

## Secretary Fredericks - Opening Statement for Senate Estimates

28 October 2022

Thank you Chair.

I would like to begin with acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are gathered today and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.

I thought it appropriate to make a short opening statement this morning to recognise the fact that this is the first appearance before Senate Estimates of the new Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – also known to us now as DCCEEW.

Can I say personally that I am very proud to lead the new department, which has been established to deal with a range of complex policy issues that are of critical importance to Australia's future way of life, and which require collaborative, innovative and joined-up reform. This includes a strong role in delivering the Government's agenda to:

- reinvigorate Australian climate action and leadership
- facilitate the smooth transformation of our energy system
- capture the opportunities of a clean energy economy
- protect, restore and manage Australia's land and ocean environment and heritage, and
- improve the health of our rivers and freshwater ecosystems.

In this, we will be focused on achieving environmental and economic outcomes, including growing our economy and ensuring regional communities continue to thrive.

The issues we are dealing with – our climate, our species, our reefs, our ecosystems, our water systems – are issues our First Nations peoples have been dealing with for over 60,000 years. This means strong, respectful and genuine partnerships with First Nations peoples, including in the design of our policies and programs, will be critical to progressing the Government's agenda across our department.

I also want to take this opportunity to provide an update on the Machinery of Government changes that established DCCEEW on 1 July 2022. These changes have been complex, but have been managed diligently and conscientiously by a range of our corporate staff – to whom I am very grateful – along with the support of other agencies, notably the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

I can advise that the machinery of government change process was finalised for DCCEEW on 28 September 2022. At that time, we had completed the legal transfer of all staff from former departments to DCCEEW, and had finalised the necessary governance and other mechanisms required for a department of state.

DCCEEW is now focused on maturing its systems and processes, while actively building an inclusive, dynamic and respectful departmental culture. I am confident that we will do this, while at the same time delivering the policies and programs which the Government has committed for delivery by DCCEEW.

Thank you.