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# Essential News

Latest news from the Essential Services Commission  
March 2021

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

## Dip in prices on cards following price review

A small dip for household water bills is on the cards after a [review of Melbourne Water's pricing plan](#).

Our draft decision, now out for public comment, proposes a \$14 million cut to Melbourne Water's proposed annual revenue, which should shave average household bills by \$7 a year.

[Find out more and have your at Engage Victoria](#)



## Environmental and cost benefits the big incentives for solar panels

Environmental and cost benefits of rooftop solar panels remain strong incentives for renewable energy despite a reduction in the feed-in tariff rate.

## Energy reforms simplifying energy deals

Our reforms to Victoria's energy industry are delivering a less confusing market, according to the latest report from the state's independent economic regulator.

The March Victorian energy market update shows changes to the energy rules have helped simplify the market, making it easier for consumers to compare energy deals.

[Find out more about the report →](#)



## Water hardship rising to new heights

The number of households needing help with water bills has hit a new peak as the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic continues to be felt across the state.

A 30 per cent drop in the wholesale cost of electricity generation is the main reason for our decision to reduce rates.

[Find out more about our decision →](#)

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## Charging into a renewable future

Victoria's booming renewable energy sector is getting a shot in the arm as we cut red tape for new power generators and retailers to fast track their entry into the market. The changes could halve the time it takes to process licence applications.

[Find out more about the reforms →](#)

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## Calls for help with bills higher than peak of pandemic

Representatives from leading community support organisations told us at our latest community roundtable on 5 March 2021 that more Victorians are reaching out now for help than at the peak of the coronavirus pandemic.

The group, representing 11 organisations helping households and small businesses struggling to pay energy and water bills said the economic fallout of the pandemic is far from over.

[Read more about the roundtable →](#)

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## Spotlight on ...

### Solar panels and the minimum feed-in tariff

With the reduction in the minimum feed-in tariff energy companies pay for power exported to the grid, there are a lot of questions about how it all works. We've addressed some of the main questions in a series of recent articles:

- [Why is the minimum feed-in tariff going down in 2021-22?](#)
- [The difference between the minimum feed-in tariff and retail energy prices](#)
- [The relationship between solar panels and the minimum feed-in tariff](#)

Our latest data shows the number of metropolitan customers being given hardship grants in February was higher than at any time over the past year.

[View the latest water customer data →](#)

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## New standards aim to reduce delays to connect new housing

We have signed off on new service standards from electricity distributors aimed at slashing the time it takes to connect new housing developments to power.

Removing sluggish connection processes will provide a boost for developers at a critical time.

[Find out more about the new standards →](#)

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## Consultation

We're currently seeking feedback on the following documents:

- [Melbourne Water price review](#) - closes 4 May

[Visit our consultations page →](#)

