AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT BUSINESS NETWORK

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ENVIRONMENT NETWORK WEEKLY (ENW)

AEBN National ENW e-news – 15 November 2024

2025 AEBN EVENTS

[AEBN Interactive Webinar]

2025 AEBN National Conference on Environment, Climate Change and Energy:

New laws, developments and funding for business in 2025

This annual AEBN Conference is designed to assist you to PLAN FOR 2025.

The Conference will cover key CHANGES EXPECTED IN 2025 on environmental, climate change (incl emissions reduction…) and energy laws, requirements including developments and funding from across Australia.

This Conference is for industry, business and councils from across Australia – to assist you to remain compliant in 2025.

10.00am to 4.00pm
7 March 2025

Register your attendance!

FEDERAL

State of the Climate 2024 Report:

Released

The Federal Government has released the 8th biennial State of the Climate Report that was developed by CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology. These two organisations play an important role in monitoring, analysing and communicating future changes in Australia's climate.

At a glance, the report states that it "*draws on the latest national and international climate research, encompassing observations, analyses and future projections to describe year-to-year variability and longer-term changes in Australia's climate.*

The report is a synthesis of the science that underpins our understanding of Australia's climate. It is intended to inform economic, environmental and social decision-making by governments, industries and communities.

Observations, reconstructions of past climate and climate modelling continue to provide a consistent picture of ongoing, long-term climate change interacting with underlying natural variability. Associated changes in weather and climate extremes— such as extreme heat, heavy rainfall, coastal inundation, fire weather and drought— exacerbate existing pressures on the health and wellbeing of our communities and ecosystems.

These changes in the weather and climate are happening at an increasing pace; the past decade has seen record-breaking extremes contributing to natural disasters that are exacerbated by anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change, including 'compound events', where multiple hazards and/or drivers occur together or in a close sequence, which intensifies their impacts.

These changes have a growing effect on the lives and livelihoods of all Australians. Australia must plan for, and adapt to, the changing nature of climate risk now and in the decades ahead.

The severity of impacts on Australians and our environment will depend on the speed at which global greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced."

COP29 – Australia attends world's largest climate meeting

As Australia works at trying to limit the global temperature increase to less than 2 degrees, an Australian official delegation is currently attending the Conference of the Parties 29 (COP29) – that is currently taking place in Baku, Azerbaijan from 11 to 22 November 2024.

198 signatories to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement come together annually to attend the world's largest climate meeting – COP29.

A key focus for COP29 is finance, particularly looking at how global partners can come together to finance climate ambition.

When the Paris Agreement was agreed in 2015, developed countries committed to mobilise $US100 billion a year by 2020 to help developing countries manage and respond to the impacts of climate change. That goal comes to an end next year, so this COP aims to set a new goal – the New Collective Quantified Goal on Climate Finance, or the NCQG.

Other key discussions will focus on curbing climate change (mitigation), responding to the change that is already happening (adaptation), and how countries are turning agreements into action.

Proposed variation to Wastewater method:

Comment sought

The Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee is seeking your feedback on the proposed variation to the wastewater method.

The proposed change will extend the crediting period for non-biomethane projects from 7 years to 12 years.

The wastewater method focuses on capturing methane from treatment ponds so it doesn't escape into the air. This helps fight climate change. It also supports turning that biogas into biomethane, which is a renewable energy source.

After earlier community and stakeholder consultations, the Emissions Reduction Assurance Committee (ERAC) recommended extending the crediting period. The extension will help to encourage wastewater projects to keep reducing methane emissions.

Feedback will help finalise this plan.

Please provide feedback by **11:59 pm AEDT, 26 November 2024**.

Carbon Leakage 2nd consultation:

Comment sought

The Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is seeking your feedback on the preliminary findings on carbon leakage that includes:

- the extent of carbon leakage risk for large scale emissions producing commodities; and
- the policy options to address that risk.

This review looks at policy options to address carbon leakage. This 2nd consultation paper of the Carbon Leakage Review, led by Prof Frank Jotzo from the Australian National University, considers how to secure a level playing field in a global net zero economy.

The first consultation helped to inform the approach to understanding carbon leakage in Australia.

Your feedback will help inform the advice to the Federal Government by the end of 2024.

Feedback on the preliminary findings is sought by 3 December 2024.

National Hydrogen Regulatory Review:

Comment sought on first draft

As part of the ongoing development of the National Hydrogen Codes of Best Practice (the Codes), the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is now seeking your feedback on the first draft content of the first 2 priority Codes: Hydrogen Production and Refuelling. Detailed guidance and background is set out in the Information for participants.

The Federal Government's immediate priority is to develop National Hydrogen Codes of Best Practice (the Codes) to support the safe and efficient growth of Australia's hydrogen industry. The first 2 codes being developed are hydrogen production and refuelling.

