



Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee  
Budget Estimates 2022-23  
Monday, 4 April 2022  
Daily summary

Here is the summary of today's proceedings in the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee estimates hearing.

The committee met from 9.00am until 3.36pm.

The committee called:

- Energy outcomes and agencies of the Industry, Science, Energy and Resources portfolio, including Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources; Australian Renewable Energy Agency; Climate Change Authority; and Clean Energy Finance Corporation.

Topics discussed by the committee included:

- percentage of renewables in the National Electricity Market;
- Clean Energy Council report into investment in renewable energy;
- Battery of the Nation and Marinus Link feasibility study;
- jobs created in Tasmania and regional Victoria through construction of Marinus Link;
- carbon capture and storage and blue hydrogen projects;
- reduction in Australian Renewable Energy Agency staffing levels;
- assessment and selection of projects under Underwriting New Generation Investments (UNGI) program;
- exclusion of coal-fired power from UNGI program;
- Grid Reliability Fund - \$1 billion not yet allocated;
- exclusion of nuclear energy or carbon capture and storage from ARENA funding;
- Climate Change Authority staffing levels and use of contract staff;
- CEFC funding for grid reliability or UNGI projects; and
- changes to CEFC investment guidelines.

The committee examined:

- Environment outcomes and agencies of the Agriculture, Water and the Environment portfolio, including Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment; Bureau of Meteorology; and Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Topics discussed by the committee included:

- commitment of funds and payment made from Environment Restoration Fund;
- ANAO Report into Management of Threatened Species and Ecological Communities;
- bushfire response plan and threatened species plan for koalas;
- Threatened Species Strategy Action Plan for Leadbeater's Possum;
- Regional Forestry Agreements;
- proposed revisions to the Victorian Code of Forest Practice and impacts on threatened species;
- Threat Abatement Plans;

- congestion busting funding to employ an additional 82 APS staff and 180 labour hire contractors in environmental regulation;
- funding to modernise Indigenous cultural heritage protections under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act;
- locations for regional environmental plans;
- Recycling Modernisation Fund;
- lack of state co-investment in recycling initiatives;
- packaging recycling targets;
- gaps in weather radar coverage;
- improving accuracy of heavy rain and flood predictions;
- effects of climate change on cyclone intensity and location;
- Northern Australia cyclone reinsurance pool costs;
- challenges for forecasting highly localised, high intensity weather events;
- warming temperatures in the East Australian Current;
- coral bleaching near Ningaloo Coast, Western Australia;
- first incidence of Great Barrier Reef coral bleaching under La Niña conditions;
- UNESCO World Heritage monitoring mission to the Great Barrier Reef; and
- ability of coral reefs to recover from frequent bleaching events.

The committee will next meet at 9:00am on Tuesday, 5 April in Senate Committee Room 2S3, calling the communication and the arts outcomes of the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications portfolio.