



Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Budget Estimates 2024–25
Tuesday, 28 May 2024
Daily Summary

The committee met from 9.00am until 9.06pm.

The committee called the following departments and agencies:

- Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water
- Snowy Hydro Corporation Limited

Commenced 9.00am– Corporate and general matters

- Conduct of the Environmental Defenders Office (EDO) in relation to grant agreements with the Business Grants Hub, including legal advice received by the department, an audit into the conduct, and the EDO’s cultural competency;
- Funding for the EDO in the 2024-25 budget;
- Procurement procedures relating to Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) contracts with EY;
- Guidance provided from PM&C for answering estimates questions on notice and inconsistencies with advice given by the Clerk of the Senate;
- Resource capacity of DCCEEW to answer Questions on Notice and obligations of DCCEEW to answer questions during Senate estimates;
- Future Made in Australia project fundings, and indications of legislation in relation to the matter; and
- DCCEEW resourcing, including average staff level numbers and changes.

Outcome 1.1 Commenced at 11.47am

- Impacts of Australia’s greenhouse gas emissions on snowfall levels, floods and droughts;
- Fuel reserves in Australia’s exclusive economic zone, fuel reserves sold to the United States;
- Greenhouse gas emission decreases during the 47th Parliament, projections for further decreases and expectations for meeting the 2030 targets;
- Private vs public funding for charging stations for electrical vehicles;
- Membership of the Powering the Regions Funds and possible conflict of interests for members;
- Particulars and rationale of the Future Gas Strategy;
- Timeframe for the transition from gas to renewables;
- New vehicle emission standards;
- DCCEEW’s consultation on proposed approach to setting ‘best international standards’ under the Safeguard Mechanism;
- Changes to rules surrounding natural gas project approvals;
- Criteria used to assess funding for the powering the regions fund;

- Progress on the housing electrification package;
- Regional cooperation on carbon capture and storage (CCS) and related APS staffing costs; and
- Emissions from native forest logging and reductions from the cessation of native logging in Victoria.

Outcome 1.2 Commenced at 5.38pm

- CEFC funding for projects under rewiring the nation and progress on renewable energy zones; and
- Role of the Australian Energy Market Operator in the energy sector and transparency of its planning procedures.

Snowy Hydro Limited Commenced 7.18pm

- Delays for Florence the tunnel borer due to rock pinching the machine shield;
- Snowy staff travel expenditure;
- Financial viability of Snowy 2.0;
- Water licences and storage for the project;
- Rate of completion of the Snowy 2.0 project per financial year;
- Planning and contingencies surrounding the potential for worker exposure to asbestos while tunnelling;
- Potential costs for stopping progress and restoring the area impacted by construction of the Snowy 2.0 project;
- Transmission lines through national parks for the project;
- Source of green hydrogen for the Hunter gas powerplant; and
- Timelines for operating of the Hunter gas powerplant initially on diesel and then on gas.

Outcome 1.2 Re-Commenced at 8.04pm

- Additional renewable energy generation and storage under the Capacity Investment Scheme (CIS);
- Funding limitations under the CIS;
- Variable renewable auctions for CIS competitive tenders;
- Recruitment for a replacement Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner;
- Development of renewables projects in states to meet 2030 targets in the AEMO report; and
- Feasibility licences for Gippsland offshore wind and First Nations consultation, timeline for the advancement of offshore floating wind projects.

The following agencies were released from the program

Climate Change Authority

Clean Energy Finance Corporation

Clean Energy Regulator

Australian Energy Regulator

Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner

Australian Renewable Energy Agency

Offshore Infrastructure Regulator & Offshore Infrastructure Registrar

The committee will next meet at 9.00am on Wednesday, 29 May 2024 in Committee room 2S3 for further examination of the Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water portfolio.