Attachment 3

Australian Government | Net Zero Economy Authority

OFFICIAL

Senate Estimates October 2025 – Net Zero Economy Authority – Opening Statement from CEO David Shankey

Chair, Senators - thank you for the opportunity to appear today.

The Net Zero Economy Authority exists because the Parliament asked us to tackle one of the most complex challenges in Australia's history - how we move to a net zero while providing a better future for industrial regions, their communities and workers.

We have three core missions that guide our efforts across the organisation:

1. Help workers in coal and gas facilities affected by the transition to prepare for and find new well paid, safe and secure jobs.
2. Support communities significantly affected by the transition to net zero to prosper, including through economic development and investment.
3. Be a trusted and influential voice to build understanding of, and shape policy on, the regional net zero transition.

Our purpose is to make sure the people and communities who have powered Australia for generations are supported as our energy system evolves.

We are guided by three core principles:

- Act where we have levers - delivering programs and frameworks that drive real outcomes.
- Partner in regions - working with local leaders, councils, unions, and industry so the solutions are shaped by the people most affected.
- Influence nationally - providing trusted advice, aligning policy, and ensuring investment flows where it's needed most.

These are complex problems with no shortcuts. But in less than a year since our establishment in December 2024, we've built the foundation to deliver. We've recruited specialist teams, stood up our core programs, built an evidence base through our *Regional Identification Framework*, and we're now operating priority regions.

In the Hunter, we've been meeting with workers at the Eraring Power Station ahead of its closure. These communities have been the backbone of Australia's industry for decades Through the Energy Industry Jobs Plan, we're consulting directly with them and their unions to design the support they need: personalised pathways, retraining options, and access to secure, well-paid jobs in the industries emerging around them.

In Central Queensland, the scale is enormous - four coal-fired stations, 24 safeguard facilities, and more than half the State's safeguard emissions. We're working throughout Central Queensland to understand community needs and harness the region's industrial strength.

In Collie, we're walking alongside a community where every household is touched by the closure of its coal mines. The Western Australian Government has made the call to exit coal by 2030. We're working closely with state and local communities to prepare for the closure of Collie Power Station to ensure local workers are supported.

In Latrobe Gippsland, three coal stations - Yallourn, Loy Yang A, and Loy Yang B - together emit more than 38 million tonnes of CO_2 each year, 75 percent of Victoria's safeguard emissions. Closers of these power stations will impact the local workers and community. We are here to ensure these closures are well-managed and workers are prepared.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

In the Upper Spencer Gulf, where Whyalla, Port Pirie and Port Augusta together produce a third of South Australia's safeguard emissions, we're working with industry and the state on major transformation projects.

And in the Pilbara, one of the world's largest industrial regions, 68 percent of WA's safeguard emissions come from heavy industry. But it's also where over $60 billion in clean energy projects proposed, we are taking a 'project-based' approach to encourage investment in the region, ensuring economic opportunities continue to arise in the Pilbara.

On the delivery front, we've already rolled out the Energy Industry Jobs Plan consultations in the Hunter and Torrens Island, completed the first Regional Identification Framework, initiated investment partnerships with state and international stakeholders, and stood up our corporate systems.

We are only at the start, but we have been in power stations, in town halls, in union rooms, and in council chambers - listening, planning, and acting with the people who've built this country's energy system.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Net Zero Economy Authority - October 2025 Estimates Index

Issue
1. Key Achievements and Challenges
2. Chair and Board
3. Regions
3.1 Central Queensland
3.2 Collie – Western Australia
3.3 Pilbara – Western Australia
3.4 Hunter – New South Wales
3.5 Latrobe Valley – Victoria
3.6 Upper Spencer Gulf – South Australia
Attachment A: Regional demographic profiles
4. Energy Industry Jobs Plan
4.1 Overview of Part 5
4.2 Regulatory Approach
4.3 Redeployment Program
4.4 Torrens Island B Community of Interest Process
4.5 Eraring Community of Interest Process
4.6 Review
4.7 Monitoring and Evaluation
5. First Nations
6. Communications and Engagement
7. Corporate Matters
Attachment A: Finance, staffing and property
Attachment B: Procurements
Attachment C: FOI
8. Supplementary Information
Senate Order 21
Questions on Notice 0036 – Four events in Hunter and Gladstone – breakdown of $527,000 spend (Feb 2025) 0434 – Agency Expenditure – Media Monitoring Services (Feb 2025) 0138 – Net Zero Economy 'Authority' Versus 'Agency' – CEFC and Arena (May 2024)
October 2025 Ministerial Hot Issues Brief
DISR Additional Info Briefs – Metals Processing Sector Issues and Aluminium Sector
Economic Reform Roundtable Submission
Select Committee on Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy Submission
Hansard extract from February Estimates appearance

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES

Key Messages:

Some highlights include:

- Since commencement of the Net Zero Economy Authority (the Authority) on 11 December 2024, the Board has met 5 times [as at 31 August 2025].
- The Stakeholder Panel has been established and as at 31 August 2025 had met twice.
- Assessments under the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP) for closing power stations have commenced.
- The Community of Interest process for the Eraring Power Station is well advanced. Assessments will commence shortly for the Collie and Yallourn Power Stations [as at 31 August].
- The 12-month review of the EIJP (as required under the NZEA Act 2024) commenced in June 2025 with the appointment of Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM as the reviewer.
- The Authority has built productive relationships in its key priority regions: the Hunter, Upper Spencer Gulf, Latrobe, Collie, Gladstone/Central Queensland and Pilbara.
- The Authority delivered a Net Zero Economic Transformation Campaign in the Hunter and Gladstone/Central Queensland between September and December 2024, and February 2025 until the Federal election was called.
- The CEO has met with leaders of comparable organisations from Germany, Spain and Scotland to learn from international experience.
- The Authority is progressing the Government's $5m commitment for masterplans for 2 Hunter Mine sites to help determine post-mining land use opportunities to attract new investment, grow industry and create local jobs to support the long-term development of the Hunter economy.

Our immediate priorities include:

- Regulatory guidance, which is being finalised to provide clarity on implementation of the EIJP.
- Regional engagement, including partnerships with state governments, industry and community organisations, especially in the Hunter, Latrobe and Collie.
- Building an understanding of the net zero transition, and the specific opportunities and challenges faced by communities and industry nationally and in different regions.
- Developing and delivering Regional Workforce Transition Plans with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and state governments – the 2024-25 Budget set aside $81.4 million for this.
- Identifying and facilitating investment opportunities that support the transition to net zero, especially in Collie, Latrobe and Hunter.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Why does the Authority exist?

- The Authority was established to promote an orderly and positive economic transformation, facilitate achievement of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets and support regions, communities and workers to manage the impacts, and share the benefits, of Australia's transition to a net zero emissions economy.
    - The envisaged transition is ambitious and must be inclusive, balancing economic prosperity, workforce security and regional development in a decarbonising economy.
- The Authority has a unique role to support the economic transition, we are taking an evidence and place-based approach to our work.
- In addition to Jobs Plan community of interest assessments, including for those currently active in Torrens and Eraring power stations, the Authority is focusing on industrial regions that are particularly exposed to change as the world decarbonises.
    - These include the Hunter, Latrobe, Central Queensland, Collie, the Pilbara and the Upper Spencer Gulf.
- Decarbonisation efforts in Australia and across the world are driving economic change and actively managing this change ensures Australia's regions and workers can capture the benefits and can be supported as they transition away from emissions-intensive jobs and industries.
- The Authority will work with local communities, workers, and local and state governments.

There are already transition planning processes in regional communities. What is the value add that the Authority is bringing? Doesn't your involvement risk bringing a top-down, Canberra-centric approach and duplicate existing effort?

- The Authority is working, and will continue to work, closely with relevant state governments, consistent with the National Transformation Principles agreed by National Cabinet in December 2022, and the community benefit principles outlined as part of the Government's Future Made in Australia Agenda
- Federal, state and territory and local governments and regional transition entities all have roles to play in managing the net zero economic transformation.
- The job of the Authority is to help ensure the government supports necessary to achieve the transition to net zero are happening in a coordinated way by avoiding duplication and filling gaps that state and local government efforts cannot address alone.
    - This includes enhancing existing efforts by bringing together all levels of government, industry, unions, and community to tailor transition strategies to local needs and voices.

How will we measure our success? How will you know how the transition is progressing?

- The Authority has published its performance measures for 2024-25 and for 2025-26.
    - Key metrics for 2025-26 involve the number of workers successfully transitioned, success of engagement in regions, effectiveness of investment facilitation, and stakeholder satisfaction.
    - Just like the organisation itself, our performance measures will evolve and mature over time.
- In addition, the Authority is undertaking ongoing work to ensure it builds a detailed understanding of its priority regions, communities and the people who work and live there.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- The Authority is developing a monitoring and reporting framework so it can track and report on regional transitions over time.

How is the Authority supporting the Government's Future Made in Australia Agenda?

Specifics on the Future Made in Australia plan should be referred to either the Treasury (Front Door and Sector Assessments) or the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR).

- The Authority's work to promote an orderly and positive economic transformation supports the Government's Future Made in Australia agenda.
- The Authority is working closely with Treasury and other Departments on facilitating projects that build new industries and create jobs, supporting workers in emissions intensive jobs to find new opportunities, and working alongside communities so that they can participate in and share in the benefits of the transition.
- In relation to the Hunter, the Authority is engaging directly with NSW Government to identify opportunities for future industries and workforce. Minister Ayres has written to and received a reply from NSW government ministers on Future Made in the Hunter.

What is the Authority doing to ensure workers affected by transition have jobs to go to?

- The Authority will work with others in regional communities to identify employers who are interested in taking on workers who lose their jobs as a result of power station closures.
- This will includes employing a jobs coordinator on the ground in the regions closer to the time of scheduled power station closures and establishing dedicated jobs board to connect workers and employers.

Has the Authority undertaken any modelling, specifically on the impact the transition or 2035 target may have on regional communities?

Specifics on the 2035 modelling should be referred to either the Treasury or the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

- The Authority undertakes a range of analysis when evaluating the impact of closing power stations.
- This includes analysis of the local labour market and an assessment of regional transition pathways for impacted workers. We use this analysis to consider the transition supports which need to be provided to workers to help them prepare for and transition to new employment.
- The Authority is also doing analysis to understand how regional economies will transition over time. While the analysis differs by region, it indicates there are a range of transition pathways for workers.
- The Authority has engaged Oxford Economics Australia to look at labour market trends for the Hunter, Latrobe Valley and Central Queensland including:
    - potential career transition opportunities for workers in fossil fuel power stations and coal mines in these regions
    - opportunities to attract Net Zero aligned industries to invest in these regions.
- The initial contract was published on AusTender on 15 June 2025 [Value $365,530.00 (GST incl.)].
- The contract was varied to exercise options under the original contract. This variation was published on AusTender on 30 June 2025 [Revised value $534,490.00 (GST incl.)]

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- This analysis is intended to inform the Authority's regional engagement priorities and strategies and will be shared with regional stakeholders to help inform and refine regional priorities.
- It will also help inform the Authority's decisions relating to relating to the Energy Industry Job Plans (EIJP), as well as the design and deployment of related government supports.

Was the Authority consulted on the Net Zero Plan? What advice did the Authority provide?

- The Authority has been involved in interdepartmental committees informing development of the Net Zero Plan and accompanying 6 sector plans.
- The Climate Change Authority was responsible for providing the Government with advice about the 2035 emissions reduction target contained within the Plan.

What international engagement has the Authority undertaken? How is the Authority learning from international experience?

- In May 2025, the Authority's Board discussed the value of learning from international experiences with net zero transition and asked that the Authority establishes links with comparable entities in other countries.
- To date, the Authority has engaged with comparable entities in Germany, Spain and Scotland to share experiences.
- The Authority plans to build on these initial meetings, exploring engagement with other comparable institutions.
- The Authority is also exploring the potential to co-convene an international network of comparable bodies focused on practical exchange, with the Scottish Just Transition Commission.

What is the Authority doing to support Australia's COP31 bid and, if successful, how will it support Australia's hosting?

- The Authority is engaged in the whole-of-government COP31 coordination processes.
- If secured, the Authority will seek to contribute to achieving identified strategic objectives for the event, to showcase the Authority's work and achievements, and also leveraging the event to achieve outcomes in line with the Authority's missions and vision.

If asked about the timeliness of our responses to Questions on Notice

- Please refer to our response to Senate Order 21.
- The Authority provided responses to questions to the Minister's office for clearance in accordance with paragraph 4.15 of the Government guidelines for official witnesses before Committees.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Division:</td><td colspan="2">Policy and Communications Division</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Prepared by: Strategic Policy, Policy, Analysis and Board Branch

Mob: N/A Ext: N/A
Date: 5 September 2025</td><td colspan="2">Cleared by General Manager:
Linda Rademakers

Mob:
Date: 9 September 2025</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Consultation: all NZEA</td><td colspan="2">Date: 5 September 2025

Mob: n/a Ext: n/a</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Cleared by Division Head: John Connor</td><td>Date: 18 September 2025</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Cleared by a/g Chief Executive Officer: Travis Bover</td><td>Date: 24 September 2025</td></tr>
</table>

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

CHAIR AND BOARD

Key Messages:

- Board appointments took effect on 11 December 2024.
- Since establishment, the Board has held 5 Board meetings.
  - 12 December 2024 in Canberra
  - 14 February 2025 in Collie with stakeholder engagement on 13 February 2025
  - 2 April 2025 in Sydney
  - 14 May 2025 in Canberra
  - 9 July 2025 in Melbourne
- The Stakeholder Panel (the Panel) appointments took effect on 14 April 2025; the list of Panel members is available on the Net Zero Economy Authority's website.
- The Panel has held three meetings.
  - 30 April 2025 virtually
  - 9 July 2025 in Melbourne with the Board
  - 7 October 2025 virtually
- Remuneration for Board members is set by the Remuneration Tribunal, and is benchmarked to comparable government agencies. The Chair and Board members are appointed on a part-time basis. Remuneration for 2024-25 is:
  - Chair - $116,180 per year
  - Members - $58,100 per year
  - For comparison:
    - Remuneration for the ARENA Chair is set at $106,760 and for Board members at $53,390.
    - Remuneration for the Chair of the National Reconstruction Fund is set at $135,800 and for Board Members at $67,510.
    - These figures, and those of other public office holders, are published on the Remuneration Tribunal's website.
- Total expenditure (excluding remuneration) on the Chair and Board from 11 December 2024 (Establishment) to 31 August 2025 was $69,774.06.
  - Travel expenditure on the Chair and Board from 11 December 2024 (Establishment) to 31 August 2025 was $55,595.25.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- Board Members:
  - Dr Iain Ross AO, Chair (5-year appointment) - was interim Agency Head from 28 May 2024 to 10 December 2024)
  - Mr Tony Maher (5-year appointment)
  - Mr Mike Mrdak AO (5-year appointment)
  - Ms Anna Skarbek AM (5-year appointment)
  - Ms Zoe Whitton (3-year appointment)
  - Ms Michele O'Neil (3-year appointment)
  - Professor Robynne Quiggin AO (3-year appointment)
- The Board may have up to nine members. It will be a decision for Government whether it seeks to fill the two remaining roles on the Board. The Government will consider them in due course.
- Duration of appointments has been staggered to create the opportunity for orderly succession in membership. Appointments are a matter for the Government of the day.

Handling:

Questions in relation to the selection and appointment process and remuneration of the Board members (and CEO) should be referred to relevant colleagues at PM&C.

Why is the Chair not appearing before the Committee?

- Dr Ross is the part-time Chair of the Board. As the full-time Chief Executive Officer responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Authority, I am well placed to answer the Committee's questions. This reflects common practice for statutory agencies led by a governing board and CEO.

Do you think you have an appropriate mix of skills and expertise on the Board?

- The Board selection and appointment process was managed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, as our then portfolio department.

How many union members are on the Authority's Board?

- The Parliament mandated that there be at least two members with experience or expertise in the trade union movement on the Board.

The *Net Zero Economy Act 2024 (NZEA Act)* requires that one member has expertise in regional development. Who has been appointed to meet this requirement?

- The Board selection and appointment process was managed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, as our portfolio department at the time.
- Mr Mike Mrdak has extensive experience as a former senior leader in the Australian Public Service in regional development, regional service delivery, transport and communications.

How is the Board managing conflicts of interest?

- In line with existing obligations under the PGPA Act, section 26 of the *NZEA Act*, and the APS Code of Conduct, conflicts of interest are recorded, reviewed and managed.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- The Board adopted a conflict of interest policy at its first meeting that requires members to declare and manage conflicts.
- The policy is available on the Authority's website along with a register of interests.
- With the support of Maddocks, the Authority undertook a review of all Board members' public interest disclosures and agreed in May 2025 that the Chair, with support from the Authority will continue to manage potential, actual or perceived conflicts as and when they arise.

How much has been spent on travel and allowances for the Board, including the Chair?

	11 December 2024-30 June 2025 **All Board** (Chair)	**1 July 2025 – 31 August 2025** **All Board** (Chair)
Travel consisting of:		
Accommodation	**$3,539.08** ($1,558.62)	**$1,990.91**($1,204.54)
Airfares	**$28,490.54** ($4,082.70)	**$7,948.21** ($4,431.42)
Other Travel (including taxis, parking, unacquitted credit cards, car hire and fuel)	**$3,608.88** ($3,031.45)	**$2,646.90** ($2,219.32)
Meals and Incidentals (including travel allowances)	**$4,458.42** ($1,244)	**$2,005.08** ($1,333.00)
Travel /Booking Fees	**$745.64** ($303.45)	**$161.59** ($161.59)
Total Travel	**$40,842.56** ($10,220.35)	**$14,752.69** ($9,349.87)

How much has been spent total on the Board, including the Chair?

	11 December 2024-30 June 2025 **All Board** (Chair)	**1 July 2025 – 31 August 2025** **All Board** (Chair)
Expenditure consisting of:		
Travel	**$40,842.56** ($10,220.35)	**$14,752.69** ($9,349.87)
Freight - Board papers	**$681.86** ($0.00)	**$0.00** ($0.00)
Venue hire and office expenses	**$3,095.88** ($283.14)	**$8,041.02** ($0.00)
Other Miscellaneous (training)	**$0.00** ($0.00)	**$2,360** ($2,360)
Executive recruitment costs for CEO and Board	**$0.00** ($0.00)	**$0.00** ($0.00)
Total Expenses (excluding remuneration)	**$44,620.35** ($10,220.35)	**$25,153.71** ($11,709.87)

What has the Board done and what are its next steps?

- At its third meeting (2 April 2025) the Board agreed the Authority's vision and missions, it noted current and planned monitoring activities and the approach for the first Corporate plan.
- At its fourth meeting (14 May 2025) the Board received an update on the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP) in relation to the forthcoming closure of the Torrens gas-fired power plant and preparations for the Eraring closure and discussed how the Authority should work to facilitate investment and job creation in key regions.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- At its fifth meeting (9 July 2025) the Board met with the Panel to discuss barriers to investment. The Board agreed the interim emissions reduction plan and discussed the Authority's enterprise risks register.
- The agenda for its sixth meeting (scheduled for 15 October 2025), includes an update on the EIJP Review from Professor Green, discussion about opportunities and challenges for the transition in Latrobe Valley, discussion about a monitoring and reporting framework for the transition.
- The Board has committed to issuing communiqués following each of its meetings, which are available on the Authority's website.

How were members of the Stakeholder Panel appointed?

- The Board considered a number of peak and other interest groups relevant to the work of the Authority to ensure relevant representation and asked me (as CEO) to invite those key stakeholder to nominate a member for the Panel and make the appointments.
- Panel members were appointed for 2 years and the list of members is published on the Authority's website.

How will the Panel work with the Board/Authority?

- The Stakeholder Panel's Terms of Reference (ToR) outlines that the Panel is a two-way consultative forum with the Board. The ToR has been published on the Authority's website.

How many times has the Panel met?

- The Panel has met three times.
- At its first meeting on 30 April 2025 the Chair and Panel discussed the wide range of interests from Panel members in the work of the Authority.
- At its second meeting on 9 July 2025, with the Board, the Panel discussed barriers to investment in low carbon and net zero projects and its forward workplan.
- At its third meeting on 7 October 2025 the Panel was briefed by DCCEEW on Net Zero and Sector Plans, and opportunities and challenges for the transition in the Latrobe Valley.

Division:	Policy and Communications Division	
Prepared by: s47F **Mob:** **Ext:** **Date:** 10 September 2025	**Cleared by General Manager:** Linda Rademakers **Mob:** s47F **Ext:** **Date:** 11 September 2025	
Consultation: Corporate **Name:** s47F	**Date:** 10 September 2025 **Mob:** **Ext:**	
Cleared by Division Head: John Connor		**Date:** 18 September 2025
Cleared by a/g Chief Executive Officer: Travis Bover		**Date:** 24 September 2025

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

REGIONS

Key Messages:

- The *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024* states that in performing the Authority's functions, the Authority should prioritise communities, regions, industries and workers that are, or will be, significantly affected by Australia's transition to a net zero emissions economy (section 16(2)).
- Central Queensland, Collie and the Pilbara (Western Australia), Hunter (New South Wales), the Latrobe Valley (Victoria) and the Upper Spencer Gulf (South Australia) are current priority regions for the Net Zero Economy Authority (the Authority).
- The Authority priority regions were selected based on a set of criteria and assessment within an identification framework that considered each region's exposure to decarbonisation-related changes, its potential for industrial and economic transformation, and adaptive capacity.
- The Authority will work in partnership with all levels of government and key regional stakeholders, avoiding duplication while filling key gaps that state and council efforts alone cannot address through existing regional planning mechanisms.
- The Authority does not replace state and council efforts—it enhances them by ensuring all levels of government work together.
- Our work in priority regions will ensure that local voices are heard in national decision-making and transition approaches are tailored to a region's needs.

Why are you only focused on region [x]?

- The Authority is focusing its initial work in Central Queensland, Collie, the Hunter, Latrobe, the Pilbara and the Upper Spencer Gulf, but our work is not limited to these regions.
    - We expect that the Authority's regional focus will expand and change over time based on industry needs and policy priorities.
- Priority regions were selected based on a set of criteria that reflect the economic and social impacts of the energy transition. This analysis informed advice to Government. The first group of priority regions includes:
    - Central Queensland (QLD) – Two power stations expected to close before 2035 (Callide B 2031 and Gladstone 2035), heavy industry hub, numerous safeguard facilities, major opportunity to decarbonise and drive net zero economy.
    - Collie (WA) – Coal-dependent town with announced power station closures (Collie Power Station in 2027 and Muja D Power Station in 2029).
    - Hunter (NSW) – Eraring closure in 2027, 23 safeguard facilities, strong industrial base.
    - Latrobe Valley (VIC) – Yallourn closure in 2028, energy-intensive industries.
    - Pilbara (WA) – Mining and energy intensive, region, strong renewable energy and clean industry potential.
    - Upper Spencer Gulf (SA) – Resource rich, large existing renewable energy, strong potential for green iron, hydrogen and green industry reindustrialisation.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

How many priority areas are marginal electorates?