The Codes are an adaptive approach to regulatory reform to provide:

- improved safety and environmental protection outcomes
- national consistency
- transparent regulatory pathways
- efficient regulatory approvals.

The Codes will deliver improved regulatory transparency and certainty for hydrogen projects in each Australian jurisdiction. The National Codes will provide guidance on how risks associated with hydrogen facilities can be effectively managed.

Hydrogen facilities, as is the case for other hazardous industries, may involve a range of potential risks, although these are manageable through appropriate facility design and practices.

Please provide your feedback by **11.59pm, 8 December 2024.**

Draft Code for the land transport of Dangerous Goods Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement:

Comment sought

The National Transport Commission (NTC) has released the Draft Code for the land transport of Dangerous Goods Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement (C-RIS). The purpose of this C-RIS is to seek feedback and comment from stakeholders on the draft Australian Code for the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road and Rail.

This Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement (C-RIS) seeks feedback on the draft Code to evaluate the costs and benefits of proposed changes, informing the development of effective regulations. The process includes drafting, ongoing consultation, and setting a timeline for the Code's implementation by October 1, 2026.

The current legislative framework and implementation of the Code by States and Territories are out of scope for this C-RIS.

Feedback is sought by 10 December 2024.

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Provisions for Transport of Explosive in ADG Code Supplementary Consultation Paper:

Comment sought

The National Transport Commission has released the Provisions for the transport of explosives in the Australian Code for the Transport of Dangerous Goods by Road and Rail (ADG Code). The purpose of this consultation paper is to seek feedback and comment from stakeholders on issues in the draft ADG Code that are particular to class 1 explosives transport.

Feedback is sought by 17 December 2024.

Capacity Investment Scheme Tender 3 now open

The Capacity Investment Scheme (CIS) Tender 3 – National Electricity Market (NEM) - Dispatchable Capacity (CIS Tender 3) is now open.

The CIS is an Australian Government revenue underwriting scheme accelerating investment in:

- renewable energy generation (generation), such as wind and solar
- clean dispatchable capacity (dispatchable), such as battery storage.

The tender is seeking an indicative target of 4GW of 4-hour equivalent dispatchable capacity, or 16 GWh projects in the NEM.

Projects with a minimum storage duration of two hours, a minimum size of 30 MW are expected to be eligible.

Proponents should read this brief to understand CIS allocations, including dispatchable capacity allocations by jurisdictions for CIS Tender 3.

AI and ESG – Introductory guide for ESG practitioners:

Released

The Federal Department of Industry, Science and Resources has released the AI and ESG: An Introductory guide for ESG practitioners guide. This practical guide is for Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) practitioners to assist them on how to better understand the implications and opportunities of AI, and how to incorporate the use of AI into their work.

The guide provides practitioners with tools to assist with incorporating AI use into their work.

The guide includes:

- why ESG practitioners should consider responsible use of AI;
- how to assess AI in the ESG sector;
- ideas for enhancing ESG solutions with AI; and
- steps to start responsibly using AI in ESG contexts.

The guide has been developed by the National AI Centre in collaboration with CSIRO's Data61.

The Federal Government has also released the Voluntary AI Safety Standard - Helping businesses be safe and responsible when using AI.

Clean Energy Regulator proposes changes to ID requirements:

Comment sought

The Clean Energy Regulator is seeking your feedback on changes to their identity verification (ID) requirements.

The Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) Scheme participants and Australian National Registry of Emissions Units (ANREU) account holders are required to provide the Clean Energy Regulator with their identity documents multiple times to register new projects or open additional accounts.

These proposed changes to amend the *Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Rule 2015* and the *Australian National Registry of Emissions Units Regulations 2011*, will no longer require multiple requests for identity documents, once this information has already been provided for another activity.

The Clean Energy Regulator is also seeking to make amendments to the legislation to bring it in line with the requirements of the Federal Government's Documentation Verification Service (DVS). This would allow the Clean Energy Regulator to accept recently expired (not cancelled) identity documents, such as a passport that has expired within the past 2 years.

To provide your feedback, please visit changes to identification documentation requirements consultation .

Clean Energy Council appointed as product listing body for solar panels and inverters

The Clean Energy Council (CEC) has been appointed as the product listing body (PLB) for solar panels and inverters eligible under the Small-scale Renewable Energy Scheme (SRES).

The product listing body plays a critical role in ensuring Australians maintain confidence in the quality standards of renewable energy products for households and small businesses. Solar panels and inverters must be approved by the product listing body to be eligible for small-scale technology certificates (STCs) under the SRES.

The appointment of the CEC follows the 2020 review of the Australian rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) sector that included an evaluation of the role, functions and governance of the Product Listing Body. The new service is intended to provide a better and more timely service to the industry.

