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Essential News

Latest news from the Essential Services Commission
May 2021

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

Call for submissions on Telstra Energy licence applications

We are [assessing an application from Telstra Energy](#) (Retail) for a licence to sell electricity and a licence to sell gas to Victorian consumers.

In line with legislative requirements and to facilitate a fair and open process in relation to a licence application that may have a significant impact for Victorian consumers, we are calling for feedback from the community through Engage Victoria.

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



Have your say on 2022 Victorian Default Offer

We have kicked off our review of the Victorian Default Offer to apply from 1 January 2022,

Breaking down the barriers to essential services

In a national first for a regulator, [we have released a draft strategy](#) aimed at breaking down the barriers many face in accessing essential services.

Submissions close on 20 June 2021.

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



Attempted fraud of VEU program to be referred to police

A case involving an alleged attempt to defraud Australia's biggest energy efficiency certificate scheme will be referred to police.

The attempted fraud came to light when an eagle-eyed member of the public tipped us off that some electricians were faking the before-

[releasing a consultation paper](#) that sets out our proposed approach.

Submissions close on 16 June 2021.

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

Consumers urged to connect as energy debt rises

Increasing debt for Victorians struggling to pay their energy bills is just one part of the story behind new data we released last week.

We have completed a review of 12 months of data showing the impact of the pandemic on energy hardship for Victorian households and small businesses.

[Read the report →](#)

Punitive pay-on-time discounts a thing of the past in Victoria

Our reforms to energy contracts have reduced the amount energy retailer can charge customers who do not make their payment on time to 3.1 per cent – a reduction of 0.52 per cent.

Executive director of energy Sarah Sheppard said the cap had been designed to protect Victorians from being stung by a high penalty price if they miss a bill payment.

[Read our media release →](#)

Spotlight on ...

Our new executive director of energy, Sarah Sheppard

We're pleased to welcome Sarah Sheppard as our new executive director of energy.

Sarah has a clear focus on promoting the rights of Victorian energy consumers and brings with her extensive experience as a lawyer, regulator and policy maker.

[Watch Sarah's introductory video →](#)

photographs to inflate the benefits of lighting upgrades in farm sheds in regional Victoria.

[Find out more →](#)

Council rate cap benefits ratepayers, report finds

Our latest report on Victoria's council rate capping system has found ratepayers on the whole are benefitting while councils were in a good place financially to respond to the initial impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Fact sheets and an interactive dashboard on each council's revenue, expenditure and financial sustainability before and after rate capping are also available.

[No councils applied for a higher rate cap](#) above the approved 1.5 per cent for the 2021–22 financial year.

[Read the report →](#)

Powershop pays \$300,000 for allegedly discriminating against solar customers

Powershop has paid penalties totalling \$300,000 for allegedly discriminating against Victorian households with rooftop solar.

We found the energy retailer, under its Kogan Energy brand, offered solar customers more expensive plans than non-solar customers, which goes against the state's energy rules.

[Find out more →](#)

Consultation

We're currently seeking feedback on the following documents:

- [Victorian Default Offer price review 2022](#) – closes 16 June
- [Regulating with consumer vulnerability in mind: draft strategy](#) – closes 20 June
- [Telstra Energy application for electricity and gas retail licences](#) – closes 1 July

[Visit our consultations page →](#)