- The selection of the Authority's priority regions was informed by a set of criteria and assessment within a prioritisation framework that considered each region's exposure to decarbonisation-related changes, its potential for industrial and economic transformation, and adaptive capacity.
- The Authority developed a statistical framework which helped identify its regions of focus. The intent was not to develop a linear ranking, but to inform advice to the Australian Government.
- Regional identification was completed in two phases:
    - Phase one (May 2023) - was focused on the identification of regions based on their exposure to downside risks from decarbonisation.
    - Phase two (Dec 2023) - strengthened the Authority's understanding of the regions with the most potential to harness possible economic opportunities from decarbonisation.
- The framework has been underpinned by literature, data, and evidence from academia, researchers, and government policy settings and is published on the Authority's website.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

1. Central Queensland

What has the Authority achieved in the region to date?

- The Authority has established key relationships in the region, working with local government, industry, communities, and Regional Workforce Transition Officers to understand the opportunities and challenges that the net zero transition presents.
    - The 2024-25 Budget included funding for DEWR to engage a Regional Workforce Transition Officer to work directly with community in the region.

Why is Central Queensland a priority region?

- The selection of the Authority's priority regions was informed by a set of criteria and assessment within a prioritisation framework that considered each region's exposure to decarbonisation-related changes, its potential for industrial and economic transformation, and adaptive capacity.
- The region is a hub for mining and energy intensive industries, including four coal-fired power stations, two alumina refineries, one aluminium smelter, sixteen coal mines, three LNG terminals and other energy-intensive industries.
- Announced closure dates for coal-fired power stations include Callide B Power Station (now closing in 2031), Gladstone Power Station (closing 2035), Stanwell Power Station (closing 2043) and Callide C Power Station (no public closure date).
- According to published data from the Clean Energy Regulator, as of 2023-24, the region's 24 Safeguard Mechanism facilities accounted for 16% of Australia's safeguard scope 1 emissions[1].
- Industry in the region is actively planning for the net zero transformation, with emissions intensive facilities such as the Boyne Aluminium Smelter already taking action to decarbonise through Power Purchase Agreements with renewable energy projects.
- The Central Queensland region has comparative advantage in advanced manufacturing, circular economy, renewable energy and potential to create valuable new export commodities like green metals, which can transition the workforce, diversify the economy, and support a Future Made in Australia.
- See Attachment A for demographic and employment data.

How many times has the Authority visited the region and who have you met with?

- The Authority has visited the Central Queensland region on multiple occasions and met with a diverse range of stakeholders, including state and local governments, regional councils, Regional Workforce Transition Officers, First Nations groups, education providers, and industry and community groups.

Is the Queensland Government working with the Authority?

- The Authority has an established relationship with Queensland officials, however, the Queensland Government's energy policy development process is yet to provide clarity on key areas of potential collaboration. We look forward to the release of the Queensland Government's policy to provide clarity for policy makers, communities and investors.
- Nonetheless, the Authority is preparing a Central Queensland regional strategy based on consultations and advice from local governments, industry and the communities of Central Queensland.

[1] Source: Clean Energy Regulator; Safeguard facility reported emissions data 2023-2024; last updated 21 November 2024.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- **If asked about the Queensland Government's cancellations of wind farm projects.** The details of those decisions are matters for the Queensland Government.

What are the key projects in the region related to net zero, and what role (if any) does the Australian Government have?

- The Australian Government has supported a number of projects in the Central Queensland region. These include:
    - Alpha HPA has secured $400 million in new loans through the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility and Export Finance Australia to deliver Australia's first high-purity alumina processing facility in Gladstone, Queensland.
    - Rio Tinto and Sumitomo Corporation delivering the Yarwun Hydrogen Calcination Pilot Demonstration Program, supported by $32.1 million in funding from the Australian Government's Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA).
    - Queensland Alumina Limited (QAL) refinery energy efficiency upgrade supported by $93 million from the Powering the Regions Fund.
    - The National Renewable Energy Priority List (led by DCCEEW) includes 4 projects in Central Queensland: Gladstone grid reinforcement, Theodore Wind Farm, Queensland SuperGrid South and Boomer Green Energy Hub.
    - ***If asked about the CQ-H2 project refer detail of the CQ-H2 project to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.***
- Additionally, the Authority meets regularly with a range of proponents and investors to discuss investment opportunities including those with interests in the Central Queensland region. The nature of these discussions are commercial-in-confidence and disclosure of details would breach confidentiality.

Next steps

- The approach the Authority takes to supporting Central Queensland will be tailored to Central Queensland.
- The Authority is developing a net zero strategy for Central Queensland to ensure the region benefits from the net zero transition.
- The strategy will identify:
    - support pathways for decarbonisation
    - support the development of new green industries and manufacturing
    - support local SMEs realise the opportunities of the net zero economy
    - help workers move into new jobs as the economy changes
    - support Communities and First Nations peoples to benefit from the transition
    - build community understanding with the transition.
- The approach will take into account natural strengths such as its world class port, significant international interest in clean energy projects in the region, established enabling infrastructure and a large skilled industrial workforce.
- The Authority will take an approach that:
    - understands the issues, interconnections and relationships in Central Queensland, that coordinates action, policies and investment accordingly.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- identifies transformative projects, funding pathways, and enabling infrastructure requirements.
- is underpinned by a place-based approach to ensure the agenda is shaped by community input and builds long-term agency and trust.

- This work will draw on the multidisciplinary skill sets and consider priorities and activities across all of our functions.
  - The Authority will continue working with the Queensland State government, local councils, and with all relevant other stakeholders. We look forward to the clarity that the Queensland Energy Roadmap may bring for all stakeholders.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

2. Collie – Western Australia

What has the Authority achieved in the region to date?

- The Authority has established relationships with key regional stakeholders through regular consultations and visits, including with the Western Australian Government, the Collie Just Transition Working Group, unions, industry, and community groups.
- These engagements support us to identify and facilitate key development priorities and understand local needs and sensitivities to be addressed in the net zero transformation and economic development planning for Collie.
- In the 2024-25 Budget, the Government allocated funding for a Regional Workforce Transition Officer to work directly with the Collie community. This is part of a $134.2 million investment under the Net Zero Jobs Plan, including funding for DEWR to develop a Regional Workforce Transition Plan for Collie, in partnership with the Authority.

Why is Collie a priority region?

- The selection of the Authority priority regions was informed by a set of criteria and assessment within a prioritisation framework that considered each region's exposure to decarbonisation-related changes, its potential for industrial and economic transformation, and adaptive capacity.
- Collie hosts 3 coal-fired power stations, supported by two coal mines, and two safeguard facilities in the region - the Premier Coal Mine and the South32 Worsley Alumina refinery.
- The Muja C Power Station closed on 1 April 2025. Closure dates have been announced for Collie Power Station (2027), and Muja D Power Station (2029) both operated by Synergy. A closure at the Bluewaters Power Station (owned by Sumitomo Group and Kansai Electric) will also happen, however no closure date has been announced.
- Collie has two domestic coal mines that supply these power stations: Ewington (also known as Griffin) Mine and Premier Coal Mine. They will likely phase down as the power stations close, noting the Griffin coal mine is in administration and is being financially supported by the WA Government.
- According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2021 Census data, blue-collar jobs dominate Collie's workforce (76 per cent of workers compared to 49 per cent across Australia). The labour market concentration of machine operators, technicians and tradespeople, and labourers is far greater in the Collie region than nationally (by magnitudes of 260, 180 and 172 per cent respectively).
- See Attachment A for demographic and employment data.

How many times has the Authority visited the region and who have you met with?

- The Authority has visited the Collie region on multiple occasions, including the Authority's first regionally held Board meeting on 13-14 February, and has engaged with a range of diverse stakeholders in WA, including state and local governments, the Collie Just Transition Working Group, Regional Workforce Transition Officers, First Nations groups, education providers, unions, industry and community groups.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

What are the key projects in the region related to net zero, and what role (if any) does the Australian Government have?

- The Authority meets regularly with a range of proponents, investors and the WA Government to discuss investment opportunities. The nature of these discussions are commercial-in-confidence and disclosure of details would breach confidentiality.

Next steps

- The WA Government and the local Collie Just Transition Working Group are developing the next 5-year Collie Just Transition Plan (2026-30). The Authority is working with the WA Government and across the Commonwealth to identify any necessary and appropriate support.
- The approach the Authority takes to supporting Collie will be tailored to Collie. The approach will take into account natural strengths such as its existing role as an energy hub in the SWIS, skilled workforce and emerging clean industry interest.
- The Authority will take an approach that:
    - involves understanding the issues, interconnections and relationships in Collie, that coordinates action, policies and investment accordingly.
    - identifies transformative projects, funding pathways, and enabling infrastructure requirements.
    - is underpinned by a place-based approach to ensure the agenda is shaped by community input and builds long-term agency and trust.
- This work will draw on the multidisciplinary skill sets and consider priorities and activities across all of our functions.

Will the EIJP apply in the context of Collie's coal-fired power station closures?

- Collie Power Station, owned by state-owned corporation Synergy, is scheduled to close in October 2027.
- In coming months, the Authority will commence preparation for an EIJP assessment process for Collie Power Station ahead of this closure date, including initial engagements with relevant stakeholders.
- Muja Power Station, also owned by Synergy, is scheduled to close in 2029.
- The Authority will consider the role of the EIJP in context of Muja Power Station leading up to the scheduled closure in 2029.
- In December 2024, the CEO exercised his statutory discretion not to formally assess the closure of Muja C Unit 6 at Muja Power Station, a single generating unit at Muja Power Station (closing April 2025).
- The Authority will continue to monitor the status of Bluewaters Power Station (noting it does not have an announced closure date) to ascertain whether the EIJP may apply in future to that station closure.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

3. Pilbara – Western Australia

What has the Authority achieved in the region to date?

- The Authority has focused on facilitating clean energy opportunities in the region including green iron, hydrogen and renewable energy
- The Authority is also working closely with the WA Government to understand the needs required for net zero transformation in the Pilbara, including common-user grid infrastructure.

Why is Pilbara a priority region?

- The selection of the Authority priority regions was informed by a set of criteria and assessment within a prioritisation framework that considered each region's exposure to decarbonisation-related changes, its potential for industrial and economic transformation, and adaptive capacity.
- The Pilbara has 40 safeguard facilities, but also has significant potential to harness clean energy and green industry opportunities. It has significant renewable energy resources, world-class existing industry and enabling infrastructure, a highly compatible workforce, and sizeable clean energy investments.
- Challenges to the decarbonisation of the Pilbara economy include its remoteness, arid and cyclone-prone climate, export-market dependent economy, and limited common-use infrastructure and capability to integrate renewable electricity and hydrogen into existing operations at scale while remaining cost competitive.
- See Attachment A for demographic and employment data.

How many times has the Authority visited the region and who have you met with?

- The Authority visited Port Hedland and Karratha in June 2025 and met with a diverse range of stakeholders, including the Pilbara Ports Authority, Pilbara Development Commission and the Karratha and Districts Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
- The Authority also visited Perth to meet with WA Government officials and industry representatives to discuss matters related to the Pilbara.

What are the key projects in the region related to net zero, and what role (if any) does the Australian Government have?

- The Authority meets regularly with a range of proponents and investors to discuss investment opportunities. The nature of these discussions are commercial-in-confidence and disclosure of details would breach confidentiality.

Next steps

- The approach the Authority takes to supporting the Pilbara that will be tailored to the Pilbara.
- The Authority is collaborating with the WA Government to facilitate the development of nationally significant projects in the Pilbara.
- Our approach will include:
    - support pathways for decarbonisation
    - facilitating transformative projects
    - investigating the common-user infrastructure requirements for new industry
    - supporting local SMEs realise the opportunities of the net zero economy

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

  - supporting Communities and First Nations peoples to benefit from the transition
  - building community understanding with the transition.

- The approach will take into account the existing strengths of the region which include vast mineral wealth, major export infrastructure, a world class workforce and attractive and large scale renewable energy resources.
- The Authority will take an approach that:
  - Understands the issues, interconnections and relationships in the Pilbara that coordinates action, policies and investment accordingly.
  - identifies transformative projects, funding pathways, and enabling infrastructure requirements.
  - is underpinned by a place-based approach to ensure the agenda is shaped by community input and builds long-term agency and trust.
- This work will draw on the multidisciplinary skill sets and consider priorities and activities across all of our functions.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

4. Hunter – New South Wales

What has the Authority achieved in the region to date?

- The Authority has delivered a place-based communications campaign in the region in FY24-25 to increase understanding of Australia's transition to a net zero economy (see 6. Communications and Engagement brief).
- Undertaken a community of interest process for Eraring Power Station (see 4. Energy Industry Jobs Plan brief, 4.5 Eraring Community of Interest Process sub-brief)
- Undertaken regional consultation in August to inform a statutory review of Part 5 of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024*, the legislative underpinning for the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP)
- The Authority has established working relationships with key regional stakeholders through regular engagement, including with NSW Government agencies, local councils in the region, unions, industry, academia and community groups.
- Insights from these engagements are directly informing policy development, including Government's priorities in the region, a Regional Workforce Transition Plan (RWTP) for the Hunter with DEWR (in progress) and a post-mining land use project in Lake Macquarie and Muswellbrook.

Election commitment $5 million Masterplans for two Hunter mine sites

- As part of the 2025 Federal election campaign, the Government announced a commitment for $5 million, alongside in-kind support from the NSW Government, to fund master plans for post-mining land use for two mine sites in the Hunter region:
    - the buffer land surrounding the BHP Mt Arthur coal mine in Muswellbrook; and
    - the closed Glencore West Wallsend coal mine near Lake Macquarie.
- The Authority will partner with the NSW Government to work closely with Muswellbrook and Lake Macquarie Councils to deliver the master plans.
- The development of the master plans will help determine post-mining land use opportunities designed to attract new investment, grow industry and create local jobs to support the long-term development of the Hunter economy. Specifically, the projects will deliver the following deliverables:
    - Project Management Plan for each project will be prepared regarding these Deliverables.
    - Masterplan detailing future land use opportunities and site outcomes including an infrastructure delivery plan.
    - Rezoning of subject land. An amendment to the relevant NSW Environmental Planning Instrument.
    - Recommendations Report detailing to changes to acts, regulations and associated policies and procedures with the *Mining Act 1992* and *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, any other relevant Acts and all relevant steps associated with required reform.
    - Journey Map documenting and detailing the process experienced through both pilot projects.
- The Authority has received formal authority and budget approval from government for the master plans (in September) and we are proceeding with the process of delivering the funding to Council, via a Federation Funding Agreement with the NSW Government.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- The Authority is working with NSW with the objective of finalising an agreement as soon as practicable. Once the FFA schedule is signed by ministers it will be publicly available on the Federal Financial Relations website.

Why is the Hunter a priority region?

- The selection of the Authority's priority regions was informed by a set of criteria and assessment within a prioritisation framework that considered each region's exposure to decarbonisation-related changes, its potential for industrial and economic transformation, and adaptive capacity.
- The Authority developed a statistical framework which helped identify its regions of focus. The intent was not to develop a linear ranking, but to inform advice to the Australian Government.
- The Hunter region has a large number of workers in carbon-intensive industries and pockets of low adaptive capacity. The region has 3 of 4 of the coal-fired power stations in NSW, and 18 safeguard facilities.
- Coal-fired power stations in the region are due to close before 2035, comprising Eraring (2027), Bayswater Power Station (2033) and Vales Point Power Station (2033). Liddell Power Station closed in 2023.
- The Hunter is well positioned to share in the benefits of the net zero transition, with large green industry and manufacturing potential, a compatible skilled workforce, and established export and supply chain infrastructure.
- Further information on the Hunter Region is at Attachment A.

What is the approach to working with Hunter as a priority region?

- The Authority is committed to collaborating meaningfully with the Hunter community to develop shared priorities and plans for change, which reflect the local needs and aspirations, as well as identify the Authority's value-add in supporting the region's transformation and ensuring workers and communities share in its benefits.
- This approach involves understanding the issues, interconnections and relationships in the Hunter and coordinating action, policies and investment accordingly. Our principles are to:
    - leverage the unique strengths and address the diverse needs of regions and the often highly localised social, economic and environmental factors at play;
    - empower communities to contribute to enduring solutions which is central to improving long-term community resilience and First Nations self-determination;
    - break down silos across sectors and between levels of governments and portfolio departments, and join up policy, program and service responses to meet the needs of individuals and communities; and
    - restore trust, build social capital, increase accountability for outcomes, and maintain social licence for long term change.
- This work will draw on the multidisciplinary skill sets and consider priorities and activities across all of our functions.

How many times has the Authority visited the region and who have you met with?

- The Authority has visited the Hunter on multiple occasions and met with a range of diverse stakeholders, including Muswellbrook Shire Council, Singleton Council, Hunter Workers, Hunter Jobs Alliance, University of Newcastle, TAFE NSW, Wanaruah Local Aboriginal Land Council, AGL

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Liddell & Bayswater, BHP Mount Arthur, Youth Committee for the Hunter, and the Hunter Joint Organisation.

Does the Authority have an office in the Hunter region?

- The Authority has offices in Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane.
- An Authority staff member works remotely in the region at-present to support regular working level engagement. There are DEWR Regional Workforce Transition Officers based in Newcastle, who work closely with the Authority.
- The Authority's senior executive staff also travel regularly to the region, including a visit by the CEO in June 2025
    - The Authority is committed to regional engagement and sits on the executive committees overseeing the Lake Macquarie and Muswellbrook post-mining land use projects.

What are the key projects in the region related to net zero, and what role (if any) does the Australian Government have?

- The Authority meets regularly with a range of proponents and investors to discuss investment opportunities. The nature of these discussions are commercial-in-confidence and disclosure of details would breach confidentiality.

Next steps

- The Authority is working collaboratively with stakeholders to identify and shape a Future Made in the Hunter. It will host two workshops with stakeholders in the region on 17 (Singleton) and 20 October (Lake Macquarie) to:
    - consider the economic diversification and future growth opportunities, barriers and enablers, and the supports available and needed in the region to help shape the Hunter's future economy and workforce.
    - consider workforce transition opportunities and challenges facing the region, and discuss the existing and future programs and policies to address key needs.
    - hear first-hand from regional stakeholders to ensure community-informed priorities are appropriately reflected in future government plans and identify pathways for ongoing regional input into future programs and policy.
    - *If raised:* the Authority leveraged its strong relationships with regional stakeholders to ensure a broad cross-section of voices would be captured at the workshops, inviting over 200 representatives from over 120 organisations across industry, academia, unions and community and Indigenous bodies as well as Federal and State government agencies.
- Dynamic and market-driven considerations including energy price challenges and global market conditions remain at the forefront of difficulties being faced by aluminium production facilities around Australia.
- The Government is actively engaging with aluminium smelters, state governments, and other organisations to ensure we find solutions to the challenges facing the industry.
    - The Authority is working collaboratively with DISR to support this work.
- In January 2025, the Government announced the Green Aluminium Production Credit - a $2 billion commitment to support the sector to remain competitive while decarbonising its production processes.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- Further questions regarding the Tomago aluminium smelter and/or the Green Aluminium Production Credit should be directed to DISR.
- The Authority will continue to collaborate with DEWR and the NSW Government to establish a Regional Workforce Transition Plan for the Hunter, with intended delivery of the RWTP in 2025-26.
- The Authority is monitoring a redundancy process at Bayswater, to occur by the end of June. Media estimates up to 30 workers are impacted. DEWR advises that supports available to impacted workers includes training, self-employment options, career coaching and careers events.
- Eraring Power Station, owned by Origin Energy, is currently scheduled to close in August 2027.
    - In May 2025, the Authority commenced a formal EIJP assessment process for Eraring Power Station, including consultations in the region and a public submissions process.
    - For further information refer to EIJP – Eraring Community of Interest Process.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

5. Latrobe Valley – Victoria

What has the Authority achieved in the region to date?

- The Authority has established working relationships with key regional stakeholders through regular engagement, including with local and state government, community organisations, First Nations peoples, unions and industry.
- The Authority has been conducting regular bilateral discussions with the Victorian Government (including the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action and Regional Development Victoria) and with local government counterparts to shape a shared vision for the region, align on priority sectors, and identify practical actions that can be undertaken.
- The Authority undertook regional consultation in August to inform a statutory review of Part 5 of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024*, the legislative underpinning for the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP).

Why is Latrobe Valley a priority region?

- Latrobe was identified as a priority region for the Authority due to its exposure to decarbonisation-related changes, potential for industrial and economic transformation, and adaptive capacity.
- The Latrobe region has a substantial proportion of workers in carbon-intensive industries. The region has 3 scheduled closures of coal-fired power stations: Yallourn (2028), Loy Yang A (2035) and Loy Yang B (2047).

Next steps:

- The Authority's October Board meeting (14-15 October) will be held in Latrobe, providing opportunity for the Board to test the Authority's analysis to date with, and hear directly from local stakeholders.
- The Authority will continue targeted engagement and analysis to finalise an approach that identifies priority sectors, funding pathways, and enabling infrastructure requirements. This work is underpinned by a place-based approach to ensure the agenda is shaped by community input and builds long-term agency and trust.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

6. Upper Spencer Gulf – South Australia

What has the Authority achieved in the Upper Spencer Gulf to date?

- The Authority was asked by the Australian Government to lead the Commonwealth's engagement on the South Australian Government's State Prosperity Project (SPP). The SPP is a coordinated initiative to unlock the potential of renewable energy, critical minerals and green manufacturing in the Upper Spencer Gulf.
- The Authority has focused on two elements of the SPP :
    - The Hydrogen Jobs Plan (HJP) – large-scale hydrogen electrolysers and storage facilities, and a hydrogen and gas fuelled power station to firm the SA electricity grid and provide hydrogen to support green iron production.
    - This HJP was suspended following the Whyalla steelworks administration event, the steelworks being the planned cornerstone offtaker of hydrogen from HJP.
    - The Northern Water (NW) Project – a large-scale desalination plant and pipeline to provide water to the mineral rich areas in the north of the state and enable the expansion of copper production as well as supporting a range of other industries.
    - **Questions on the Whyalla steelworks administration should be referred to the Department of Industry, Science and Resources.**
- Further information on the Upper Spencer Gulf, including demographic information, can be found at Attachment A.