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Carbon market infrastructure for holding and trading certificates and units:

Comment sought

The Clean Energy Regulator is seeking your feedback on the discussion paper: Enabling deep, liquid, transparent and accessible carbon markets in Australia to:

- identify market needs and priorities for establishing new market infrastructure; and
- test the feasibility of an Australian carbon credit unit exchange trading model.

Carbon markets play an important role in supporting Australia to meet its legislated climate targets. The Regulator supports carbon markets through processes that record, track and monitor the trading of:

- Australian carbon credit units (ACCUs)
- Safeguard Mechanism credit units (SMCs)
- large-scale generation certificates (LGCs)
- small-scale technology certificates (STCs).

This consultation is open to:

- participants in our schemes, including entities creating, holding and trading carbon units and certificates
- safeguard facilities
- carbon market participants
- consultants
- brokers and intermediaries.

Feedback is sought by 22 November 2024 via the online survey.

$36 million boost to help decarbonise Australia's transport industry

The Federal Minister for Climate Change and Energy has announced a $36 million funding boost, through the Driving the Nation program, to make Australia's transport industry cleaner, cheaper to run, and quieter.

Transport accounts for one-fifth of Australia's emissions, with heavy vehicles such as trucks and buses responsible for a quarter of these transport emissions.

The additional funding reflects a renewed focus for the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) to help decarbonise Australian transport by encouraging heavy EV adoption and integration including through better charging infrastructure, and innovation as part of Driving the Nation.

$4 million for Australian battery innovation

The Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) is investing $4 million to support new silicon anode technology that gives lithium-ion batteries much higher energy density. This higher energy density means future batteries could supply the same amount of power while being smaller, lighter and cheaper.

The government's investment is supporting Australian company AnteoTech's $11.1 million project to bring its commercial technology to market.

The global demand for lithium-ion batteries is expected to ramp up from 700 GWh of annual demand in 2022 to around 4,700 GWh by 2030 – mainly due to EVs.

VICTORIA

Review of safe Drinking Water Regulations: Comment sought

The Victorian Department of Health is seeking your feedback on proposed changes to Victoria's safe drinking water regulations as the regulations are due to expire in July 2025.

Victoria's drinking water supplies are regulated under the *Safe Drinking Water Act 2003* (the Act) and the Safe Drinking Water Regulations 2015 (the Regulations). This regulatory framework currently applies to 20 water agencies (both water suppliers and water storage managers), which include 18 state-owned water corporations, and two statutory authorities - Parks Victoria and Alpine Resorts Victoria.

The Regulations are currently under review to develop updated replacement regulations. Amendments to the Act are outside the scope of this review and reform process, so any such feedback will be noted for consideration in future processes for amending the Act.

Proposed changes to the Regulations are detailed in the discussion paper. This paper outlines how future regulations can better support the Act and align with the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, which provide a best-practice framework for the management of drinking water supplies that has been developed with the best available scientific evidence.

The discussion paper primarily focuses on proposes changes to the Regulations relating to:

- Risk management plans that are used to manage risks to drinking water supplies; and
- Drinking water quality standards that apply to the health and aesthetic qualities of drinking water.

Feedback is sought by 17 December 2024 via the online survey.

Managing plastic feedstock information sheet: Released

EPA Victoria has released the Managing plastic feedstock fact sheet to assist industry with its obligations.

Plastic feedstock is the raw material such as flakes, powder, recycled chips and resin pellets used to make plastic

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products. These products include rainwater tanks, pipes, medical supplies, textiles, electronics, food containers and drink bottles.

Businesses must take reasonably practicable steps to control their plastic feedstock to avoid breaches.

Victorian Recycling Infrastructure Plan

Recycling Victoria has released the Victorian Recycling Infrastructure Plan that provides Victorian circular economy investors with a road map to guide decision-making on waste, recycling and resource recovery infrastructure over the next 30 years.

The Plan outlines infrastructure needs and gaps, driving innovation and potential investment where it is needed most. It also informs potential locations for new development and helps to protect existing infrastructure from encroachment.

As an essential resource for industry, local government, and investors, the VRIP provides:

- in-depth infrastructure needs analysis that considers capacity and capability
- place-based assessments for each material stream
- residual waste and waste to energy
- regional opportunities
- land use planning.

NEW GUIDELINES: Responsible Entity Risk, Consequence and Contingency Plan

Recycling Victoria has prepared guidance and resources to support responsible entities to prepare their Responsible Entity Risk, Consequence and Contingency Plan.

The Guidelines provide comprehensive information to support responsible entities to determine their responsible entity status, notify Recycling Victoria and prepare their Responsible Entity Risk, Consequence and Contingency (RERCC) Plan.

Responsible entities are a critical sub-set of service providers in the waste, recycling and resource recovery sector. Responsible entities manage services that, if disrupted, present a serious risk to service continuity or progressing to a more circular economy.

