close on 29 March 2024, to be made via: dwer-env.smartygrants.com.au