Who has the Authority spoken to in relation to the Upper Spencer Gulf and accessing this opportunity?

- The Authority has visited the USG on two occasions and met with a range of stakeholders.
- The Authority has met regularly with South Australian Government officials who lead on the State Prosperity Project.
- The Authority has met with DISR to keep abreast of the Whyalla steelworks administration providing input and support where applicable.

What are the next steps for the work of the Authority in the Upper Spencer Gulf?

- The approach the Authority takes to the USG will be tailored to the USG.
- The approach will take into account the USG's natural strengths such as significant interest in iron ore resources, long-term opportunities for hydrogen production, skilled workforce, export access and the role of major operators such as BHP's Olympic Dam.
- The Authority will take an approach that:
    - understands the issues, interconnections and relationships in Upper Spencer Gulf, that coordinates action, policies and investment accordingly.
    - identifies transformative projects, funding pathways, and enabling infrastructure requirements.
    - is underpinned by a place-based approach to ensure the agenda is shaped by community input and builds long-term agency and trust.
- This work will draw on the multidisciplinary skill sets and consider priorities and activities across all of our functions.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

If asked: Is a green iron industry in Whyalla realistic given the issues facing the steelworks?

- Refer to Department of Industry, Science and Resources, which is responsible.

If asked: Is the Authority involved in the support of the Nyrstar's Port Pirie operations?

- No. Refer to the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, which is responsible.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Attachments

- Attachment A: Regional profiles

<table>
<tr><td>Division:</td><td colspan="2">Regional Transformation Division</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Prepared by: Multiple – N/A

Mob: N/A Ext: N/A
Date: September 2025</td><td>Cleared by General Managers:
Josh Cosgrave & Sacha Edema

Mob: N/A Ext: N/A
Date 16 September 2025</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Consultation: Industry and Investment Division, Communications Branch, Worker Transition branch

Name: N/A</td><td>Date: N/A

Mob: N/A Ext: N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Cleared by Division Head: Travis Bover</td><td>Date: 24 September 2025</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Cleared by a/g Chief Executive Officer: Travis Bover</td><td>Date: 24 September 2025</td></tr>
</table>

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Government

Net Zero Economy Authority



Regional Profiles

Upper Spencer Gulf

Total Area: 56,076 sq. km **Population:** 68,180 **Working Zones:** Jamestown, Kimba-Cleve-Franklin Harbour, Peterborough-Mount Remarkable, Port Augusta and Quorn-Lake Gilles, Port Pirie and region, Whyalla and Whyalla North *(maps at end of profile)*

Region Selection Rationale

Exposure to decarbonisation	Potential to harness economic opportunities from decarbonisation
• **Carbon Intensity:** 4 safeguards, accounting for 34% of SA's scope 1 safeguard emissions • **Adaptive Capacity:** Very low in Upper Spencer Gulf, with Port Augusta, Port Pirie and Whyalla all sitting in the second lowest decile.	• **Natural capital:** Primarily concentrated in its strong renewable energy potential and its extremely high green industry potential, reflected in presence of existing industrial facilities. • **Workforce compatibility:** High proportion of workers in Whyalla are in jobs highly compatible with clean energy industries. There is moderate compatibility across the rest of the region. • **Enabling infrastructure:** Strong position - existing and proposed transport infrastructure. Construction projects include the $13 billion Port Bonython Hydrogen Hub, an announced new large-scale clean hydrogen production precinct for both export and domestic markets.

Carbon-Intensive Industries

Safeguard Facilities (Emit 100,000+ tonnes CO2 annually - power stations connected to grid are exempt)

Type	No.	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e (23/24)	% of SA scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)	% of Aus scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)
Liberty Primary Steel Whyalla Steelworks	1	1,191,510	21.7%	0.8%
Nyrstar Port Pirie Facility (multi-metals processing)	1	441,897	8.0%	0.3%
Port Bonython Plant (oil & gas extraction)	1	82,939	1.5%	0.1%
SIMEC Mining - Middleback Range Iron Ore Mine (Whyalla)	1	127,129	2.3%	0.1%
Total safeguards	4	1,843,475	33.5%	1.2%

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Major Industries

Gross Regional Product (GRP): $5.7 billion (4.0% of SA's Gross State Product)[1]

Ranked Industries with most value	Value (m)	% of GRP
Mining	$1,365.4	24.1%
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	$622.2	11.0%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	$509.9	9.0%
Health Care & Social Assistance	$499.0	8.8%
Manufacturing	$480.0	8.5%

Ranked Employing Industries (by usual residence[2])	No. of employees (% of workforce)	Ranked Employing Industries (by place of work[3])	No. of employees (% of workforce)
Total labour force living in region	28,160[4]	Total labour force working in region	27,016[5]
Health Care and Social Assistance	4,399 (16%)	Health Care and Social Assistance	4,392 (17%)
Retail & Wholesale Trade	3,257 (12%)	Retail & Wholesale trade	3,224 (12%)
Manufacturing	2,714 (10%)	Manufacturing	2,765 (11%)
Education & Training	2,514 (9%)	Education & Training	2,560 (10%)
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	2,301 (8%)	Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	2,179 (8%)

Major Investments

Major clean energy and heavy industry projects (excluding cancelled and completed) (top projects by value)

Project	Description	Category	Status	Value
Port Bonython Hydrogen Hub	A new large-scale clean hydrogen production precinct for both export and domestic markets	Green hydrogen	Announced	$13,000 m
Northern Water	A new desalination plant and 600km pipeline network to create a reliable water supply	Water	Feasibility	$5,900 m
Eyre Peninsula Gateway Project	A new electrolysis plant and an ammonia synthesis facility to supply domestic markets and support trial export shipments of renewables-based hydrogen to Asian markets	Green hydrogen	Under construction	$240 m
Vast Solar Port Augusta Concentrated Solar Thermal Power Project	A new solar Concentrated Solar Thermal Power (CSP) plant including energy generation and storage capacity	Renewable energy	Feasibility	$203 m

1 Data sourced using REMPLAN (incorporating ABS 2021 Census Place of Work Employment (Scaled); 2022 / 2023 National Input Output Tables; June 2024 Gross State Product figures)

2 Data by usual residence means only employees living in Upper Spencer Gulf region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually work in Upper Spencer Gulf).

3 Data by place of work means only employees working in Upper Spencer Gulf region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually reside in Upper Spencer Gulf).

4 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 27,305 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

5 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 26,185 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Transmission Infrastructure Projects

AEMO Final 2024 Integrated System Plan (ISP)

Name	Description	Status	Timing	Costs
Project EnergyConnect	New 330kV double-circuit interconnector between SA and NSW, with a new 220kV double-circuit line to Vic.	Committed (unchanged from Draft 2024 ISP)	Dec 2024 - Stage 1 (unchanged)	Approx. $2,300 m
Mid North SA REZ Expansion	New 275kV and 132kV transmission lines to connect renewable generation to Adelaide and to supply increasing industrial load	Actionable (progressed from Future in Draft 2024 ISP)	July 2027 – Stage 2 (previously July 2026)	$389 m (±50%) (in 2023 $ terms)
Mid North SA REZ Extension	New network investment project appearing for first time in AEMO ISP.	Future (listed for first time (i.e. not in Draft ISP))	2029-30 – both options (not in Draft ISP)	$70 m (±50%) for Option 1b. $350mn (±50%) for Option 1a

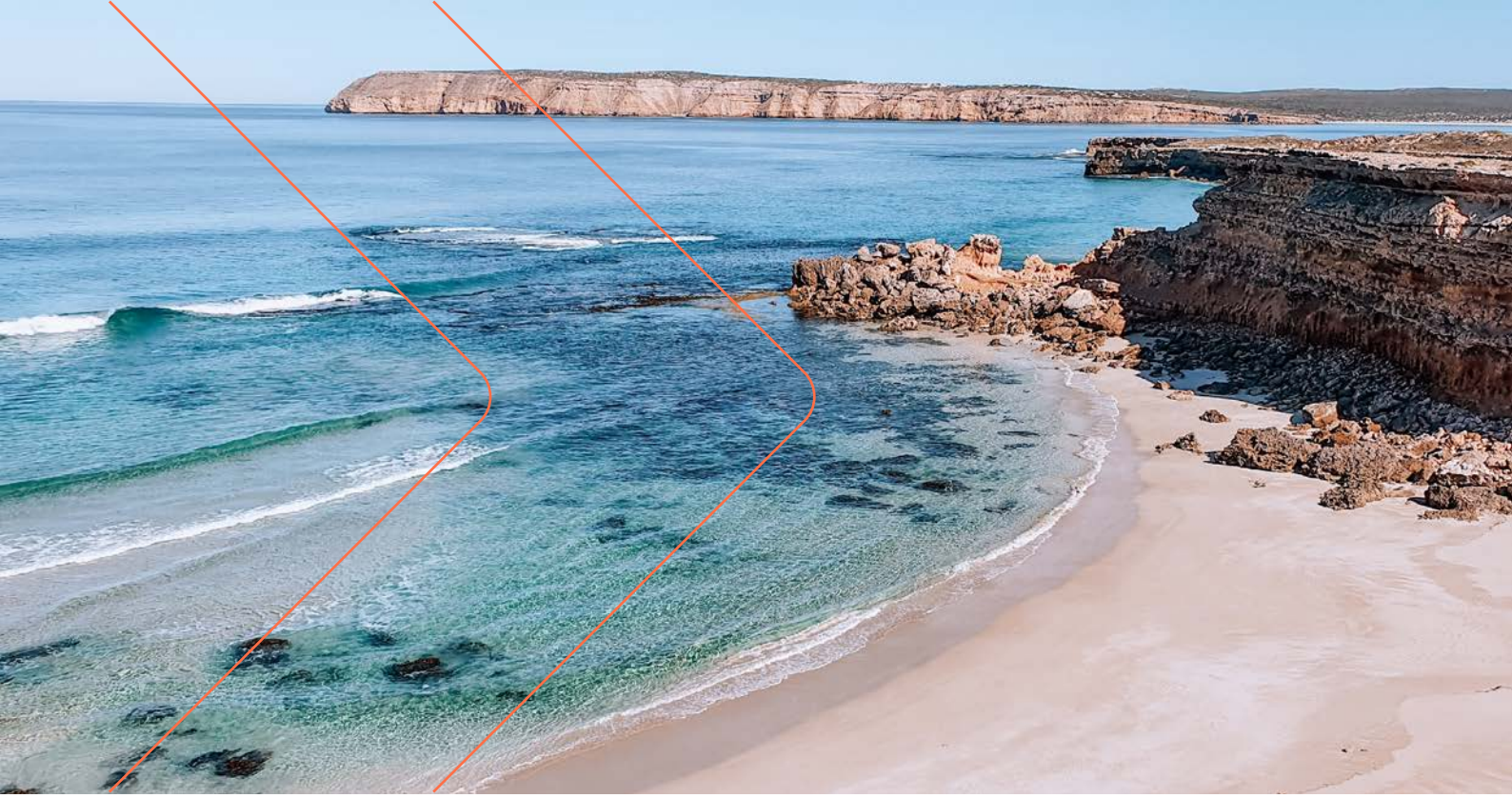
Employment

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)[6]	USG	SA
Average working age	41	39
Median income (annual gross, exc. super)	$26K - $33.8K	$33.8K - $41.6K
Participation in workforce	54%	60%
Female participation in workforce	51%	57%
Unemployment rate (Dec 2024)	5.8%	4.0%
Regional Labour Market Index (Mar 2025)	Poor[7]	N/A

6 Census data used here is based on 'usual residence' and not 'place of work'

7 This index of 'Poor' applies to the two SA4s (Barossa - Yorke - Mid North & South Australia – Outback) that cover all of the SA2s (Jamestown, Port Pirie, Port Pirie Surrounds, Kimba - Cleve - Franklin Harbour, Whyalla, Whyalla – North, Quorn - Lake Gilles, Port Augusta) in Upper Spencer Gulf. However, it is important to note both of those SA4s also cover SA2s that are not part of the regional definition of Upper Spencer Gulf.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 31 of 375



Demographics

Indicator (2021 Census)	USG	SA
Median age	43	40
First Nations (% of population)	8%	2%
Population growth (2016-2021)	-1%	6%
Educational attainment (% of population aged 15 & above):[8]		
• Below Y12	62%	44%
• Y12 or equivalent	38%	56%
• Cert III & IV	24%	19%
• Bachelor and above	11%	24%

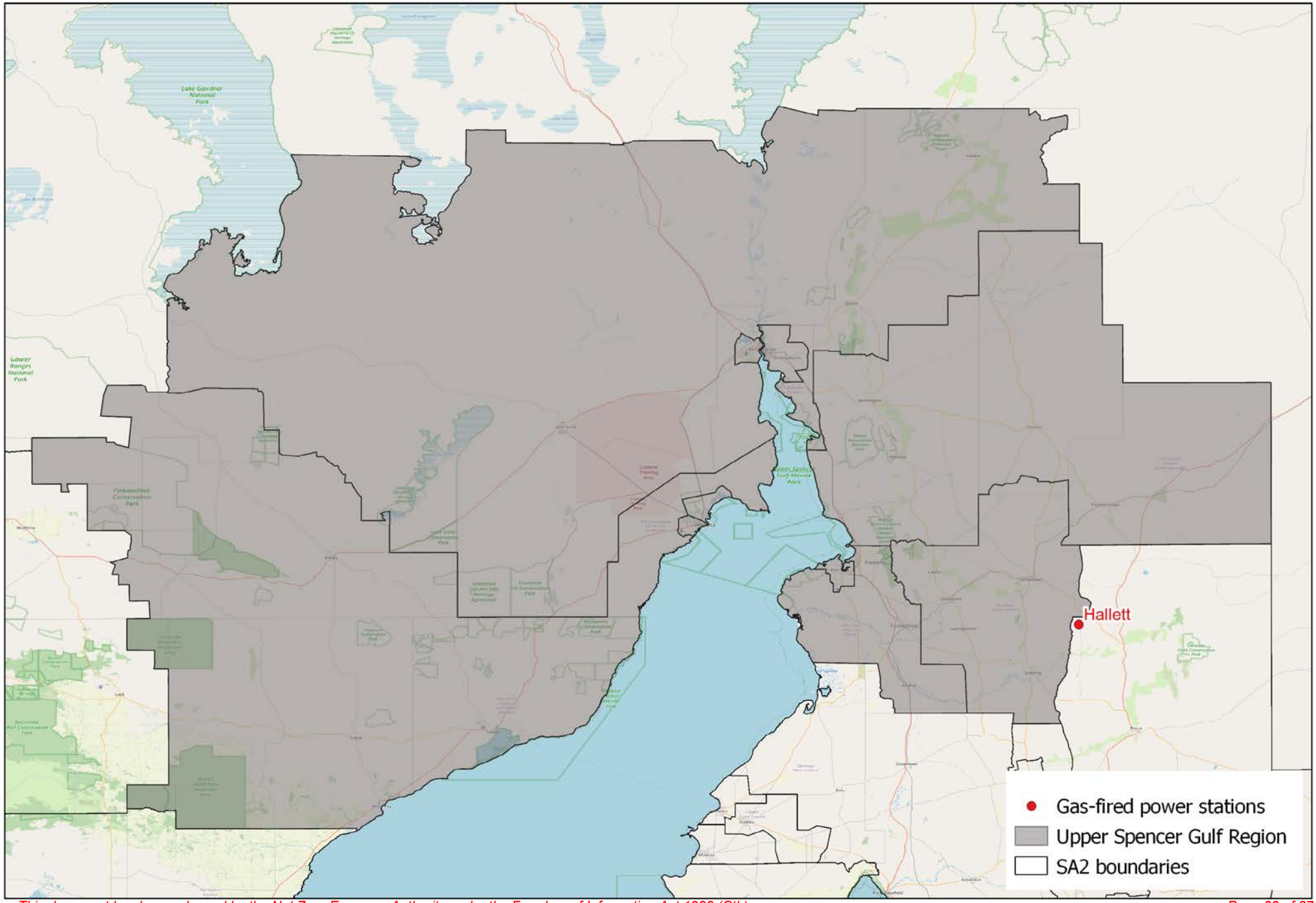
Housing

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	USG	SA
Homelessness[9]	0.9%	0.4%
Commonwealth Rent Assistance (Dec 2024)[10]	6%	5%
Mortgage stress[11]	9%	12%
Rental stress[12]	23%	31%

8 Excludes 'not stated' and categories are not cumulative
9 Share of population
10 Share of population
11 Share of households where repayments are >30% of household income
12 Share of households where rent payments are >30% of household income

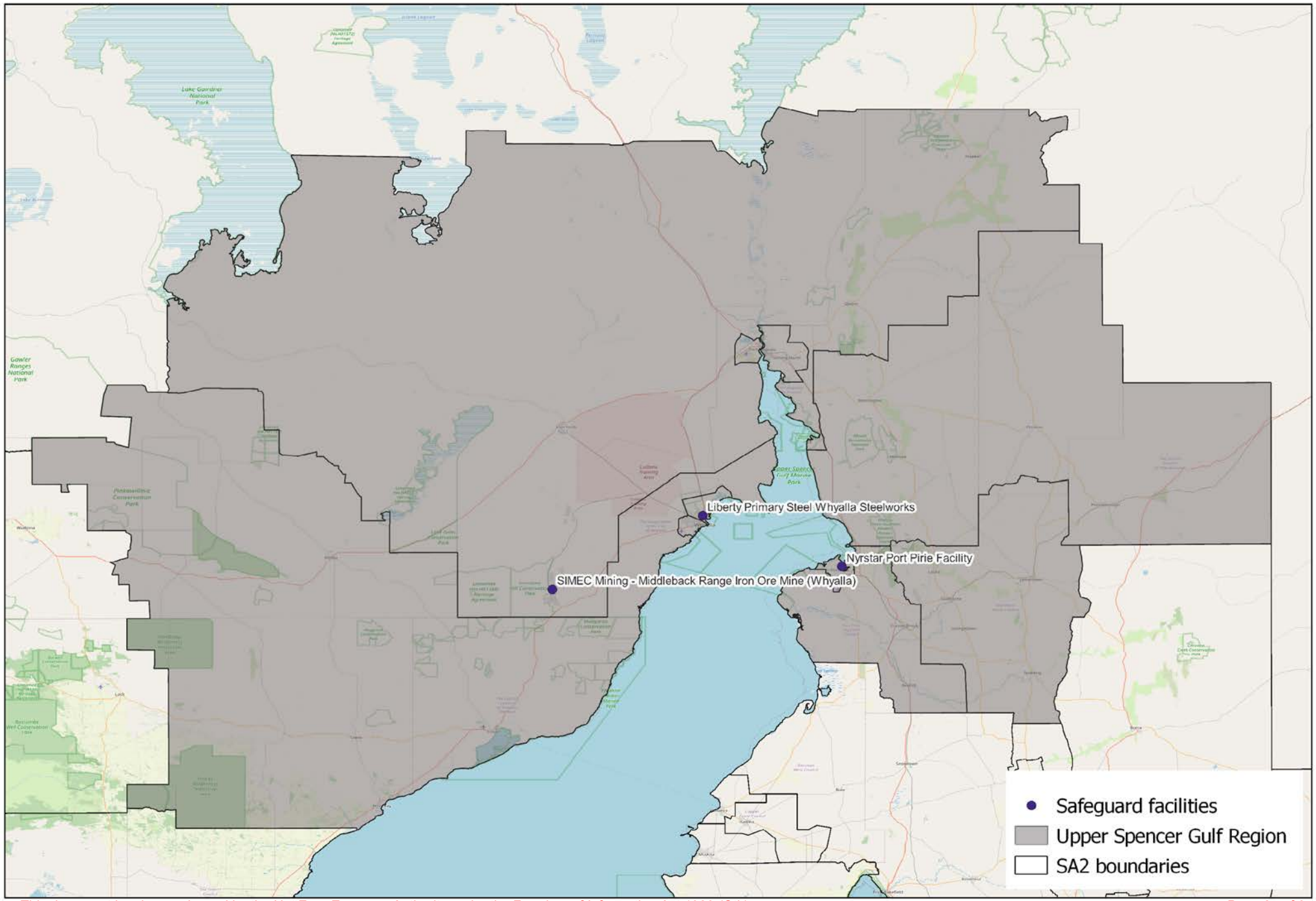
This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Power Stations



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Safeguards



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Data Sources

Section	Source	Date
Overview		
Total Population	Census, ABS	2021
Area	Mesh Blocks - SA2 Allocation Files, ABS	2021
Priority Region Selection Rationale		
All	Regional identification framework	February 2025
Carbon Intensive Industries		
Gas Fired Power Stations	Greenhouse & energy information by designated generation facility, CER Greenhouse & energy information - data highlights (SA)	2023-24
Power station closure dates	Generation Information[a], AEMO	April 2025
Safeguard facilities	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Major Industries		
Ranked industries by most value	Economic data[b], REMPLAN	2025
Ranked employing industries	Census, ABS	2021
Major Investments		
All	Funded projects, ARENA HyResource[c], CSIRO Resources and Energy Major Projects, DISR	2025 2025 2024

a Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/energy-systems/electricity/national-electricity-market-nem/nem-forecasting-and-planning/forecasting-and-planning-data/generation-information

b Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://www.remplan.com.au

c Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://research.csiro.au/hyresource/projects/projects-spreadsheet/

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 35 of 375



Section	Source	Date
Transmission Infrastructure Projects		
All	Integrated System Plan[d], AEMO	June 2024
Employment		
Average working age, median income, labour force participation	Census, ABS	2021
Regional Labour Market Index	Regional Labour Market Indicator, Jobs and Skills Australia	March 2025
Unemployment rate:		
• Upper Spencer Gulf	Small Area Labour Markets, Jobs and Skills Australia	December 2024
• SA	Labour Force, Australia, ABS	December 2024
Demographics		
All	Census, ABS	2021
Housing		
Homelessness, mortgage stress, rental stress	Census, ABS	2021
Commonwealth Rental Assistance	Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics - quarterly data, DSS	December 2024
Maps		
All	Produced using data from Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), DAFFs	December 2023

Note: All datasets maintained by third party providers listed above and date reflects most recent data available.

d Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/en/energy-systems/major-publications/integrated-system-plan-isp/2024-integrated-system-plan-isp

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 36 of 375

Australian Government

Net Zero Economy Authority



Regional Profiles

Central Queensland

Total Area: 107,744 sq. km **Population:** 221,445 **Working Zones:** Banana, Biloela, Central Highlands-East, Emerald & Central Highlands-West, Gladstone & surrounds, Rockhampton & surrounds, Yeppoon & surrounds *(maps at end)*

Region Selection Rationale

Exposure to decarbonisation	Potential to harness economic opportunities from decarbonisation
• **Carbon intensity:** Large number of facilities (incl. 4 coal-fired power stations and 24 safeguards. As of 2023-24, safeguards in the region account for 54% of Qld's safeguard scope 1 emissions); high carbon-intensive employment • **Urgency:** 2 coal-fired power stations projected to close by 2035. • **Adaptive capacity:** Moderate with pockets of lower adaptive capacity, particularly in areas with higher concentration of coal mining. • **Readiness:** no specific regional transition planning for Central Qld (outside of Gladstone) but some regional planning in areas such as Central Highlands.	• **Natural capital:** Considerable green industry potential – including green aluminium and alumina, strong renewable energy resources (solar & wind). • **Workforce compatibility:** High proportion of workers in Central Qld North and Gladstone in roles compatible with forecast clean energy occupations. Medium compatibility in Central Qld South. • **Enabling infrastructure:** High, including 5G presence, Gladstone airport and proposed future hydrogen port in region. Port of Gladstone has eight main wharf centres, comprising 20 wharves in total, handling export of over 30 different products. Curtis Island is home to the LNG export terminals, the only such facilities on Australia's east coast.