Sector participants must self-assess whether they are a responsible entity. The Guidelines for a Responsible Entity Risk, Consequence and Contingency Plan and the CERCC Plan will assist with the self-assessment.

Circular Economy Risk, Consequence and Contingency Plan: Released

Recycling Victoria released the Circular Economy Risk, Consequence and Contingency Plan (CERCC Plan) that came into force on 9 May 2024. It is an annual, state-wide plan for the waste, recycling and resource recovery sector.

The CERCC Plan aims to identify, describe and manage risks to service continuity and the transition to a circular economy in Victoria's waste, recycling and resource recovery sector. It focuses on identifying serious threats to service provision and providing responsible entities with an initial framework to assess their own preparedness and mitigation measures.

The CERCC Plan outlines serious risks in the waste, recycling and resource recovery industry that may disrupt services and how responsible entities must mitigate them.

The Head, Recycling Victoria is required to submit the CERCC Plan to the Victorian Minister for Environment on or before 31 December of each year.

NEW SOUTH WALES

Renewable Energy Planning Framework – to support NSW's clean energy future

The NSW Government has developed the Renewable Energy Planning Framework that provides clarity and transparency for how renewable energy developments are assessed and managed.

It includes a suite of planning policies and guidelines for wind and solar energy generation and transmission infrastructure. It also includes Benefit Sharing Guidelines so communities receive benefits from the renewable energy projects they're hosting.

The new Renewable Energy Planning Framework includes five new and updated guidelines:

- Wind Energy Guidelines – provides advice on planning considerations relevant to wind energy development, including visual impacts, site selection and decommissioning.
- Transmission Guidelines – addresses route selection, community consultation expectations and visual impact assessment.
- Solar Energy Guidelines – revisions to the existing guideline to provide additional advice on decommissioning and incorporate other aspects of the Framework.
- Benefit Sharing Guidelines – encourages equitable and sustainable distribution of benefits to local communities.
- Private Agreement Guidelines – advises landholders and renewable energy developers on key considerations when negotiating commercial agreements for hosting renewable energy projects.

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Pollution washes up as blackballs on NSW beaches

NSW EPA has been working closely with NSW Maritime, Randwick City Council, and scientists to determine the origin of thousands of black balls that washed up on Eastern suburbs' beaches recently.

Extensive analytical testing, by the Federal Department of Climate Change, Environment, Energy and Water and the University of NSW (UNSW) Science and UNSW's Mark Wainwright Analytical Centre, has confirmed the balls comprised fatty acids, petroleum hydrocarbons, and other organic and inorganic materials.

Fatty acids are natural substances that come from oils and fats, found in products like cooking oils, soaps, and skincare items. Petroleum hydrocarbons are chemicals from oil and gas products, such as gasoline, motor oil, and diesel fuel.

Organic material refers to carbon-based substances that can naturally decompose, including items like hair, food waste and other plant and animal matter. The balls also contained inorganic material such as sand, calcium salt and bacteria which are commonly associated with wastewater.

The investigation has revealed that the balls contain hundreds to thousands of different materials, including human hair and various fibres, indicating they likely originated from a source that releases mixed waste.

Authorities have considered several possible causes, such as a shipping spill or wastewater outflow. However, due to the complex composition of the balls and the time they have spent in the water, testing has not been able to confirm their exact origin. As a result, authorities have so far been unable to trace the source, but final results are due in the coming weeks.

QUEENSLAND

Monitoring and testing for PFAS in organic material processing:

Information Sheet Released

The QLD Government has released an Information sheet on Monitoring and testing for PFAS in organic material processing (composting) to assist composting operators to comply with the conditions of their environmental authority (EA), particularly in relation to monitoring and testing requirements.

Per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a group of synthetic 'forever' chemicals that persist in the environment, bioaccumulate in living organisms and are highly mobile in soils and water. PFAS have been linked to long-term consequences in human health and the environment.

The QLD Government has recognised the importance of managing PFAS in the environment and through the environmentally relevant activities (ERAs) it regulates, including organic material processing by way of composting (ERA53).

The Department of Environment, Science and Innovation (the department) has developed a Regulatory Position Statement on PFAS in organic material processing (composting) (ESR/2024/6783) to accompany the Model Operating Conditions for composting activities (ERA53 MOCs) (ESR/2015/1665).

NEW GUIDELINE: Odour impact assessment from developments

The QLD Government has released the Guideline on Odour Impact Assessment from Developments.

The guideline sets out various approaches to assess potential impacts from new development proposals. Wherever possible, the odour emission record of the facility (in the case of modifications) or industry type should be included in the assessment along with any practical experience in using odour management techniques.

Tools such as odour field surveys, odour diaries, complaints data and compliance history, which provide additional relevant information for assessing the impact of odour from modifications to existing facilities, are also discussed in this guideline.

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