

Essential News

Latest news from the Essential Services Commission

July 2025

Our 2025–29 Strategic Plan released

We are pleased to announce the launch of our 2025–29 Strategic Plan.

The plan was developed in consultation with stakeholders across government, our regulated sectors, consumer and community groups.

It outlines our new vision: **Fair and dependable essential services, today and tomorrow** and our purpose to promote the long-term interests of Victorian consumers.

[Read more](#)

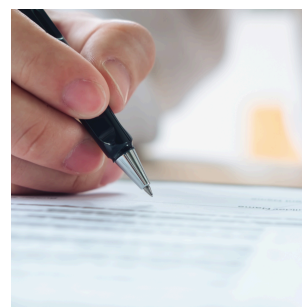


Our 2025–26 Regulatory Priorities released

This week, we have also released our 2025–26 Regulatory Priorities, which sets out how we will deliver on the outcomes and impact areas in our 2025–29 Strategic Plan to promote the long-term interests of all Victorians.

This includes sector-specific actions by impact area and the following five priorities for compliance and enforcement:

1. Take action to address practices that exacerbate cost of living pressures.
2. Hold businesses accountable when they fail to provide consumers experiencing vulnerability with fair and equitable access to essential services.



3. Deter conduct that increases the likelihood and impact of harm to customers affected by family violence.
4. Address conduct that compromises market integrity.
5. Focus on conduct impacting Victoria's First Nations people.

We encourage all regulated businesses to put these priorities at the centre of their practice, to prevent harm in these areas.

[Read more](#)

2025–26 water prices approved for Victorian water businesses

We have this week confirmed the maximum prices Victoria's 18 water businesses can charge their customers for specific services in 2025–26.

The average annual water bill for owner-occupier households will increase by around \$32 in Melbourne and by around \$33 in regional Victoria (compared to 2024–25).

Water bills vary depending on factors such as water usage, changes in borrowing costs and inflation. Inflation (2.4%) is the main driver for the increase in 2025–26 owner-occupier bills.



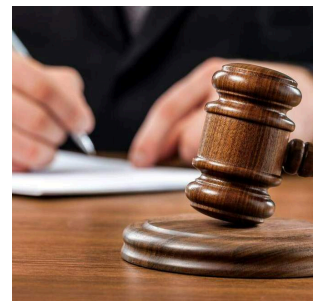
[Read more](#)

Energy retailer fined \$341,724 for illegal telemarketing

Energy retailer CovaU Pty Ltd (trading as CovaU) has been fined \$341,724 for alleged unlawful cold-call telemarketing that aimed to win back former customers.

We allege that between February 2023 and March 2024, CovaU contracted a third party to cold-call former customers and offer short-term discounts to entice them back, otherwise known as 'win-back' offers.

Cold-calling and win-back offers were banned in 2021 as part of a suite of changes to protect Victorian energy customers from high-pressure sales tactics.



[Read more](#)

Cap on council rates continues to benefit ratepayers

We have now released our 2025 Local Government Outcomes Report, which shows most local councils remain in good financial health and ratepayers continue to benefit from council rate caps.

Rate capping is a system that limits the amount Victorian councils can increase their average rates by each year. The Minister for Local Government sets the rate cap, which applies to all councils.

We report on the outcomes of the rate capping system every two years to identify any emerging trends across the local government sector and any other impacts of the caps on the sector.

[Read more](#)



Review of electricity distributors' emergency preparedness and customer communication

We recently completed our review of the systems and processes Victoria's electricity distributors have in place to deliver reliable and timely information to their customers during unplanned outages and emergencies.

This includes provisions for people who rely on electricity for their life-support equipment.

The review forms part of our proactive compliance program. It required electricity distributors to demonstrate their ability to respond to unplanned outages and future extreme weather events, with respect to the Electricity Distribution Code of Practice rules.

[Read more](#)



Inquiry into Port of Melbourne rent setting process released

A report into the findings of our second inquiry into the Port of Melbourne's (the Port) approach to rent negotiations has been tabled in the Parliament of Victoria recently.

The inquiry found that, while the Port has power in the setting and reviewing of land rents, it has not

exercised this power to the material detriment of Victorian consumers.



[Read more](#)

New guideline to help water businesses address billing issues

We published new guidance on how water businesses may recover money from customers who have been undercharged on bills.

The new guideline provides advice on:

- common causes for undercharging
- how to best notify a customer they have been undercharged
- how to recover an undercharged amount from a customer.



[Read more](#)

Consultations

We're currently seeking feedback on:

- [Review of New Customer Contributions](#) - consultation closes 22 July 2025

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