Carbon-Intensive Industries

Coal Fired Power Stations (CFPS)

Name	Owner	Public closure date (AEMO NEM Gen Apr 2025[a])	Supplying Coal Mine	Scope 1 emission (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of Scope 1 Qld emissions (23/24)	% of Scope 1 Aus emissions (23/24)
Stanwell	Stanwell (Qld gov.)	2043	Curragh	7.0 m	8%	2%
Gladstone	Rio Tinto, NRG Energy & others	2035	Rolleston, Callide, & Ensham	6.5 m	7%	2%
Callide B	CS Energy (Qld gov.)	2031	Callide	4.0 m	5%	1%
Callide C	IG Power & CS Energy (Qld gov.)	Not provided	Callide	0.7 m	1%	0.2%
Total: 4			4	18.1 m	21%	6%[1]

a Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/energy-systems/electricity/national-electricity-market-nem/nem-forecasting-and-planning/forecasting-and-planning-data/generation-information

1 Individual percentages may not add up to total due to rounding.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Metal Manufacturing / Refineries and Smelters

Name	Owner	PPA expiry date	Power source	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of Scope 1 Qld emissions (23/24)	% of Scope 1 Aus emissions (23/24)
Boyne aluminium smelter	Rio Tinto, Sumitomo, others	2029	Gladstone CFPS	0.9 m	1.0%	0.3%
Yarwun alumina refinery	Rio Tinto	N/A	Gas-fired cogeneration plant, Gladstone CFPS	2.1 m	2.4%	0.7%
Queensland alumina refinery	Rio Tinto, Rusal	N/A	Gladstone CFPS	3.1 m	3.5%	1%
Total: 3			2	6.1 m	7.0%	2.0%

Coal mines

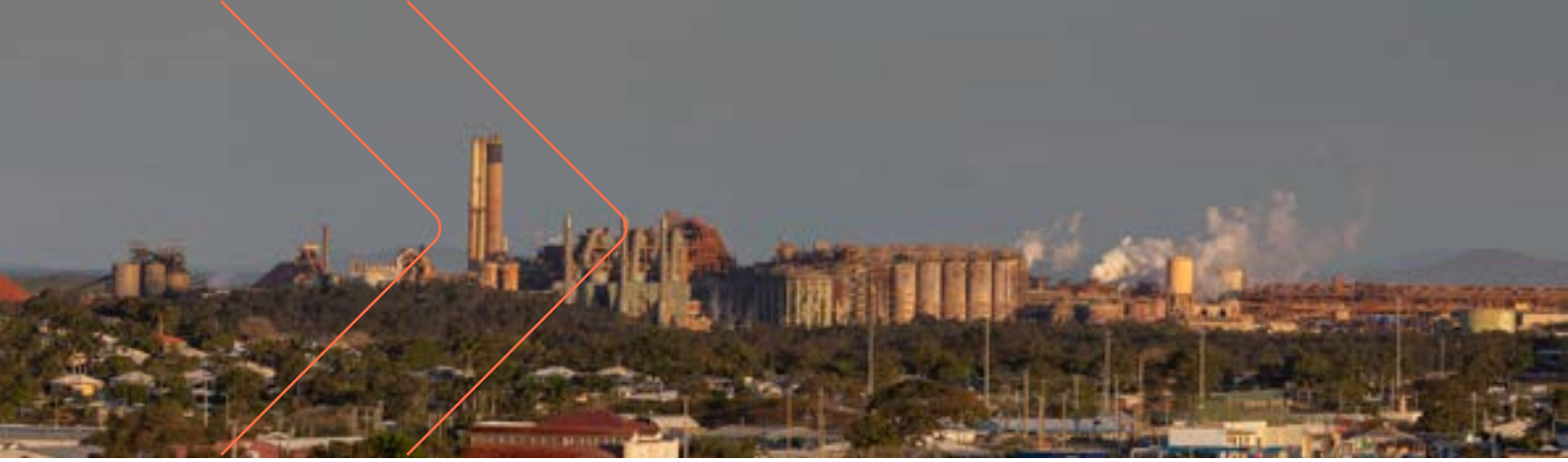
Type	No.
Safeguards	13
Non-safeguards	4
Total	17

Safeguard Facilities *(Emit 100,000+ tonnes CO2 annually - power stations connected to grid are exempt)*

Type	No.	Total scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of Qld scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)	% of Aus scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)
Manufacturing	7	8.5 m	23%	7%
Coal mines[2]	13	5.7 m	15%	4%
Oil & gas extraction	4	5.8 m	15%	5%
Total safeguards	24	20.0 m	54%	16%

2 Not all coal mines qualify as a safeguard facility. The total number of coal mines in Central QLD is 17 facilities.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Major Industries

Gross Regional Product (GRP): $34.6 billion (7.2% of Qld's Gross State Product)[3]

Ranked Industries with most value	Value (m)	% of GRP
Mining	$18,017	52.1%
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	$2,459	7.1%
Construction	$1,949	5.6%
Health Care & Social Assistance	$1,593	4.6%
Manufacturing	$1,473	4.3%

Ranked Employing Industries (by usual residence[4])	No. of employees (% of workforce)	Ranked Employing Industries (by place of work[5])	No. of employees (% of workforce)
Total labour force living in region	102,177[6]	Total labour force working in region	100,852[7]
Health Care and Social Services	13,144 (13%)	Health Care and Social Services	12,930 (13%)
Retail & Wholesale Trade	11,395 (12%)	Retail & Wholesale Trade	11,533 (12%)
Education & Training	9,344 (10%)	Educating & Training	9,334 (10%)
Construction	8,764 (9%)	Mining	9,251 (10%)
Mining	8,691 (9%)	Construction	7,929 (8%)

3 Data sourced using REMPLAN (incorporating ABS 2021 Census Place of Work Employment (Scaled); 2022 / 2023 National Input Output Tables; June 2024 Gross State Product figures)

4 Data by usual residence means only employees living in Central QLD region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually work in Central QLD).

5 Data by place of work means only employees working in Central QLD region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually reside inCentral QLD).

6 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 98,203 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

7 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 96,943 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 39 of 375

Major Investments

Major clean energy and heavy industry projects (top 5 by value)

Project	Description	Category	Status[8]	Value
H2-Hub(TM) Gladstone	An industrial-scale green hydrogen and ammonia production complex	Green hydrogen	Under development	$4,700 m
Boomer Green Energy Hub	Proposed one-gigawatt wind farm, located approximately 30 km southwest of Marlborough, Central Queensland. The project is proposed by Ark Energy.	Renewable energy	Under development	$3,000 m
Brigalow Peaking Power Plant	The Brigalow Peaking Power Plant is proposed to feature up to 12 modular turbines, supplied by GE Verona, which are capable of using a blend of renewable hydrogen and natural gas. The power plant is forecast to be operational in 2027.	Green hydrogen	Under development	$642 m
Aldoga Solar Farm	A flagship renewable energy project which will be directly connected to the electricity grid	Renewable energy	Under Construction	$550 m
Green Methanol Feasibility Study	Cement Australia and Mitsubishi Gas Chemical Company (MGC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding in October 2022 to conduct a feasibility study on green methanol production.	Non-Green Hydrogen	Under Construction	$150 m

Transmission Infrastructure Projects

AEMO Final 2024 Integrated System Plan transmission infrastructure projects

Name	Description	Status (Draft 2024 ISP Status)	Timing (Draft 2024 ISP Timing)	Costs
Gladstone Grid Reinforcement	Increase network capacity from Central Qld into the Gladstone area to support the area's industry once Gladstone Power Station retires and add capacity between Northern and Southern Qld.	Actionable (unchanged)	Mar 2029 (Sep 2029)	$1,300 m (±50%)
Queensland SuperGrid South	Stage 2 of the SuperGrid, under the Qld Energy and Jobs Plan, to greatly increase the transfer limit between Central and Southern Qld and connect to the Borumba Pumped Hydro project.	Actionable (unchanged)	Sep 2031 (June 2031)	$3,300 m (±50%)
Queensland SuperGrid North	Add transfer capacity between Central and North Qld, and enable capacity in northern Qld REZs.	Future (unchanged)	2032-33 (unchanged)	$4,200 m (±50%)

8 Excluding projects that are archived, completed and paused

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Employment

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Central Queensland	Queensland
Average working age	39	38
Median income (annual gross, exc. super)	$33.8K - $41.6K	$33.8K - $41.6K
Participation in workforce	62%	62%
Female participation in workforce	59%	59%
Unemployment rate (Dec 2024)	4.8%	3.9%
Regional Labour Market Index (Dec 2024)	Average	N/A

Demographics

Indicator (2021 Census)	Central Queensland	Queensland
Median age	37	38
First Nations (% of population)	7%	5%
Population growth (2016 – 2021)	3%	10%
Educational attainment (% of population aged 15 & above)*		
• Below Y12	51%	41%
• Y12 or equivalent	49%	59%
• Cert III & IV	26%	21%
• Bachelor and above	14%	24%

* *Excludes 'not stated' and categories are not cumulative*

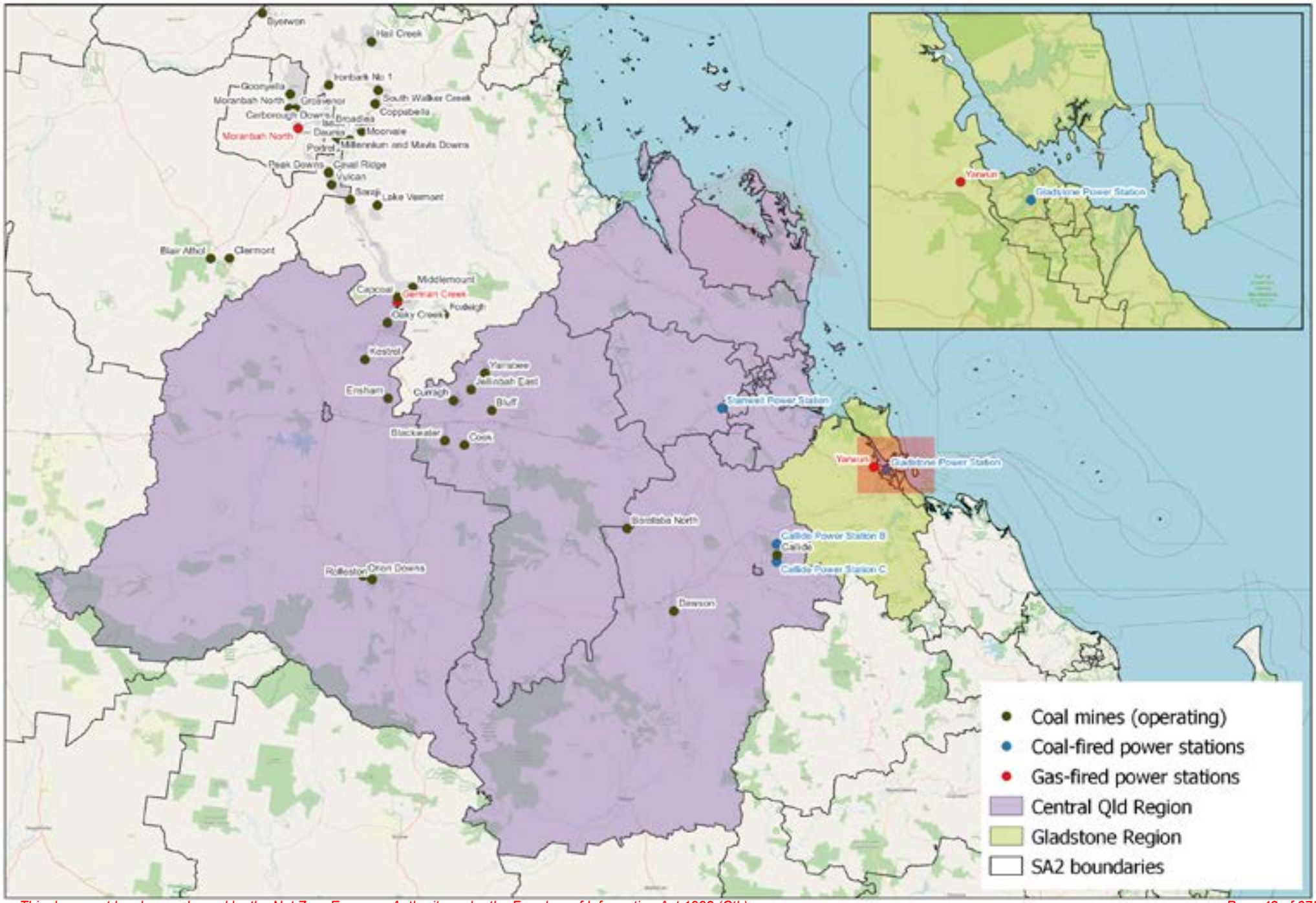
Housing

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Central Queensland	Queensland
Homelessness[9]	0.4%	0.4%
Commonwealth Rent Assistance (Dec 2024)[10]	6%	6.6%
Mortgage stress[11]	9%	12%
Rental stress[12]	24%	32%

9 Share of population
10 Share of population
11 Share of households where repayments are >30% of household income
12 Share of households where rent payments are >30% of household income

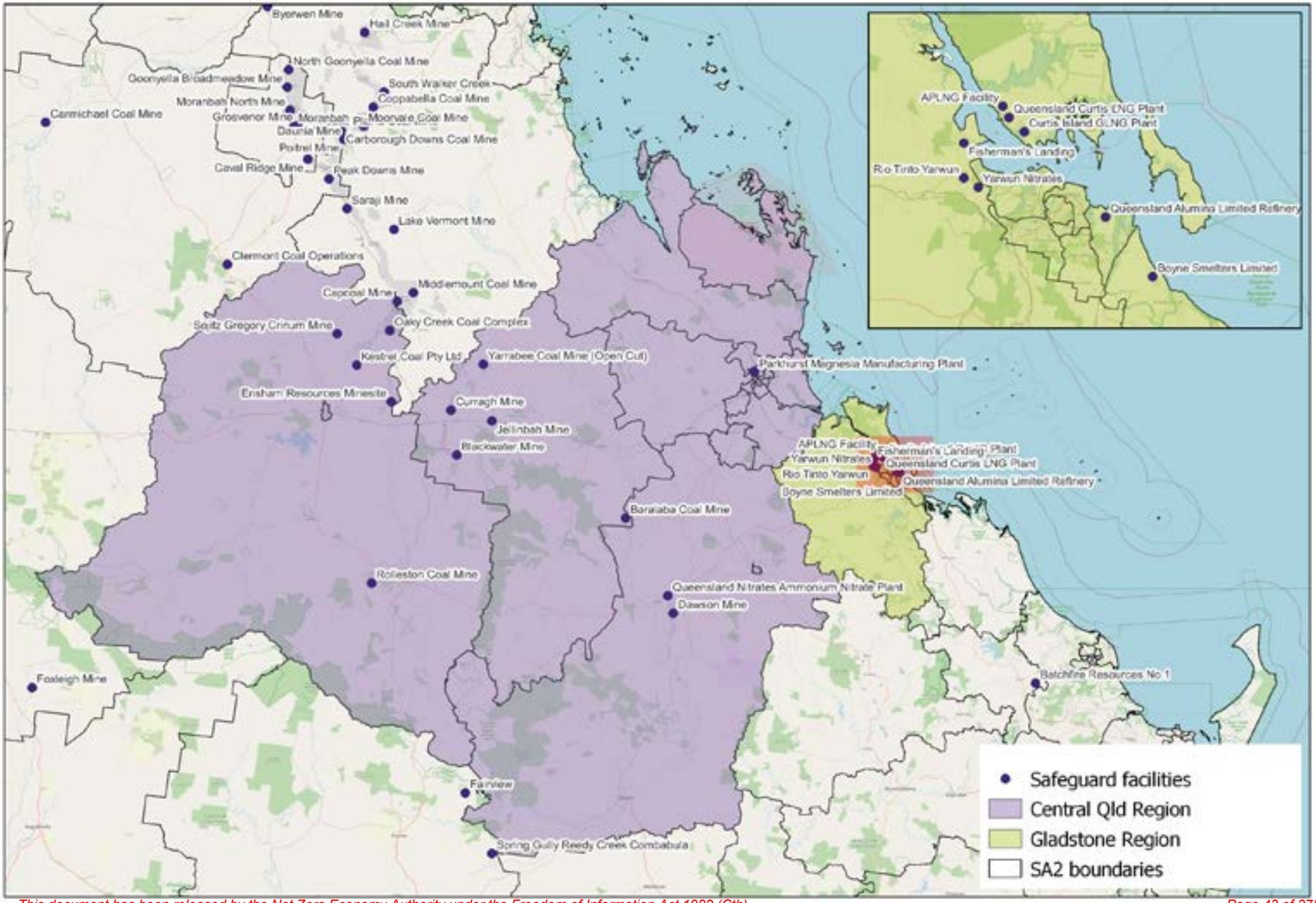
This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Power Stations and Mines



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Safeguards



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Data Sources

Section	Source	Date
Overview		
Total Population	Census, ABS	2021
Area	Mesh Blocks - SA2 Allocation Files, ABS	2021
Priority Region Selection Rationale		
All	Regional identification framework	February 2025
Carbon Intensive Industries		
Coal Fired Power Stations	Greenhouse and energy information by designated generation facility, CER (Gladstone & CQLD) Greenhouse and energy information - published data highlights (QLD)	2023-24
Metal Manufacturing / Smelters & Refineries	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Coal mines	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Safeguard facilities	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Major Investments		
All	Funded projects, ARENA HyResource[a], CSIRO Resources and Energy Major Projects, DISR	2025 2025 2024
Major Industries		
Ranked Industries by value	Growing the Gladstone Region, Gladstone Regional Council Economic data[b], REMPLAN	2021 2025
Ranked Employing Industries	Census, ABS	2021

a Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://research.csiro.au/hyresource/projects/projects-spreadsheet/
b Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://www.remplan.com.au

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Section	Source	Date
Transmission Infrastructure Projects		
All	Integrated System Plan[c], AEMO	June 2024
Employment		
Average working age, median income, labour force participation	Census, ABS	2021
Regional Labour Market Index	Regional Labour Market Indicator, Jobs and Skills Australia (Central Qld SA4)	December 2024
Unemployment rate:		
• Gladstone & CQLD	Small Area Labour Markets, Jobs and Skills Australia	December 2024
• Queensland	Labour Force, Australia, ABS	December 2024
Demographics		
All	Census, ABS	2016 & 2021
Housing		
Homelessness, mortgage stress, rental stress	Census, ABS	2021
Commonwealth Rental Assistance	Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics - quarterly data, DSS	December 2024
Maps		
All	Produced using data from Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), DAFF	December 2023

Note: All datasets maintained by third party providers listed above and date reflects most recent data available.

c Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/en/energy-systems/major-publications/integrated-system-plan-isp/2024-integrated-system-plan-isp

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Government

Net Zero Economy Authority



Regional Profiles

Latrobe Gippsland

Total Area: 41,289 sq. km **Population:** 300,708 **Working Zones:** Drouin, Warragul and surrounds; La Trobe Valley Orbost and Alps-East; Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance and surrounds; Leongatha and surrounds; Wonthaggi-Inverloch and Phillip Island; Sale and surrounds; Yarram (maps at end of profile)

Region Selection Rationale

Exposure to decarbonisation	Potential to harness economic opportunities from decarbonisation
• **Carbon intensity:** 3 coal-fired power stations, 5 gas-fired power stations and 2 safeguards. As of 2023-24, safeguards in the region account for 37% of Vic safeguard scope 1 emissions; region has large amounts of employment in coal power generation and in manufacturing. • **Urgency:** High – two of three power stations expected to close by 2035. • **Adaptive capacity:** Moderate to above average. • **Readiness:** High - there is already strong planning, funding and preparation for decarbonisation, including development of the Latrobe Valley and Gippsland Transition Plan, designed in conjunction with businesses, industries, and local communities.	• **Natural capital:** High offshore wind potential. • **Workforce compatibility:** Moderate number of workers in the region are in jobs highly compatible with clean energy industries. Compatibility is largely consistent across region. • **Enabling infrastructure:** High – Strong road and telecoms connectivity. Gippsland's proximity to Port of Hastings, a deep-water port allows for hydrogen export.

