



Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Budget Estimates 2022-23
Thursday, 31 March 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 9.38pm.

The committee called:

- Energy outcomes and agencies of the Industry, Science, Energy and Resources portfolio, including Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources; Snowy Hydro Limited; and Clean Energy Regulator.

Topics discussed by the committee included:

- \$22 billion spending on clean energy technologies from 2020 to 2030;
- reduced funding for the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA);
- reduction in departmental provision of staff to ARENA and increased use of consultants;
- gas projects listed under the Underwriting New Generation Investments (UNGI) program;
- disruptions to the carbon market from default on carbon credit contracts;
- priority actions concerning gas supply in the east coast market;
- selection of gas exploration projects in the Beetaloo Basin;
- development of priority gas infrastructure projects consistent with the Future Gas Infrastructure Investment Framework;
- Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions from gas projects;
- Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF) incentives;
- emissions projections and abatement;
- AEMO forecasts for rising power prices;
- National Energy Security Assessment concerning fuel security, electricity and gas;
- construction of large-scale solar facility adjacent to Snowy Hydro's Hunter project;
- carbon farming and landfill gas electricity generation sites and an associated disallowance motion; and
- conflicts of interest and disclosure obligations for members of the Clean Energy Regulator and Electrical Regulatory Authorities Council.

The committee examined:

- Environment outcomes and agencies of the Agriculture, Water and the Environment portfolio, including Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment.

Topics discussed by the committee included:

- flood recovery;
- timing of the State of the Environment report;
- allocation of \$100 million under the Emissions Reduction Fund;

- advanced technologies funded under the Recycling Modernisation Fund;
- Remade in Australia recycling initiative recycled content certification;
- Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence;
- additional resourcing to achieve reduced times for applications for waste export licences;
- endangered species recovery plan for koalas;
- endangered species recovery plans for Tasmanian giant kelp forests;
- State Party Report on the state of conservation of the Great Barrier Reef Heritage Area;
- UNESCO world heritage monitoring mission to the Great Barrier Reef;
- Ocean Leadership funding package;
- Sustainable Ocean Action Plan;
- applications for protection of Indigenous heritage;
- Cultural Heritage Management Plans;
- regional plans for protection of threatened species;
- Hobart Cities Deal and Antarctic Science Precinct; and
- plans and costings for relocation of the Australian Antarctic Division.

The committee called:

- Communications and arts outcomes and agencies of the Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications portfolio, including Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications; Australian Broadcasting Corporation; Australian Communications and Media Authority; NBN Co; Australian Postal Corporation; and Office of the eSafety Commissioner.

Topics discussed by the committee included:

- new and upgraded coverage under the Mobile Black Spot program;
- funding support for the arts and creative industry;
- one-year extension of the PacificAus TV initiative;
- Public Interest News Gathering program;
- funding for regional newspapers;
- regional journalism cadets funding;
- funding for Viewer Access Satellite Television (VAST);
- meetings and remuneration for members of the Creative Economy Taskforce;
- funding for Australian 5G Innovation Initiative;
- ministerial requests for digital platforms to block Russian media platforms;
- Digital Games Tax Offset;
- ACMA preparations for Federal election caretaker period;
- ACMA powers to oversee misinformation and disinformation;
- NBN Co government relations and media relations staff;
- NBN upgrades in regional Australia;
- Australia Post conclusion of alternate day mail delivery;
- increasing use of postal votes at South Australian election;
- \$31.6 million investment in online safety;
- online safety grants for community groups;
- online safety training for school teachers; and
- eSafety MoUs and liaison with police forces.

The committee will next meet at 9:00am on Monday, 4 April in Senate Committee Room 2S3, calling energy outcomes of the Industry, Science, Energy and Resources portfolio and environment outcomes and agencies of the Agriculture, Water and the Environment portfolio.