



[View this email in your browser](#)

# Essential News

Latest news from the Essential Services Commission  
February 2021

Welcome to Essential News, our regular update on key decisions, releases and events from the Essential Services Commission.

## Alinta Energy pays more than \$1 million in penalties

Alinta Energy has paid penalties of \$1.125 million for allegedly putting conditions on providing help to distressed customers despite the requirements of Victoria’s energy rules.

We issued the energy retailer with 75 penalty notices after we found Alinta caused distress to vulnerable customers by making them provide financial information before agreeing to set up payment plans.

[Read our media release →](#)



## Water customer hardship applications up

Hundreds of Victorian water customers are continuing to receive assistance to cope with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, according to

## Council rate cap set for 2021-22 at 1.5 per cent

After receiving advice from the commission, the Minister for Local Government, Shaun Leane announced in December that [council rates will be capped at 1.5 per cent](#) for the 2021-22 financial year. Councils have until 31 March 2021 to [apply for an increase above the cap](#).

Our [2020-21 council compliance report](#) showed 16 of the state's 79 councils kept rates steady for 2020-21 due to the coronavirus pandemic.



## Faster electricity connections for new developments

We are continuing work to ensure faster and more transparent electricity connections at new Victorian housing developments. Distribution businesses recently submitted customer service standards following our review addressing

our latest data covering December 2020 and January 2021.

[View the latest data →](#)

extensive wait times for connections in greenfield development areas.

[Find out more →](#)

---

## Final feedback on port pricing methods before 2021 review

We provided preliminary feedback in December on the methods used by the Port of Melbourne to demonstrate compliance with the government's pricing order. The annual commentary on the port's tariff compliance statement comes ahead of an inaugural review of the port's compliance with the pricing order this year.

[Read our commentary →](#)

---

## Water customers feel supported and more satisfied

Our 2019-20 water performance report shows Victoria's water businesses responded to the needs of their customers in a year that saw more needing help because of bushfires and the coronavirus pandemic.

[View the report →](#)

## Spotlight on ...

### Regulating with vulnerability in mind

We are developing a strategy for how we regulate to support the interests of Victorian consumers experiencing vulnerability. The strategy will set a pathway for a consistent, coordinated and long-term approach across our regulatory functions.

[Read more about the strategy →](#)

## Consultation

We're currently seeking feedback on the following documents:

- [Maximum Energy Retail application for electricity retail licence](#) - closes 25 February
- [GEE Power & Gas application for electricity and gas retail licences](#) - closes 11 March

[Visit our consultations page →](#)