Carbon-Intensive Industries

Coal Fired Power Stations (CFPS)

Name	Owner	Public closure date (AEMO NEM Gen Apr 2025[a])	Supplying Coal Mine	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of Scope 1 Vic emissions (23/24)	% of Scope 1 Aus emissions (23/24)
Yallourn Power Station	Energy Australia	2028	Yallourn	10,344,727	20%	3%
Loy Yang Power Station A	AGL	2035	Loy Yang	18,531,075	36%	6%
Loy Yang Power Station B	Alinta Energy	2047	Loy Yang	9,642,473	19%	3%
Total 3	3		2	38,518,275	75%	13%[1]

a Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/energy-systems/electricity/national-electricity-market-nem/nem-forecasting-and-planning/forecasting-and-planning-data/generation-information

1 Values may not add to total due to rounding

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Gas Fired Power Stations (GFPS)

Name	Owner	Public closure date (AEMO NEM Gen Apr 2025[a])	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of Vic scope 1 emissions (23/24)	% of Aus scope 1 emissions (23/24)
Jeeralang A	EnergyAustralia	2039	34,838 (across both facilities)	0.1%	0.01%
Jeeralang B	EnergyAustralia	2039			
Valley Aking/ Power	Snowy Hydro Ltd (Cwth gov.)	2070	17,317	0.03%	0.01%
Bairnsdale	Alinta Energy	2042	33,601	0.1%	0.01%
Longford	Exxon Mobil	2024-2032	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total 5	4		85,756	0.2%[2]	0.03%

a Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/energy-systems/electricity/national-electricity-market-nem/nem-forecasting-and-planning/forecasting-and-planning-data/generation-information

Manufacturing

Name	Owner	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of Vic scope 1 emissions (23/24)	% of Aus scope 1 emissions (23/24)
Opal Australian Paper Maryvale Mill	Paper Australia Ltd	235,738	0.5%	0.1%

Safeguard Facilities (Emit 100,000+ tonnes CO2 annually - power stations connected to grid are exempt)

Type	No.	Total scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of Vic scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)	% of Aus scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)
Manufacturing (Opal Australian Paper Maryvale Mill)	1	235,738	5.0%	0.2%
Oil & gas extraction (Gippsland Basin facility)	1	1,505,497	31.9%	1.2%
Total safeguards	2	1,741,235	36.8%	1.4%[3]

2 Values may not add to total due to rounding
3 Values may not add to total due to rounding

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Major Industries

Gross Regional Product (GRP): $23.3 billion (4.1% of VIC's Gross State Product)[4]

Ranked Industries with most value	Value (m)	% of GRP
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	$3,165	13.6%
Mining	$2,460	10.6%
Health Care & Social Assistance	$2,337	10.0%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	$2,290	9.8%
Construction	$2,203	9.5%

Ranked Employing Industries (by usual residence[5])	No. of employees (% of workforce)	Ranked Employing Industries (by place of work[6])	No. of employees (% of workforce)
Total labour force living in region	127,371[7]	Total labour force working in region	113,028[8]
Healthcare & Social Assistance	19,698 (16%)	Healthcare & Social Assistance	18,770 (17%)
Retail & Wholesale Trade	14,674 (12%)	Retail & Wholesale Trade	13,490 (12%)
Construction	13,861 (11%)	Education	10,146 (9%)
Education	10,942 (9%)	Construction	9,763 (9%)
Agriculture	9,580 (8%)	Agriculture	9,183 (8%)

4 Data sourced using REMPLAN (incorporating ABS 2021 Census Place of Work Employment (Scaled); 2022 / 2023 National Input Output Tables; June 2024 Gross State Product figures)

5 Data by usual residence means only employees living in Latrobe Gippsland region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually work in Latrobe Gippsland).

6 Data by place of work means only employees working in Latrobe Gippsland region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually reside in Latrobe Gippsland).

7 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 122,175 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

8 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 108,702 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Major Investments

Clean energy and heavy industry projects (excluding cancelled and completed) (top projects by value)

Project	Description	Category	Status	Value
Gippsland Dawn Offshore Wind Project	Proposed project with up to 2.1 gigawatts of electricity generation capacity. The project would comprise up to 140 offshore wind turbines on fixed foundations, and four offshore substations. Subsea cables will be used to transport the electricity generated to an onshore landing point.	Wind	Announced	$10 b
Star of the South Offshore Wind Farm	At up to 2.2 GW, project could potentially power around 1.2 million homes. The project is being progressed under a feasibility licence in a 586 square km area, 10 km from the coast at its closest point.	Wind	Feasibility	$8 b
Wooreen Energy Storage System (WESS)	A four-hour utility-scale battery to store low-cost electricity, such as excess renewable energy, near Yallourn CFPS	Renewable Energy	Under construction	$800 m
CarbonNet Project	Proposed 100-kilometre pipeline to take liquefied CO2 to a carbon capture storage (CCS) site beneath the seabed.	CCS	Announced	$150 m

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Transmission Infrastructure Projects

AEMO Final 2024 Integrated System Plan transmission infrastructure projects

Name	Description	Status	Timing	Costs
Project Marinus	Two new high voltage direct current cables connecting Vic (inc. Latrobe) and Tas, each with 750 MW of transfer capacity & associated AC transmission, to enable efficient power sharing between regions. HVAC network assets in Tas for REZs under Transmission Developments project.	Actionable	Stage 1 Dec 2030 Stage 2 Dec 2032 (unchanged)	Stage 1: $3,800 m (±30%). Stage 2: $2,700 m (±30%).
Eastern Victoria Grid Reinforcement	Add transfer capacity between Latrobe Valley and Melbourne to accommodate increased onshore and new offshore wind power generation.	Future	2030 - 2031	$297 m (±50%).
Gippsland Offshore Wind Connection	VicGrid is coordinating shared transmission to support offshore wind energy in Vic.	Future	2027-2030	$700 m - $1,500 m (overhead) $2,000 m - $4,500 m (underground)

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Employment

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Latrobe Gippsland	Victoria
Average working age	42	38
Median income (annual gross, exc. super)	$26.0K - $33.8K	$41.6K - $52.0K
Participation in workforce	54%	62%
Female participation in workforce	51%	59%
Unemployment rate (Dec 2024)	5.0%	4.5%
Regional Labour Market Index (Dec 2024)	Poor[9]	N/A

Demographics

Indicator (2021 Census)	Latrobe Gippsland	Victoria
Median age	45	37
First Nations (% of population)	2%	1%
Population growth (2016-2021)	11%	10%
Educational attainment (% of population aged 15 & above):[10]		
• Below Y12	56%	37%
• Y12 or equivalent	44%	63%
• Cert III & IV	24%	15%
• Bachelor and above	17%	32%

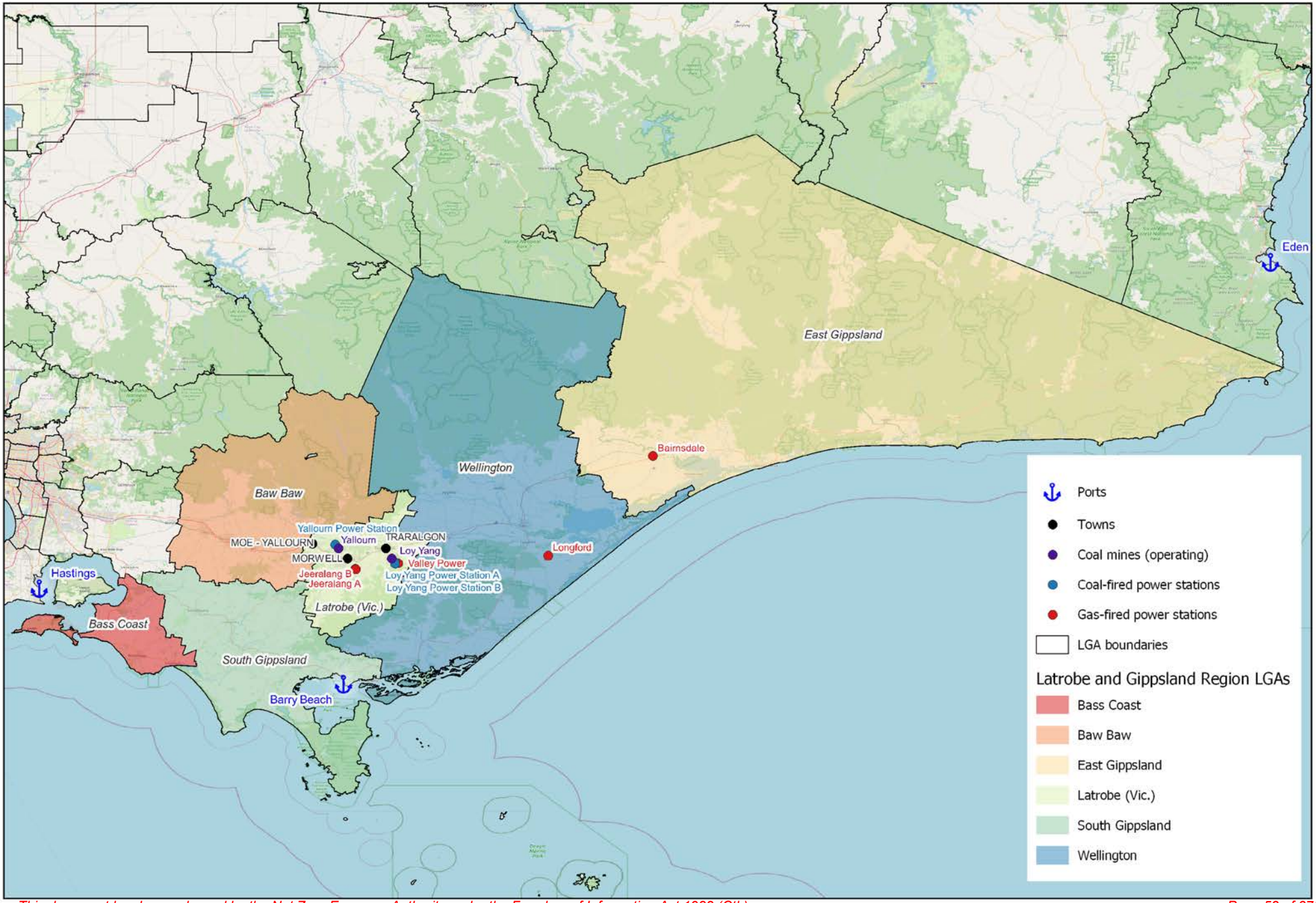
Housing

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Latrobe Gippsland	Victoria
Homelessness[11]	0.3%	0.5%
Commonwealth Rent Assistance (Dec 2024)[12]	6%	5%
Mortgage stress[13]	12%	15%
Rental stress[14]	34%	31%

9 Note, Regional Labour Market Index is calculated by SA4. Score shown reflects Latrobe-Gippsland SA4.
10 Excludes 'not stated' and categories are not cumulative
11 Share of population
12 Share of population
13 Share of households where repayments are >30% of household income
14 Share of households where rent payments are >30% of household income

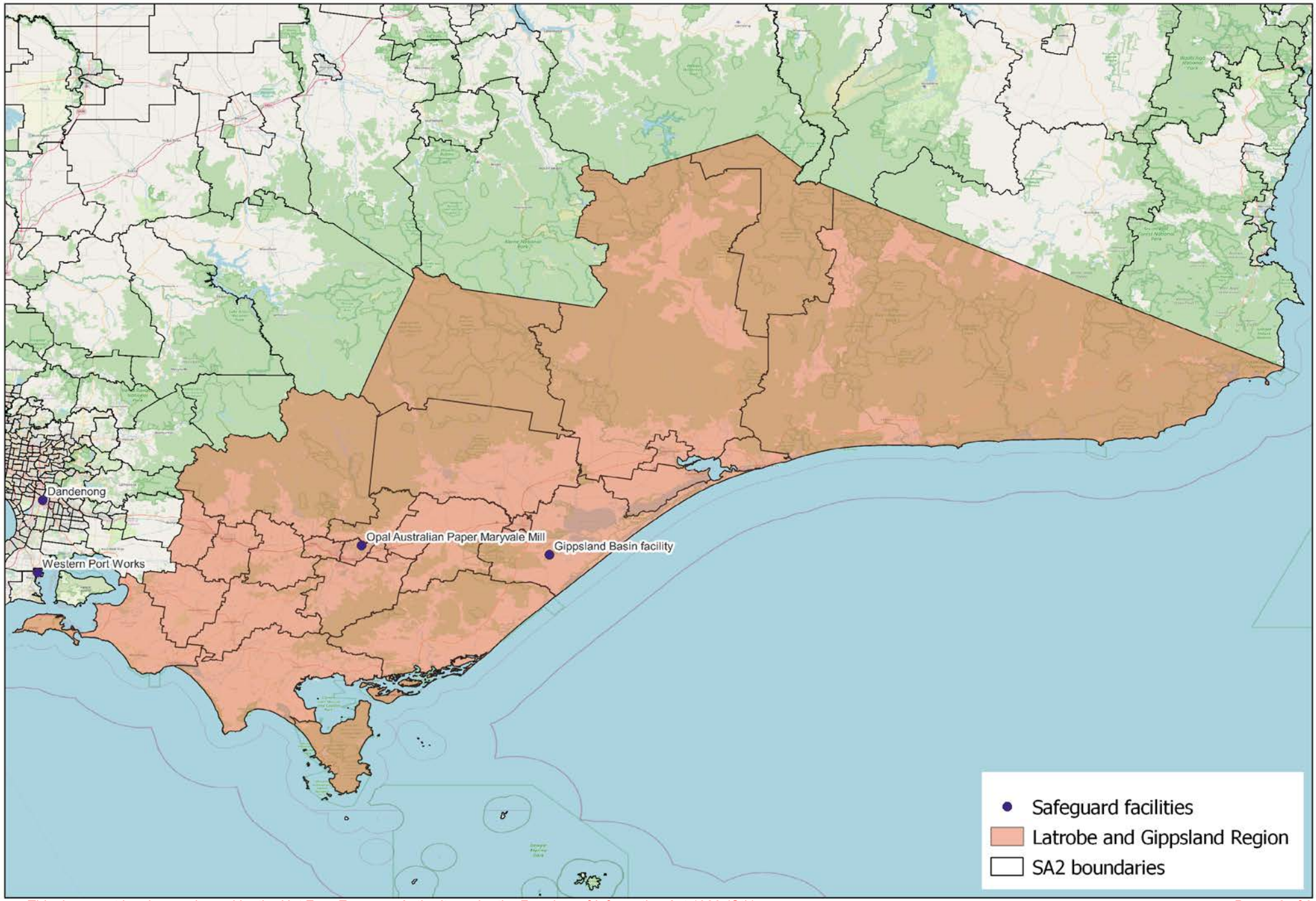
This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Power Stations and Mines



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Safeguards



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Data Sources

Section	Source	Date
Overview		
Total Population	Census, ABS	2021
Area	Mesh Blocks - SA2 Allocation Files, ABS	2021
Priority Region Selection Rationale		
All	Regional identification framework	February 2025
Emissions	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Carbon Intensive Industries		
Coal Fired Power Stations	Greenhouse and energy information by designated generation facility, CER (Latrobe-Gippsland) Greenhouse and energy information - published data highlights (VIC)	2023-24
Power station closure dates	NEM Generation Information[a], AEMO	April 2025
Coal mines	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Safeguard facilities	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Major Industries		
Ranked industries by most value	Economic data[b], REMPLAN	2025
Ranked employing industries	Census, ABS	2021
Major Investments		
All	Funded projects, ARENA HyResource[c], CSIRO Resources and Energy Major Projects, DISR	2025 2025 2024

a Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://www.aemo.com.au/energy-systems/electricity/national-electricity-market-nem/nem-forecasting-and-planning/forecasting-and-planning-data/generation-information

b Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://www.remplan.com.au

b Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://research.csiro.au/hyresource/projects/projects-spreadsheet/

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Section	Source	Date
Transmission Infrastructure Projects		
All	Integrated System Plan[d], AEMO	2024
Employment		
Average working age, median income, labour force participation	Census, ABS	2021
Regional Labour Market Index	Regional Labour Market Indicator, Jobs and Skills Australia	December 2024
Unemployment rate:		
• Latrobe	Small Area Labour Markets, Jobs and Skills Australia	December 2024
• Victoria	Labour Force, Australia, ABS	December 2024
Demographics		
All	Census, ABS	2021
Housing		
Homelessness, mortgage stress, rental stress	Census, ABS	2021
Commonwealth Rental Assistance	Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics - quarterly data, DSS	December 2024
Maps		
All	Produced using data from Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), DAFF	December 2023

Note: All datasets maintained by third party providers listed above and date reflects most recent data available

d Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/energy-systems/major-publications/integrated-system-plan-isp/2024-integrated-system-plan-isp

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Government

Net Zero Economy Authority



Regional Profiles

Hunter

Total Area: 33,851 sq. km **Population:** 1,119,685 (Hunter: 773,110; Central Coast: 346,575) **Working Zones:** Bulahdelah-Stroud; Central Coast & surrounds; Forster, Tuncurry & surrounds; Gloucester; Muswellbrook, Scone & surrounds; Nelson Bay Peninsula & Anna Bay; Newcastle, Lower Hunter & surrounds; Taree & surrounds *(maps at end of profile)*

Region Selection Rationale

Exposure to decarbonisation	Potential to harness economic opportunities from decarbonisation
• **Carbon intensity:** Large number of facilities (incl. 3 coal-fired power stations and 17 safeguards. As of 2023-24, safeguards in the region account for 39% of NSW safeguard scope 1 emissions); high carbon-intensive employment (Approx. 20,000 employees). • **Urgency:** All coal-fired power stations projected to close by 2033. • **Adaptive capacity:** Varying levels of adaptive capacity across the region, largely reflecting proximity to well-diversified economies in city centres and related education and skill level opportunities. • **Readiness:** Moderate to strong position for energy transition opportunities – hydrogen hubs planned for Singleton & Newcastle, with government support flagged for Newcastle, Lower Hunter prospective projects. Several transition planning initiatives exist, but not joined up, reflecting different dynamics across Upper and Lower Hunter regions. However, the NSW Government is now establishing a Future Jobs and Investment Authority for NSW's four coal mining regions, including the Hunter.	• **Natural capital:** Considerable green industry potential – including green aluminium, strong offshore wind energy resources • **Workforce compatibility:** Moderate number of workers in the region are in jobs highly compatible with clean energy industries. Higher compatibility in the Muswellbrook, Scone and surrounds working zone. • **Enabling infrastructure:** Strong position - existing and proposed transport infrastructure, particularly its large regional airport and port (Newcastle Shipping Port), will support labour mobility to meet workforce needs and connect the region's output to global markets.

Carbon-Intensive Industries

Coal Fired Power Stations (CFPS)

Name	Owner	Public closure date	Supplying Coal Mine	S1 emiss. (tCO2-e) (23/24)[1]	% of NSW S1 emiss. (23/24)[2]	% of Aus S1 emiss. (23/24)
Bayswater Power Station	AGL	2033	Mangoola, Mt Arthur, Wilpinjong	13,678,909	19%	5%
Eraring Power Station	Origin	2027	Mandalong, Myuna, & three others	13,535,335	19%	4%
Vales Point Power Station	Delta	2033	Chain Valley (primary)	7,043,816	10%	2%
Total	3		9+	34,258,060	47%	11%

1 S1 emiss. indicates Scope 1 Emissions (2023/24)
2 Note, NSW Scope 1 Emissions includes ACT Scope 1 Emissions

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Metal Manufacturing / Refineries and Smelters

Name	Owner	PPA expiry date	Power source	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of NSW Scope 1 emissions (23/24)[3]	% of Aus Scope 1 emissions (23/24)
Tomago Aluminium Smelter	Tomago Aluminium Company Ltd	2028	Bayswater CFPS	1,159,663	1.6%	0.4%

Gas Fired Power Stations

Name	Owner	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of NSW Scope 1 emissions (23/24)[4]	% of Aus Scope 1 emissions (23/24)
Colongra	Snowy Hydro Limited (Cwth gov)	63,830	0.1%	0.02%

Safeguard Facilities (Emit 100,000+ tonnes CO2 annually - power stations connected to grid are exempt)

Type	No.	Total scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of NSW scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)[5]	% of Aus scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)
Manufacturing	2	1,642,734	7.3%	1.3%
Coal mines	15	7,129,811	31.9%	5.6%
Total safeguards	17	8,772,545	39.2%	6.9%

Coal mines

Type	No.
Safeguards	15[6]
Non-safeguards	5
Total	20

3 Note, NSW Scope 1 Emissions includes ACT Scope 1 Emissions
4 See above
5 See above
6 Mannering Colliery operates as part of an integrated mining operation with Chain Valley

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Major Industries

Gross Regional Product (GRP): $108.1 billion (14% of NSW's Gross State Product)[7]

Ranked Industries with most value[8]	Value (m)	% of GRP
Mining	$31,509	29.2%
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	$12,363	11.4%
Health Care & Social Assistance	$10,471	9.7%
Construction	$8,401	7.8%
Public Administration & Safety	$5,937	5.5%

Hunter

Ranked Employing Industries (by usual residence[9])	No. of employees (% of workforce)	Ranked Employing Industries (by place of work[10])	No. of employees (% of workforce)
Total labour force living in region	336,495[11]	Total labour force working in region	312,965[12]
Health Care and Social Assistance	61,190 (18%)	Health Care and Social Assistance	57,879 (18%)
Retail & Wholesale Trade	40,139 (12%)	Retail & Wholesale Trade	38,741 (12%)
Construction	33,132 (10%)	Education and Training	28,616 (9%)
Education and Training	29,995 (9%)	Construction	26,970 (9%)
Accommodation and Food Services	26,322 (8%)	Accommodation and Food Services	25,590 (8%)

7 Data sourced using REMPLAN (incorporating ABS 2021 Census Place of Work Employment (Scaled); 2022 / 2023 National Input Output Tables; June 2024 Gross State Product figures)

8 Note, this table has been produced looking at both Hunter and Central Coast regions (but does not include Forster, Tuncurry and Taree areas).

9 Data by usual residence means only employees living in Hunter region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually work in Hunter).

10 Data by place of work means only employees working in Hunter region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually reside in Hunter).

11 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 454,135 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

12 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 400,964 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Central Coast

Ranked Employing Industries (by usual residence[13])	No. of employees (% of workforce)	Ranked Employing Industries (by place of work[14])	No. of employees (% of workforce)
Total labour force living in region	144,753[15]	Total labour force working in region	112,242[16]
Health Care and Social Assistance	26,792 (19%)	Health Care and Social Assistance	24,006 (21%)
Retail & Wholesale Trade	18,714 (13%)	Retail & Wholesale Trade	16,010 (14%)
Construction	17,370 (12%)	Construction	10,626 (9%)
Education and Training	12,413 (9%)	Education and Training	10,224 (9%)
Accommodation and Food Services	10,578 (7%)	Accommodation and Food Services	9,986 (9%)

Major Investments

Clean energy and heavy industry projects (excluding cancelled and completed) (top projects by value)

Project	Description	Category	Status	Value
AGL Energy – Liddell Large Scale Battery with advanced inverters	Project involves the construction and operation of a 500 MW / 1000 MWh battery with advanced inverters at the retired Liddell Power Station in Muswellbrook, New South Wales.	Battery storage	Under construction	$695 m
Bowmans Creek Wind Farm	Stage 1 involves 54 wind turbines, and scoping of stage 2 proposes an additional 21 wind turbines	Renewable energy	Announced	$569 m
Waratah Super Battery	Will allow network operators to move greater amounts of electricity over existing transmission lines and to 'shock absorb' during power surges	Infrastructure	Reached mechanical completion and will be fully operating later in 2025	$500 m
Hunter Valley Hydrogen Hub	Project proponent is progressing large-scale renewables-based hydrogen project located in the Newcastle industrial and port precinct.	Hydrogen	Under development	$250 m
Liddell Solar Manufacturing Hub	Establishment of solar panel manufacturing plant in Upper Hunter at site of former Liddell Power Station	Renewable energy	Feasibility	Unknown

13 Data by usual residence means only employees living in Hunter region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually work in Hunter).

