



Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee
Supplementary Budget Estimates 2024–25
Monday, 4 November 2024
Daily summary

The committee met from 9.00am until 11:00pm.

The committee called the following departments and agencies:

- Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)
- Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA)
- Clean Energy Finance Corporation
- Climate Change Authority (CCA)
- Snowy Hydro Limited
- Clean Energy Regulator (CER)
- Australian Energy Regulator (AER)
- Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner
- The Offshore Infrastructure Regulator (OIR) and Offshore Infrastructure Registrar (OIR)
- Threatened Species Scientific Committee

The committee release the following agencies:

- Australian Institute of Marine Science
- DCCEEW - Outcome 3: Advance Australia's environmental, scientific, strategic and economic interests in the Antarctic region by protecting, researching and administering in the region, including through international engagement.

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)

Corporate matters – 9.00

- Grant payments made to the Environmental Defenders Office and any issues surrounding international funds paid to the EDO;
- Costings of travel of departmental staff and use of departmental credit cards; and
- Staffing levels of the department both in the ACT and around the country.

Outcome 1.1 and 1.2 – Commenced at 9.33am, Concluded at 11.07am

- Costings and departmental advice surrounding nuclear policy;
- Emissions reduction over time and meeting Australian obligations under the Paris Agreement and increases in emissions in recent years;
- Meeting the renewable energy targets by 2030, and the associated projections on emissions, changes to those emission projections based on the introduction of the fuel efficiency legislation in 2024;
- Large emission facilities and coverage by the Safeguard Mechanism and the Clean Energy Regulator;
- Development of the terms of reference for the expert methane reporting panel;
- Methane reporting – best methods to measure and monitor methane emissions, simulating controlled release of methane from an open cut mine;
- Methane emission reduction pledge, and steps being taken to meet obligations under it;
- Expansion of renewable energy infrastructure to meet growing demand in coming years;

- Pumped hydro and renewable energy investment in Queensland, and department discussions with the Queensland Government; and
- Offshore wind matters – status of the proposals, any new proposals and feasibility licenses issued.

Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) – Commenced at 12.22 pm, Concluded at 12.51pm

- International investment in Australian energy;
- Manufacturing and assembly of solar panels in Australia;
- Large scale battery projects – status of current projects; and
- Purpose and goals of the agency and the remuneration of the SES.

Clean Energy Finance Corporation – Commenced at 1.47pm, Concluded at 2.17pm

- Funding of Rewiring the Nation, Household Energy Upgrade Fund and the Powering Australia Fund; and
- Funding allocations and budgeting for energy transmission projects.

Climate Change Authority (CCA) – Commenced at 2.17pm, Concluded at 3.12pm

- Integrated Systems Plan – The cheapest pathway to replace ageing energy generation infrastructure, included incorporating the emissions and reductions targets of the government;
- Clean Energy Finance Corporation’s aim, employment statistics, budget including grants, and salary;
- Rewiring the Nation Fund’s guidelines and funding; and
- CCA’s role in target reduction and communications with the government.

Snowy Hydro – Commenced at 3.12pm, Concluded at 3.44pm

- Movement of the Florence Drill - update on meeting tunnelling targets; and
- Timeline for the testing of one of the hydrogen/diesel generators on site.

Clean Energy Regulator (CER) – Commenced at 3.59pm, Concluded at 4.49pm

- Beef herds, ACUs, and the oversight of the CER;
- Role and responsibilities of the CER, and the breakdown of staff;
- Findings of the Chubb review; and
- Human induced land regeneration.

Australian Energy Regulator (AER) -Commenced at 4.49pm, Concluded at 5.37pm

- Energy hardship in Australia;
- The Australian Energy Market Operator’s responsibilities and their relationship with the AER; and
- Usage of smart meters across Australia, the benefits to the general population from their adoption and comparison between Victoria and other parts of the country.

Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner – Commenced at 5.37pm, Concluded at 5.58pm

- Land footprint of various forms of energy generation; and
- Progress of the Dyer Report and implementation of recommendations.

The Offshore Infrastructure Regulator (OIR) and Offshore Infrastructure Registrar (OIR)– Commenced at 5.58pm, Concluded at 6.13pm

- Role of the OIRs in relation to permits and decision making for offshore wind projects.

DCCEEW – Outcome 2, Program 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 – Commenced at 7.00pm

- Vulcan South Coal mine – alleged illegal activity involving bulldozing native habitat;
- Applications for listing threatened ecological communities in the Macquarie marshes and downstream of the Murray Darling River and associated aquatic floodplains;
- Proposal for a development in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, and requirements for it under *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*;
- Department survey/in person examination of the sites of the McPhillamy's Tailings Dam and Gold Mine as part of the EPBC assessment. Concerns of Indigenous Australians with regard to the river, and the cultural significance it holds to them;
- TSSC decisions surrounding the Maugean Skate, submissions received from the public and the decision to extend the period of consideration for increasing the listing of the Skate from endangered to critically endangered;
- Government investment in the maintenance and establishment of Indigenous Protected Areas;
- Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Middle Arm Industrial Precinct, extension of the NT EPA's assessment of the site until 2026. Interactions between the department and the NT Government in relation to the site;
- Invasive Fire Ant spread in Australia and the impacts of eradication measures on local ecosystems;
- Communications between the department, the TSSC and the minister in relation to conservation information about the Maugean Skate;
- Changes to West Australian Indigenous Heritage laws, and a UN committee saying those changes could constitute a breach of the racial discrimination convention;
- Facial tumour disease in Tasmanian Devils and mitigation strategies from the department;
- EPBC assessment of critically endangered grey nurse sharks, issues surrounding sharks caught in nets;
- Progress on the government response to the committee's inquiry into Climate-related marine invasive species that was recently completed;
- Interdepartmental collaboration on the statutory 5-year review of the *Recycle and Waste Reduction Act 2020*; and
- Costings of the Global Nature Positive Summit, support offered to the relevant ministers from Pacific-Island Nations to attend.

Threatened Species Scientific Committee – Commenced at 10.21pm

- Data which informed the TSSC recommendations regarding the conservation efforts for the Maugean Skate;
- Impact of salmon farming in the Macquarie Harbour on the Maugean Skate;
- TSSC decision to request an additional twelve months for consideration of the uplisting of the Maugean Skate's endangered status;
- TSSC views and prioritisation on the applications for listing threatened ecological communities in the Macquarie marshes and downstream of the Murray Darling River, and the land area that is captured by those applications; and
- Impact on farmers of conservation decisions handed down by the minister.

The committee will next meet at 9.00am on Tuesday, 5 November 2024 in Committee room 2S3 for examination of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, excluding Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development.