14 Data by place of work means only employees working in Hunter region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually reside in Hunter).

15 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 454,135 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

16 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 400,964 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Transmission Infrastructure Projects

AEMO Final 2024 Integrated System Plan transmission infrastructure projects

Name	Description	Status (Draft 2024 ISP Status)	Timing (Draft 2024 ISP Timing)	Costs
Hunter-Central Coast REZ Network Infrastructure Project	Substation upgrades to supply generation from the Hunter and Central Coast to Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong load centres.	Actionable (previously listed as Future)	Dec 2027 (previously 2027-28)	$59 m (±50%)
Sydney Ring South	Switching station and modular power flow controllers to reinforce supply to Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong load centres.	Actionable (previously listed as Future)	Sep 2028 (previously Dec 2027)	$221 m (±50%)
Sydney Ring North (Hunter Transmission Project)	High capacity 500 kV transmission network to reinforce supply to Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong load centres.	Actionable (unchanged from Draft 2024 ISP)	Dec 2028 (previously Dec 2027)	$1,100 m (±50%)
New England REZ Network Infrastructure project	Three separate projects to increase the transfer capability between central and northern NSW, enable more transfer capacity out of QLD-NSW Interconnector, and expand the New England REZ.	Actionable (unchanged from Draft 2024 ISP)	Part 1 Jun 2031 Part 2 Jun 2033 (previously Sep 2028)	$3,700 m (±50%) (estimate includes the three separate projects

Employment

Hunter

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Hunter	NSW
Average working age	39	38
Median income (annual gross, exc. super)	$33.8K - $41.6K	$41.6K - $52.0K
Participation in workforce	58%	59%
Female participation in workforce	55%	56%
Unemployment rate (Dec 2024)	3.4%	3.8%
Regional Labour Market Index (Dec 2024)	Below average[17]	N/A

Central Coast

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Central Coast	NSW
Average working age	40	38
Median income (annual gross, exc. super)	$33.8K - $41.6K	$41.6K - $52.0K
Participation in workforce	56%	59%
Female participation in workforce	53%	56%
Unemployment rate (Dec 2024)	3.0%	3.8%
Regional Labour Market Index (Dec 2024)	Above average	N/A

17 Note, this does not include Newcastle. The neighbouring SA4 of Newcastle and Lake Macquarie has an 'Above average' score

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Demographics

Hunter

Indicator (2021 Census)	Hunter	NSW
Median age	41	38
First Nations (% of population)	6%	3%
Population growth (2016-21)	9%	8%
Educational attainment (% of population aged 15 & above):[18]		
• Below Y12	54%	39%
• Y12 or equivalent	46%	61%
• Cert III & IV	22%	16%
• Bachelor and above	18%	30%

Central Coast

Indicator (2021 Census)	Central Coast	NSW
Median age	42	38
First Nations (% of population)	5%	3%
Population growth (2016-21)	6%	8%
Educational attainment (% of population aged 15 & above):[19]		
• Below Y12	51%	39%
• Y12 or equivalent	49%	61%
• Cert III & IV	21%	16%
• Bachelor and above	18%	30%

18 Excludes 'not stated' and categories are not cumulative
19 Excludes 'not stated' and categories are not cumulative

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Housing

Hunter

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Hunter	NSW
Homelessness[20]	0.3%	0.4%
Commonwealth Rent Assistance (Dec 2024)[21]	7%	6%
Mortgage stress[22]	12%	17%
Rental stress[23]	37%	36%

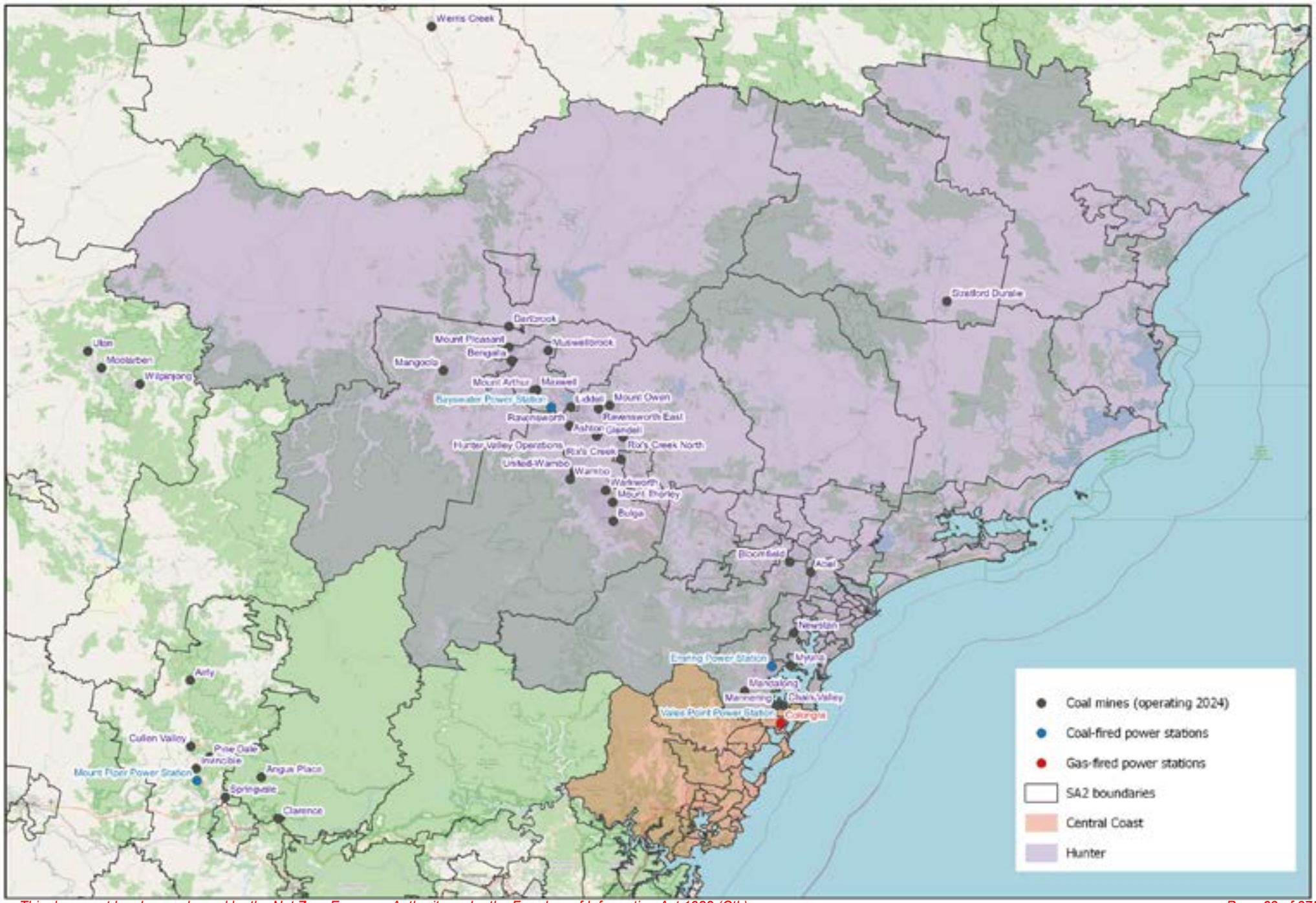
Central Coast

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Central Coast	NSW
Homelessness[24]	0.2%	0.4%
Commonwealth Rent Assistance (Dec 2024)[25]	8%	6%
Mortgage stress[26]	15%	17%
Rental stress[27]	42%	36%

20 Share of population
21 Share of population
22 Share of households where repayments are >30% of household income
23 Share of households where rent payments are >30% of household income
24 Share of population
25 Share of population
26 Share of households where repayments are >30% of household income
27 Share of households where rent payments are >30% of household income

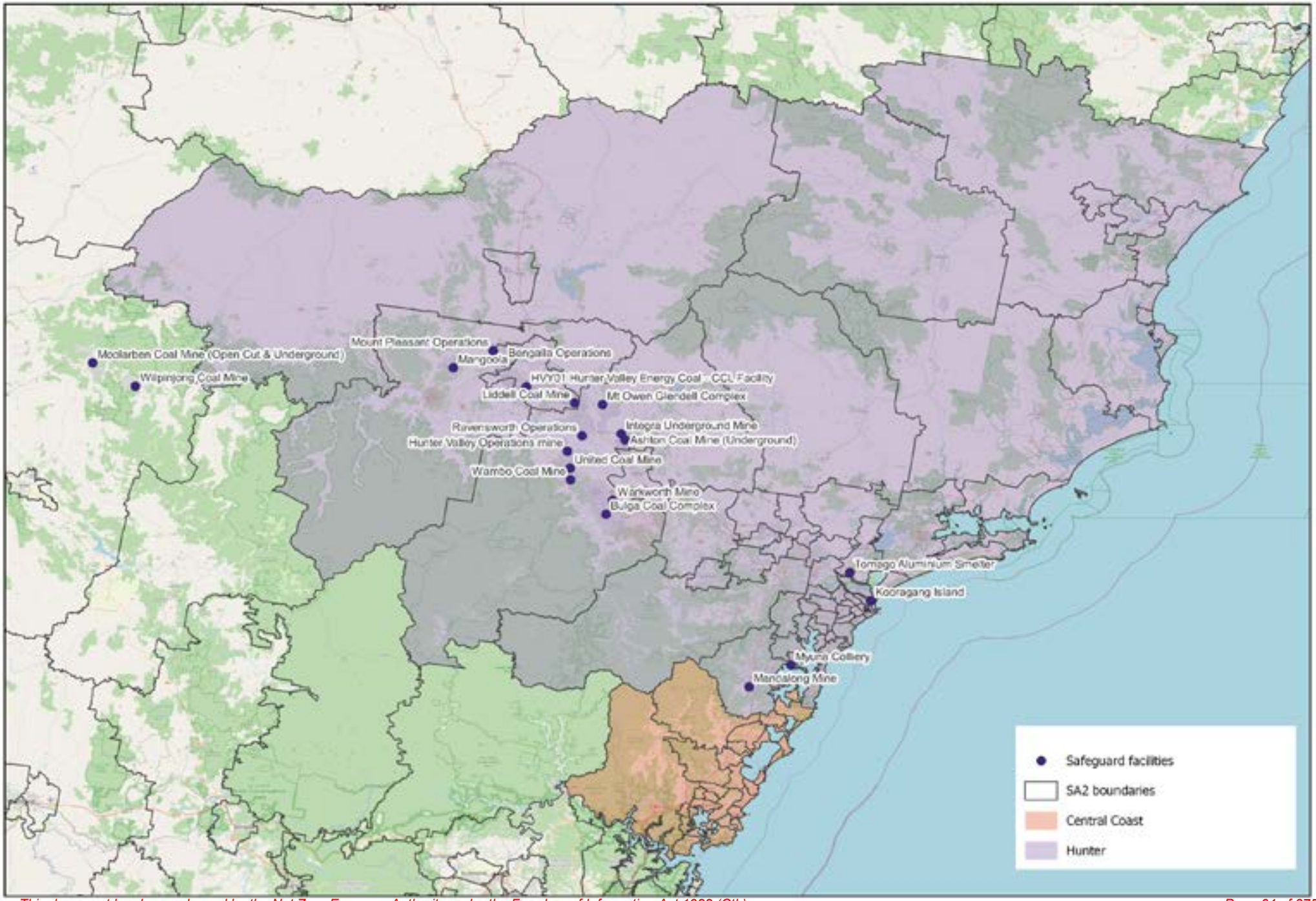
This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Power Stations and Mines



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Safeguards



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Data Sources

Section	Source	Date
Overview		
Total Population	Census, ABS	2021
Area	Mesh Blocks - SA2 Allocation Files, ABS	2021
Priority Region Selection Rationale		
All	Regional identification framework	February 2025
Emissions	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Carbon Intensive Industries		
Coal Fired & Gas Fired Power Stations	Greenhouse and energy information by designated generation facility, CER (Hunter) Greenhouse and energy information - published data highlights (NSW)	2023-24
Coal mines	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Safeguard facilities	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Major Industries		
Ranked Industries by most value	Economic data[a], REMPLAN	2025
Ranked Employing Industries	Census, ABS	2021
Major Investments		
All	Funded projects, ARENA HyResource[b], CSIRO Resources and Energy Major Projects, DISR	2025 2025 2024

a Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://www.remplan.com.au

b Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://research.csiro.au/hyresource/projects/projects-spreadsheet/

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Section	Source	Date
Transmission Infrastructure Projects		
All	Integrated System Plan[c], AEMO	June 2024
Employment		
Average working age, median income, labour force participation	Census, ABS	2021
Regional Labour Market Index	Regional Labour Market Indicator, Jobs Skills Australia	December 2024
Unemployment rate:		
• Hunter	Small Area Labour Markets, Jobs & Skills Australia	December 2024
• NSW	Labour Force, Australia, ABS	December 2024
Demographics		
All	Census, ABS	2021
Housing		
Homelessness, mortgage stress, rental stress	Census, ABS	2021
Commonwealth Rental Assistance	Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics - quarterly data, DSS	December 2024
Maps		
All	Produced using data from Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), DAFF	December 2023

Note: All datasets maintained by third party providers listed above and date reflects most recent data available.

c Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/en/energy-systems/major-publications/integrated-system-plan-isp/2024-integrated-system-plan-isp

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 66 of 375

Australian Government

Net Zero Economy Authority



Regional Profiles

Collie

Total Area: 1,710 sq. km **Population:** 8,812 **Working Zones:** Collie *(maps at end of profile)*

Region Selection Rationale

Exposure to decarbonisation	Potential to harness economic opportunities from decarbonisation
• **Carbon intensity:** 3 coal-fired power stations and 2 safeguards. As of 2023-24, safeguards in the region account for 7% of WA safeguard scope 1 emissions; region has large amounts of employment in coal power generation, related coal mining and a large alumina refinery. • **Urgency:** High – two power stations are expected to close by 2030. • **Adaptive capacity:** Very low, high unemployment (5.6% as of Dec 2024) and working age population decline. • **Readiness:** High – there is already strong planning, funding and preparation for decarbonisation, including establishment of a working group for transition and a supported just transition framework, with announced WA government funding of $662 million. This includes the $200 million Collie Industrial Transition Fund to attract major projects.	• **Natural capital:** Moderate wind and solar capacity and potential for green manufacturing (e.g. proposed green steel mill and net zero magnesium refinery). • **Workforce compatibility:** High proportion of workers in the region are in jobs highly compatible with clean energy industries. • **Enabling infrastructure:** Connected by major highways and approximately 50km from Bunbury Port, which has road and rail links, supporting connectivity, logistics and trade. No commercial airport.

Carbon-Intensive Facilities

Coal Fired Power Stations (CFPS)

Name	Owner	Public closure date	Supplying Coal Mine	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of Scope 1 WA emissions (23/24)	% of Scope 1 Aus emissions (23/24)
Bluewaters Power Station	Kansai Electric & Sumitomo	Not reported	Ewington	2,590,563	4%	1%
Collie Power Station	Synergy (WA gov)	2027	Ewington & Premier	920,053	1%	0.3%
Muja Power Station C & D	Synergy (WA gov)	2025 (C) & 2029 (D)	Ewington & Premier	3,091,936	4%	1%
Total 3	3		2	6,602,552[1]	10%[2]	2%

1 Sum of emissions for individual power stations do not add up to Total due to rounding.
2 See above.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Metal Manufacturing / Refineries and Smelters

Name	Owner	PPA expiry date	Power source	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of Scope 1 WA emissions (23/24)	% of Scope 1 Aus emissions (23/24)
WOR01 (Worsley Alumina)	South32 Worsley Alumina Pty Ltd	np	Worsley Refinery Power Station	3,177,815	5%	1%

Coal mines

Name	Safeguard
Premier	1
Ewington	0
Total	1

Safeguard Facilities *(Emit 100,000+ tonnes CO2 annually - power stations connected to grid are exempt)*

Type	No.	Total scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of WA scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)	% of Aus scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)
Manufacturing (Worsley Alumina)	1	3,177,815	6.7%	2.5%
Coal mines (Premier)	1	110,291	0.2%	0.1%
Total safeguards	2	3,288,106	6.9%	2.6%

Major Industries

Gross Regional Product (GRP): $2.7 billion (0.6% of Gross State Product)[3]

Ranked Industries With Most Value	Value	% of GRP
Mining	$1,755 m	64%
Manufacturing	$269 m	10%
Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services	$256 m	9%
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	$113 m	4%
Construction	$88 m	3%

3 Data sourced using REMPLAN (incorporating ABS 2021 Census Place of Work Employment (Scaled); 2022 / 2023 National Input Output Tables; June 2024 Gross State Product figures)

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Ranked Employing Industries (by usual residence[4])	No. of employees (% of workforce)	Ranked Employing Industries (by place of work[5])	No. of employees (% of workforce)
Total labour force living in region	3,422[6]	Total labour force working in region	4,774[7]
Mining	608 (18%)	Manufacturing	1,138 (25%)
Health Care and Social Assistance	352 (11%)	Mining	756 (16%)
Retail & Wholesale Trade	331 (10%)	Electricity, Gas, Water & Waste Services	523 (11%)
Education and Training	283 (9%)	Health Care and Social Assistance	339 (7%)
Accommodation and Food Services	266 (8%)	Education and Training	311 (7%)

Major Investments

Clean energy and heavy industry projects (excluding cancelled and completed) (top projects by value)

Project	Description	Category	Status	Value
Collie Battery	Neoen's (French producer of renewable energy) first 4-hour long duration battery and its first major project in WA. Project has development approval for 1 GW / 4 GWh. Stage 1 is sized at 219 MW / 877 MWh Stage 2 is sized at 341 MW / 1,363 MWh Once fully operational, Collie Battery will provide short duration storage in peak times to ease pressure on the grid. It will have the ability to charge and discharge 20% of the average demand in WA's SWIS.	Battery	Construction on stage 2 began in May 2024	$2,000 m
Greenbushes Expansion CGP3	Construction of a third chemical grade processing plant (CGP3) at the existing lithium facility.	Key mineral	Announced	$880 m
Collie Green Steel Mill	Mill will use an electric arc furnace powered by renewable energy to convert Western Australian scrap steel into rebar used in construction.	Green manufacturing	Announced	$400 m
Collie BAM Facility	Produce high-grade anode materials for lithium-ion battery.	Manufacturing	Announced	$341 m
Collie Net Zero Magnesium Refinery	Project will establish and construct a pilot plant to produce high-purity magnesium metal in Collie's Light Industrial Area.	Manufacturing	Announced	$18 m

4 Data by usual residence means only employees living in Collie region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually work in Collie region).
5 Data by place of work means only employees working in Collie region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually reside in Collie region).
6 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 3,290 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').
7 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 4,596 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 69 of 375



Transmission Infrastructure Projects

SWIS (South West Interconnected Grid System) Transmission Planning Update

Name	Description	Status	Timing	Costs
Clean Energy Link - East	Clean Energy Link (both East and South connections) aims to optimise the existing infrastructure and prepare the regional electricity network in WA for clean energy future. Focuses on expanding the State's main electricity network to enable more renewable energy connections and supporting industry growth and electrification of processes to aid transitioning to net zero emissions by 2050.	In Planning Stage	N/A	$21 m
Clean Energy Link - South		In Planning Stage	N/A	N/A

Employment

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Collie	WA
Average working age	42	38
Median income (annual gross, exc. super)	$26.0K - $33.8K	$41.6K - $52.0K
Participation in workforce	51%	64%
Female participation in workforce	48%	60%
Unemployment rate (Dec 2024)	5.6%	3.4%
Regional Labour Market Index (Dec 2024)	N/A[8]	N/A

8 Note, Regional Labour Market Index is calculated by SA4. Bunbury SA4, which Collie SA2 sits within, has an 'average' rating but its unemployment rate of 3.5% is much lower than 7.0% in Collie, meaning using Bunbury's RLMI score as a proxy for Collie would be misleading.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Demographics

Indicator (2021 Census)	Collie	WA
Median age	44	37
First Nations (% of population)	4%	3%
Population growth (2016-2021)	0.2%	8%
Educational attainment (% of population aged 15 & above):[9]		
• Below Y12	68%	40%
• Y12 or equivalent	32%	60%
• Cert III & IV	29%	19%
• Bachelor and above	7%	26%

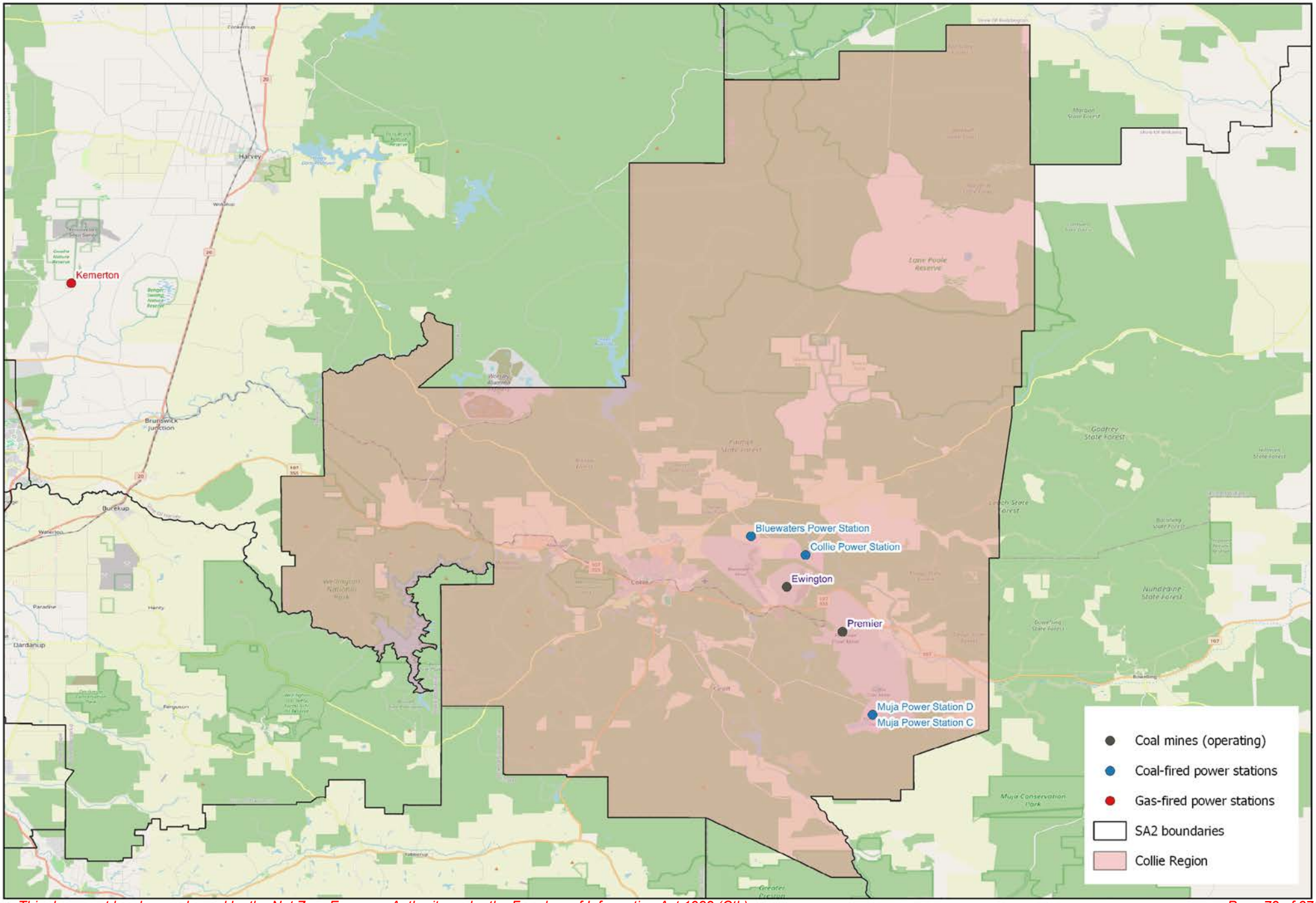
Housing

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Collie	WA
Homelessness[10]	0.4%	0.4%
Commonwealth Rent Assistance (Dec 2024)[11]	5%	4%
Mortgage stress[12]	9%	13%
Rental stress[13]	33%	28%

9 Excludes 'not stated' and categories are not cumulative.
10 Share of population
11 Share of population
12 Share of households where repayments are >30% of household income
13 Share of households where rent payments are >30% of household income

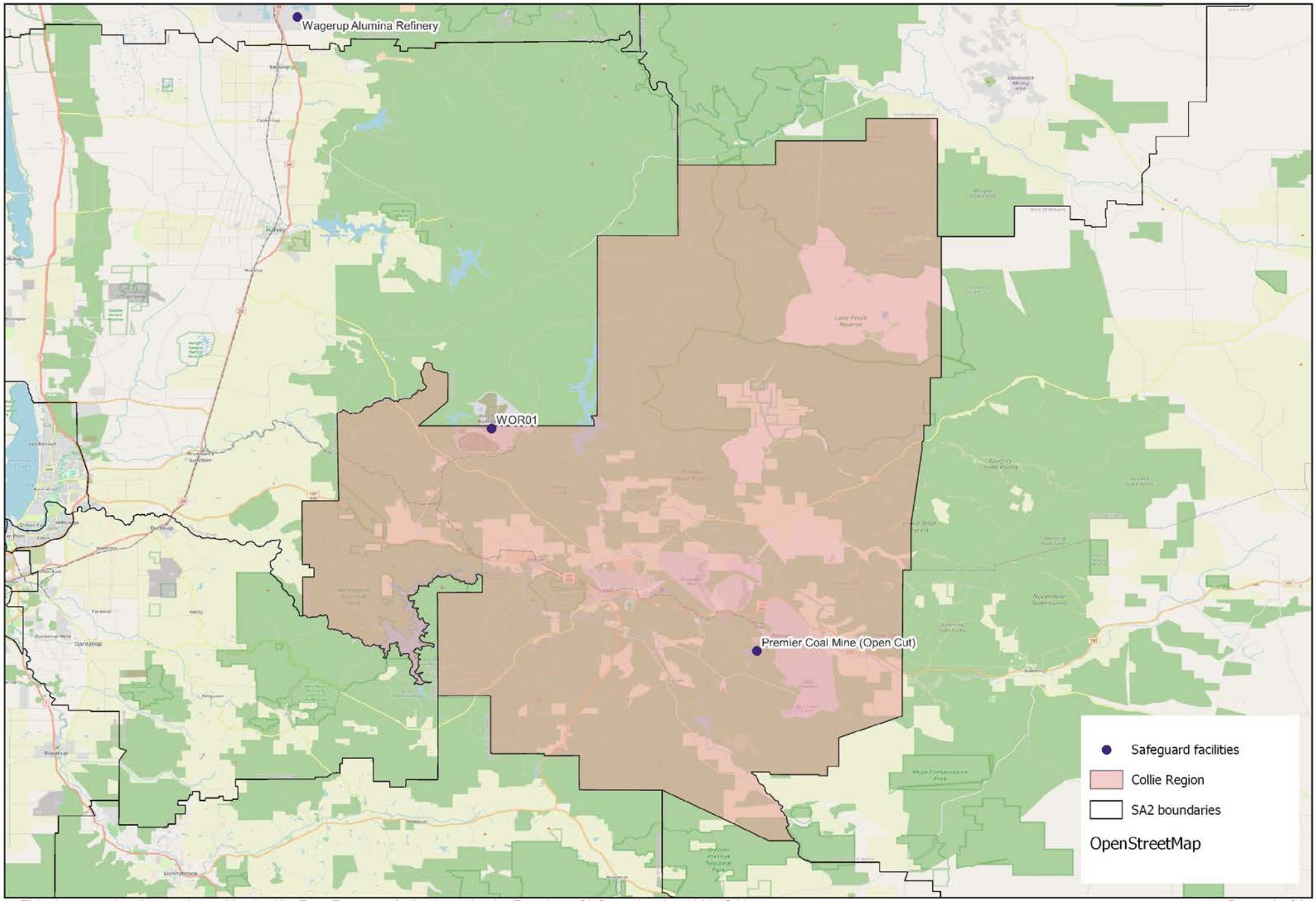
This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Power Stations and Mines



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Safeguards



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Data Sources

Section	Source	Date
Overview		
Total Population	Census, ABS	2021
Area	Mesh Blocks - SA2 Allocation Files, ABS	2021
Priority Region Selection Rationale		
All	Regional identification framework	Feb 2025
Emissions	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Carbon Intensive Industries		
Coal Fired Power Stations	Greenhouse and energy information by designated generation facility, CER Greenhouse and energy information - published data highlights (WA)	2023-2024
Coal mines	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Power station closure dates	Collie Community Fact Sheet, WA Government	August 2023
Safeguard facilities	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-2024
Major Industries		
Ranked Industries by most value	Economic data[a], REMPLAN	2025
Ranked Employing Industries	Census, ABS	2021
Major Investments		
All	Funded projects, ARENA HyResource[b], CSIRO Resources and Energy Major Projects, DISR	2025 2025 2024

a Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://www.remplan.com.au

b Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://research.csiro.au/hyresource/projects/projects-spreadsheet/

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Section	Source	Date
Transmission Infrastructure Projects		
All	Integrated System Plan[c], AEMO	June 2024
Employment		
Average working age, median income, labour force participation	Census, ABS	2021
Regional Labour Market Index	Regional Labour Market Indicator, Jobs and Skills Australia	December 2024
Unemployment rate:		
• Collie	Small Area Labour Markets, Jobs & Skills Australia	December 2024
• WA	Labour Force, Australia, ABS	December 2024
Demographics		
All	Census, ABS	2021
Housing		
Homelessness, mortgage stress, rental stress	Census, ABS	2021
Commonwealth Rental Assistance	Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics - quarterly data, DSS	December 2024
Maps		
All	Produced using data from Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), DAFF	December 2023

Note: All datasets maintained by third party providers listed above and date reflects most recent data available.

c Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/en/energy-systems/major-publications/integrated-system-plan-isp/2024-integrated-system-plan-isp

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Government

Net Zero Economy Authority



Regional Profiles

Pilbara

Total Area: 506,778 sq. km **Population:** 55,039 **Working Zones:** East Pilbara, Newman, Port Hedland and South Hedland, Ashburton, Karratha and Roebourne *(maps at end of profile)*

Region Selection Rationale

Exposure to decarbonisation	Potential to harness economic opportunities from decarbonisation
• **Carbon intensity:** High - 7 gas-fired power stations and 40 safeguards. As of 2023-24, safeguards in the region account for 68% of WA safeguard scope 1 emissions. • **Urgency:** High – heavy reliance on fossil fuels, driven by energy-intensive gas extraction and iron ore mining industries. • **Adaptive capacity:** Moderate (Karratha and Roebourne (average); Port Hedland and South Hedland; Newman (below average); Ashburton & East Pilbara (least adaptive)). • **Readiness:** High – WA's state government plans include expansion of renewable energy infrastructure and emission reduction. Private sector initiative: mining companies have committed to significant decarbonisation targets.	• **Natural capital:** substantial mineral resources, strong solar energy and green industry potential. • **Workforce compatibility:** High proportion of workers in the region are in jobs highly compatible with clean energy industries. • **Enabling infrastructure:** Medium – Port infrastructure, including facilities at Port Hedland and Dampier, support mineral exports and is being adapted for future renewable energy and hydrogen exports. Port Hedland airport – largest airport in region. Connected by Great Northern Highway and NW Coastal Highway.

Carbon-Intensive Industries

Gas Fired Power Stations (GFPS)

Name	Owner	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of WA scope 1 emissions (23/24)	% of Aus scope 1 emissions (23/24)
Yurralyi Maya	Rio Tinto	410,351	0.6%	0.1%
Port Hedland	APA	340,466	0.5%	0.1%
South Hedland	TransAlta	306,419	0.4%	0.1%
Karratha	ATCO	53,106	0.1%	0.02%
Paraburdoo	Rio Tinto	289,565	0.4%	0.1%
West Angelas	Rio Tinto	197,559	0.3%	0.1%
Cape Lambert	Rio Tinto	108,551	0.2%	0.04%
Total 7	4	1,706,017	2%	1%

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



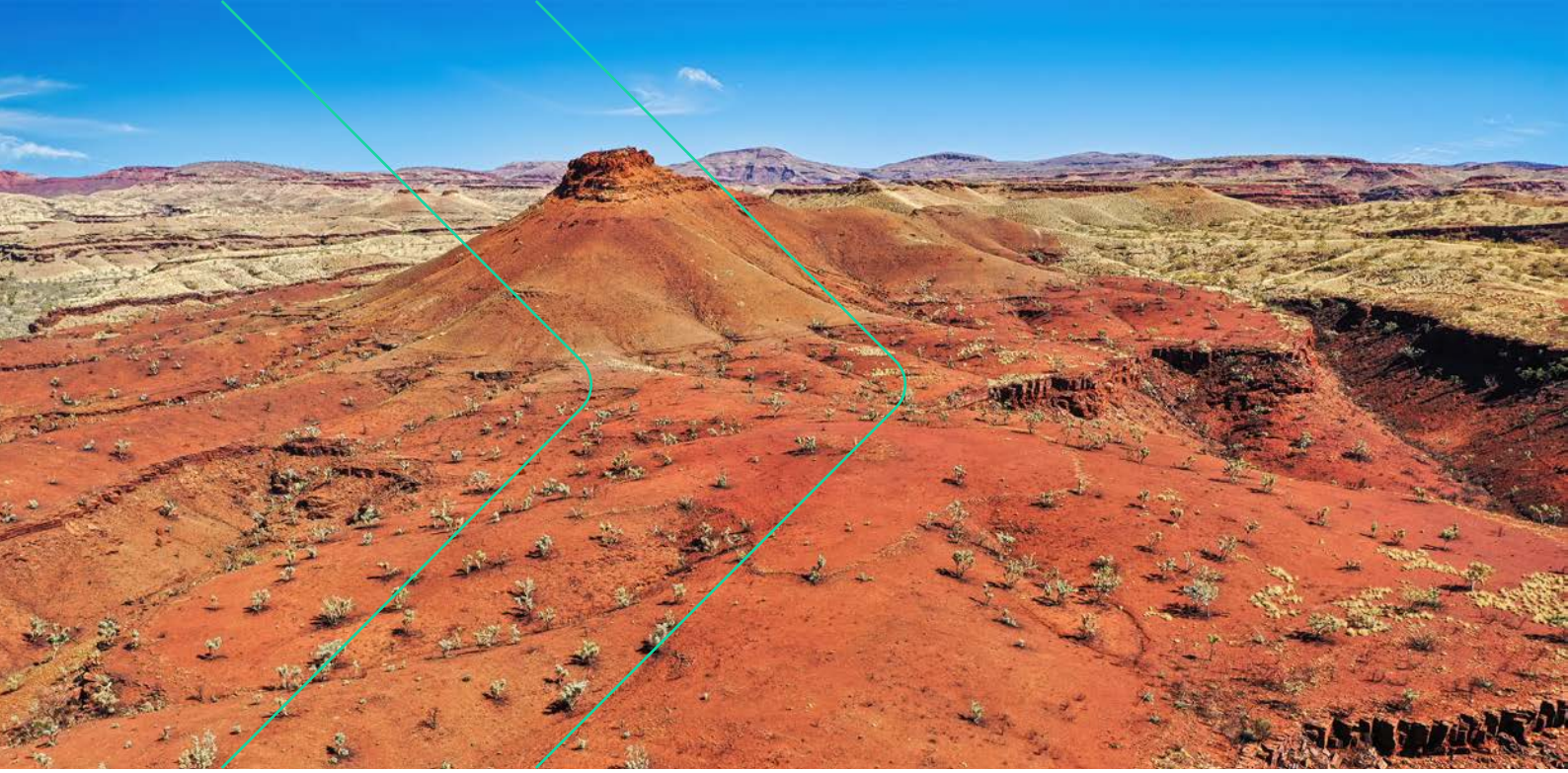
Manufacturing

Name	Owner	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of WA scope 1 emissions (23/24)	% of Aus scope 1 emissions (23/24)
YPF Ammonia Plant	Yara Pilbara Fertilisers Pty Ltd	1,366,029	2%	0.5%

Safeguard Facilities *(Emit 100,000+ tonnes CO2 annually - power stations connected to grid are exempt)*

Type	No.	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of WA scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)	% of Aus scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)
Electricity generation	3	1,040,732	2%	1%
Fertiliser and pesticide manufacturing	1	1,366,029	3%	1%
Metal ore mining	25	6,855,870	14%	5%
Oil & Gas Extraction	8	21,716,129	46%	17%
Rail freight transport	3	1,470,398	3%	1%
Total Safeguards	40	32,449,158	68%	25%

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Major Industries

Gross Regional Product (GRP): $88.8 billion (20.3% of WA's Gross State Product)[1]

Ranked Industries with most value	Value (m)	% of GRP
Mining	$82,479	92.9%
Construction	$1,884	2.1%
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	$1,090	1.2%
Transport, Postal & Warehousing	$635	0.7%
Public Administration & Safety	$351	0.4%

Ranked Employing Industries (by usual residence[2])	No. of employees (% of workforce)	Ranked Employing Industries (by place of work[3])	No. of employees (% of workforce)
Total labour force living in region	27,594[4]	Total labour force working in region	55,594[5]
Mining	9,072 (34%)	Mining	28,014 (50%)
Construction	2,394 (9%)	Construction	5,554 (10%)
Education	1,971 (7%)	Accommodation & Food Services	2,729 (5%)
Healthcare & Social Assistance	1,889 (7%)	Transport, Postal and Warehousing	2,579 (5%)
Transport, Postal and Warehousing	1,680 (6%)	Health Care and Social Assistance	2,056 (4%)

1 Data sourced using REMPLAN (incorporating ABS 2021 Census Place of Work Employment (Scaled); 2022 / 2023 National Input Output Tables; June 2024 Gross State Product figures)

2 Data by usual residence means only employees living in Pilbara region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually work in Pilbara).

3 Data by place of work means only employees working in Pilbara region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually reside in Pilbara).

4 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 26,449 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

5 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 53,592 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Major Investments

Clean energy and heavy industry projects (excluding cancelled and completed) (top 5 projects by value)

Project	Description	Category	Status	Value
Australian Renewable Energy Hub[6]	To integrate solar and onshore wind power, green hydrogen and green ammonia for export and domestic markets	Green hydrogen	Under development	$30,000 m
Port Hedland Green Steel (POSCO)[7]	Reduce magnetite iron ore to HBI before being shipped to South Korea for steelmaking; the project would replace natural gas for green hydrogen to reduce carbon emissions	Green metals	Proposed	$27,000 m
Balla Balla River desalination plant[8]	Plant will provide nearby industry 150 gigalitres per year of desalinated seawater	Water	Announced	$5,000 m
Yindjibarndi Energy Hub[9]	Development of renewable energy and storage projects on Yindjibarndi Ngurra (country). Plans include up to 3GW of wind, solar and battery storage to be in construction in the next several years.	Renewable energy	Announced	$1,000 m
Pilbara Generation Project[10]	A new hybrid solar gas energy solution to support the incorporation of large scale renewable energy and battery storage that will power existing projects	Renewable energy	Announced	$718 m

Transmission Infrastructure Projects

NWIS (North West Interconnected Grid System) Transmission Planning Update

Name	Description	Status	Timing	Costs
Pilbara Green Link[11]	550 km of transmission lines will connect Horizon Power's infrastructure to the Australian Renewable Energy Hub (AREH) and other renewable energy projects. Aim is to support renewable energy generation and decarbonisation efforts in the mining sector.	Announced	Construction to commence in 2025	N/A
Transmission Upgrades[12]	Includes various expansions to existing NWIS to improve capacity and facilitate the integration of renewable energy projects.	Ongoing	N/A	N/A

6 https://research.csiro.au/hyresource/australian-renewable-energy-hub/ (Access may be restricted on a secure network)
7 https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-12-16/south-korean-green-steel-iron-ore-plans-port-hedland/103201750 (Access may be restricted on a secure network)
8 https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-06-28/legacie-suez-ngarluma-pilbara-desalination-plant-balla-balla/104030948 (Access may be restricted on a secure network)
9 https://international.austrade.gov.au/en/news-and-analysis/success-stories/yindjibarndi-people-partner-with-acen-to-bring-clean-energy-to-western-australia
10 https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/resources-and-energy-major-projects-2024
11 https://reneweconomy.com.au/engineer-named-for-new-transmission-line-from-massive-renewable-hub-to-pilbara-iron-ore-mines/ (Access may be restricted on a secure network)
12 https://www.wa.gov.au/organisation/energy-policy-wa/pilbara-energy-transition-plan

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 79 of 375

Employment

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Pilbara	WA
Average working age	37	37
Median income (annual gross, exc. super)	$78.0K - $91.0K	$41.6K - $52.0K
Participation in workforce	67%	64%
Female participation in workforce	65%	60%
Unemployment rate (Dec 2024)	2.2%	3.4%
Regional Labour Market Index (Mar 2025)	Below average[13]	N/A

Demographics

Indicator (2021 Census)	Pilbara	WA
Median age	32	38
First Nations (% of population)	15%	3%
Population growth (2016-2021)	-8%	8%
Educational attainment (% of population aged 15 & above):[14]		
Below Y12	45%	40%
Y12 or equivalent	55%	60%
Cert III & IV	31%	19%
Bachelor and above	16%	26%

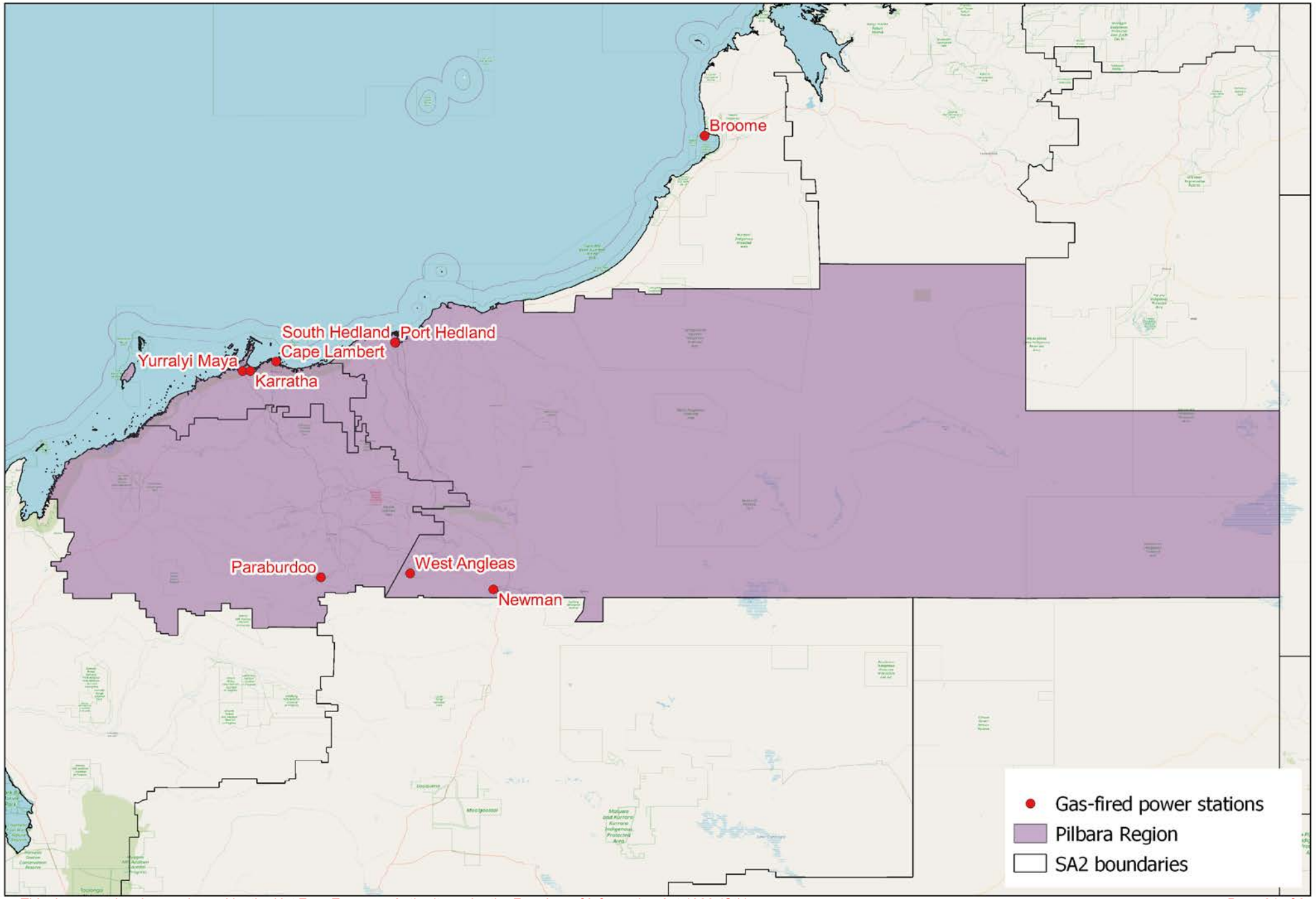
Housing

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Pilbara	WA
Homelessness[15]	0.7%	0.4%
Commonwealth Rent Assistance (Dec 2024)[16]	1%	4%
Mortgage stress[17]	8%	13%
Rental stress[18]	9%	28%

13 Note, the Pilbara region falls within the 'Western Australia – Outback North & South' labour market region, where the Regional Labour Market Index (RMLI) is assessed as 'Below average'. However, the unemployment rate is much higher across this region than it is in Pilbara, meaning using this as a proxy for Pilbara would be misleading.
14 Excludes 'not stated' and categories are not cumulative
15 Share of population
16 Share of population
17 Share of households where repayments are >30% of household income
18 Share of households where rent payments are >30% of household income

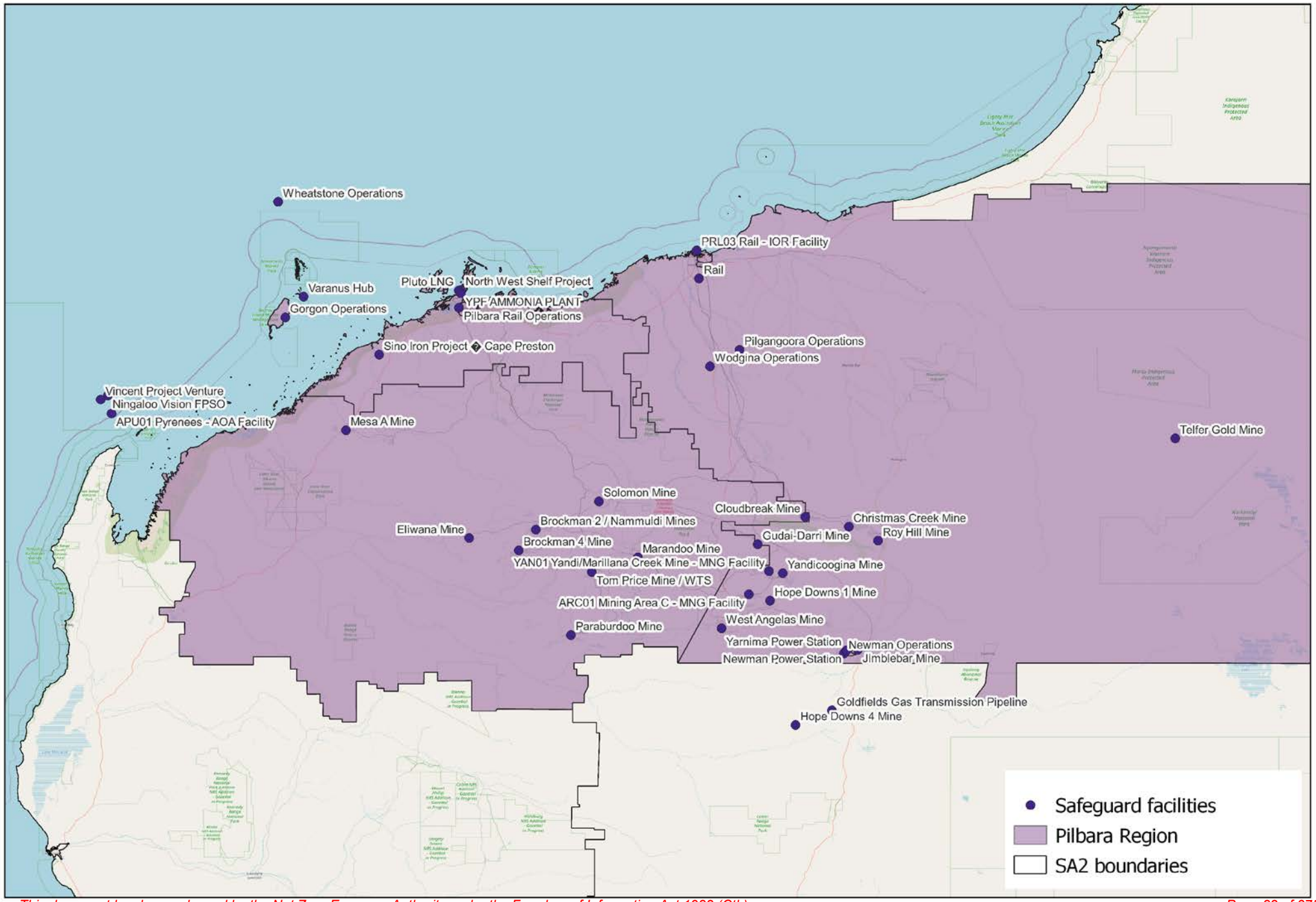
This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Power Stations and Mines



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Safeguards



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Data Sources

Section	Source	Date
Overview		
Total Population	Census, ABS	2021
Area	Mesh Blocks - SA2 Allocation Files, ABS	2021
Region Selection Rationale		
All	Regional identification framework	February 2025
Carbon Intensive Industries		
Gas Fired Power Stations	Greenhouse & energy information by designated generation facility, CER (Pilbara) Greenhouse & energy information - published data highlights (WA)	2023-24
Manufacturing	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Safeguard facilities	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Major Industries		
Ranked industries by most value	Economic data[a], REMPLAN	2025
Ranked Employing Industries	Census, ABS	2021
Major Investments		
All	Funded projects, ARENA HyResource[b], CSIRO Resources and Energy Major Projects, DISR	2025 2025 2024

a Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://www.remplan.com.au

b Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://research.csiro.au/hyresource/projects/projects-spreadsheet/

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Section	Source	Date
Transmission Infrastructure Projects		
Pilbara Green Link	Pilbara Green Link[c], Horizon Power	November 2024
NWIS Upgrades	$3 billion Rewiring the Nation deal to power WA jobs and growth, DCCEEW	August 2023
Employment		
Average working age, median income, labour force participation	Census, ABS	2021
Regional Labour Market Index	Regional Labour Market Indicator, Jobs and Skills Australia	March 2025
Unemployment rate:		
• Pilbara	Small Area Labour Markets, Jobs and Skills Australia	December 2024
• WA	Labour Force, Australia, ABS	December 2024
Demographics		
All	Census, ABS	2021
Housing		
Homelessness, mortgage stress, rental stress	Census, ABS	2021
Commonwealth Rental Assistance	Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics - quarterly data, DSS	December 2024
Maps		
All	Produced using data from Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), DAFF	December 2023

Note: All datasets maintained by third party providers listed above and date reflects most recent data available.

c Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://infrastructurepipeline.org/project/pilbara-green-link

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Government

Net Zero Economy Authority



Regional Profiles

Adelaide

Total Area: 1,352 sq. km **Population:** 1,131,022 **Working Zones:** Adelaide & surrounds[1] *(maps at end of profile)*

Region Focus Rationale

Exposure to decarbonisation

- **Carbon intensity:** 8 gas-fired power stations and 3 safeguards. As of 2023-24, safeguards in the region account for 20% of SA safeguard scope 1 emissions.
- **Urgency:** High - Torrens Island power station is expected to close in 2026, Osborne is expected to close in 2027, and Dry Creek is expected to close in 2030. All other power stations are not expected to close until 2037 and beyond.
- **Adaptive capacity:** Moderate, partly driven by relatively low unemployment (4.1% as of Dec 2024). Pockets of low adaptive capacity surrounding Torrens Island.
- **Readiness:** The legislative framework for the Energy Industry Jobs Plan commenced on 11 December 2024, with the commencement of the Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024 (the Act). In January 2025, the Authority commenced consultation to assess whether Torrens Island B power station should be included in the EIJP, in the lead-up to its scheduled closure in June 2026. These consultations are focused on understanding how workers and businesses are impacted by the closure, what support workers can already access, and what other employment opportunities exist in the region.

Carbon-Intensive Industries

Gas Fired Power Stations

Name	Owner	Closure year (AEMO NEM Gen Apr 2025[a])	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of SA scope 1 emissions (23/24)	% of Aus scope 1 emissions (23/24)
Barker Inlet	AGL	2044	163,814	2%	0.1%
Bolivar	Iberdrola Australia Energy Markets Pty Ltd	2045	23,494	0.2%	0.01%
Dry Creek	ENGIE	2030	12,596	0.1%	0.00%
Osborne	ATCO and Origin Energy	2027	156,932	2%	0.1%
Pelican Point	ENGIE	2037	677,090	7%	0.2%
Quarantine	Origin Energy	2044-55	72,916	1%	0.02%
Snapper Point	Nexif and RATCH	2046	26,704	0.3%	0.01%
Torrens Island	AGL	2026	370,328	4%	0.1%
Total 8	8		1,503,874	15%	0.5%

a Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/energy-systems/electricity/national-electricity-market-nem/nem-forecasting-and-planning/forecasting-and-planning-data/generation-information

1 Adelaide & surrounds comprises the 4 Adelaide statistical area level 4s (SA4s) (Central and Hills, North, South, West but excludes Adelaide Hills and Onkaparinga statistical areas level 3 (SA3s), mirroring boundaries used for the EIJP.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Safeguard Facilities (Emit 100,000+ tonnes CO2 annually - power stations connected to grid are exempt)

Type	No.	Scope 1 emissions (tCO2-e) (23/24)	% of SA scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)	% of AUS scope 1 safeguard emissions (23/24)
Cement, lime, plaster & concrete product manufacturing (Angaston Operations & Birkenhead Operations)	2	922,272	17%	1.6%
Glass manufacturing (Orora Glass Plant Gawler)	1	189,646	3%	0.1%
Total safeguards	3	1,111,918	20%	1.8%

Major Industries

Gross Regional Product (GRP): $97.7 billion (70.1% of SA's Gross State Product)[2]

Ranked Industries with most value	Value (m)	% of GRP
Rental, Hiring & Real Estate Services	$12,636	12.9%
Health Care & Social Assistance	$11,289	11.6%
Public Administration & Safety	$8,821	9.0%
Financial & Insurance Services	$8,327	8.5%
Construction	$7,826	8.0%

Ranked Employing Industries (by usual residence[3])	No. of employees (% of workforce)	Ranked Employing Industries (by place of work[4])	No. of employees (% of workforce)
Total labour force living in region	547,065[5]	Total labour force working in region	567,786[6]
Health Care and Social Assistance	93,374 (18%)	Health Care and Social Assistance	100,641 (18%)
Retail & Wholesale Trade	65,794 (12%)	Retail & Wholesale trade	69,489 (13%)
Education & Training	49,493 (9%)	Education & Training	52,262 (10%)
Construction	43,623 (8%)	Public Administration & Safety	44,423 (8%)
Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	40,294 (8%)	Professional, Scientific & Technical Services	43,192 (8%)

2 Data sourced using REMPLAN (incorporating ABS 2021 Census Place of Work Employment (Scaled); 2022 / 2023 National Input Output Tables; June 2024 Gross State Product figures)

3 Data by usual residence means only employees living in Adelaide region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually work in Adelaide).

4 Data by place of work means only employees working in Adelaide region would be captured (regardless of whether or not they actually reside in Adelaide).

5 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 529,019 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

6 Note, for purposes of calculating shares of workforce, total of 549,304 was used (total workforce minus those workers in 'Industry of Employment' categories listed as 'inadequately described' and 'not stated').

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Major Investments

Major clean energy and heavy industry projects (excluding cancelled and completed) (top projects by value)

Project	Description	Category	Status	Value
Neoen Big Battery (Blyth) Deployment Project	Neoen will procure the construction of a Grid-Forming Battery with a minimum size of 200 MW / 400MWh at Blyth in South Australia.	Battery storage	Under construction	$337.5m
Green Hydrogen and Battery Energy Storage System	Consists of demonstrator scale hydrogen production and battery storage system located at Bolivar and provides proof of concept for the transport of hydrogen absorbed in a metal hydride tank for safe handling and further utilisation in Indonesia.	Renewable energy	Under construction	$17.5 m
Hydrogen Park Adelaide	Will deliver a renewable hydrogen blend to customers on the existing gas network.	Green hydrogen	Under construction	N/A
HILT CRC - upgrading iron ore for DRI production using seawater	HILT CRC will lead the development of a scalable hydrometallurgical caustic leaching process to upgrade iron ore using the reagents derived from seawater reverse osmosis (RO) brines.	Research & Development	Feasibility	$5.73 m

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Transmission Infrastructure Projects

AEMO Final 2024 Integrated System Plan (ISP)

Name	Description	Status	Timing	Costs
Mid North SA REZ Expansion	New 275kV and 132kV transmission lines to connect renewable generation to Adelaide and to supply increasing industrial load.	Actionable (progressed from Future in Draft 2024 ISP)	Jul 2029 (previously 2027-28)	$389 m (±50%) (in 2023 $ terms)

Employment

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)[7]	Adelaide	SA
Average working age	38	39
Median income (annual gross, exc. super)	$33.8K - $41.6K	$33.8K - $41.6K
Participation in workforce	62%	60%
Female participation in workforce	58%	57%
Unemployment rate (Dec 2024)	4.1%	4.0%
Regional Labour Market Index (Dec 2024)	Poor – Above average[8]	N/A

7 Census data used here is based on 'usual residence' and not 'place of work'

8 This range ('Poor' – 'Above average') applies to the four Adelaide SA4s (noting Adelaide Hills and Onkaparinga SA3s are excluded from NZEA's Adelaide regional definition). Adelaide – North (Poor); Adelaide – West (Average); Adelaide – Central & Hills and Adelaide – South (Above average)

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Demographics

Indicator (2021 Census)	Adelaide	SA
Median age	38	40
First Nations (% of population)	2%	2%
Population growth (2016-2021)	5%	6%
Educational attainment (% of population aged 15 & above):[9]		
• Below Y12	39%	44%
• Y12 or equivalent	61%	56%
• Cert III & IV	17%	19%
• Bachelor and above	29%	24%

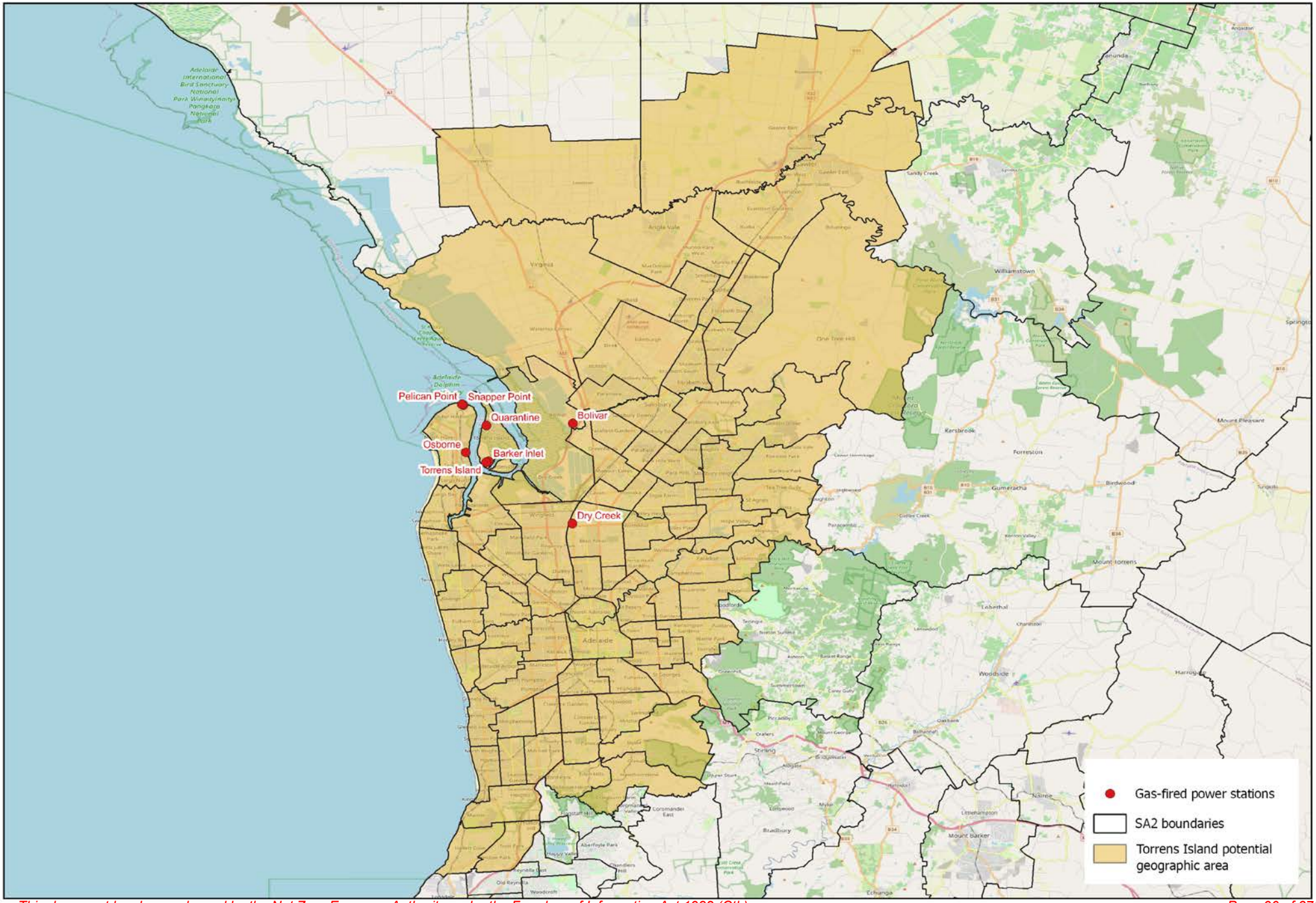
Housing

Indicator (2021 Census unless otherwise stated)	Adelaide	SA
Homelessness[10]	0.4%	0.4%
Commonwealth Rent Assistance (Dec 2024)[11]	5%	5%
Mortgage stress[12]	13%	12%
Rental stress[13]	31%	31%

9 Excludes 'not stated' and categories are not cumulative
10 Share of population
11 Share of population
12 Share of households where repayments are >30% of household income
13 Share of households where rent payments are >30% of household income

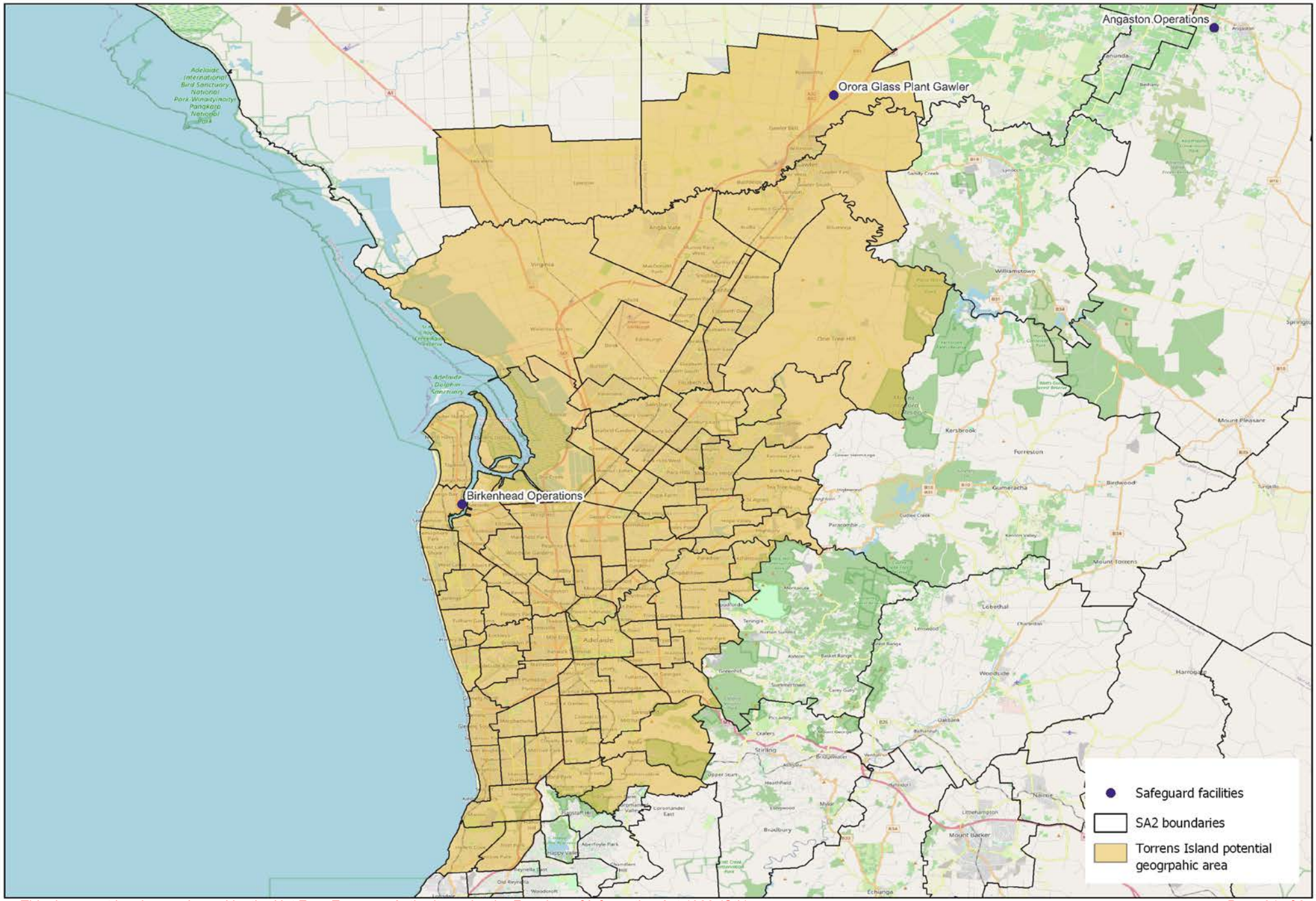
This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Power Stations



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Map of Region – Safeguards



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Data Sources

Section	Source	Date
Overview		
Total Population	Census, ABS	2021
Area	Mesh Blocks - SA2 Allocation Files, ABS	2021
Region Focus Rationale		
All	Regional identification framework	Feb 2025
Emissions	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Carbon Intensive Industries		
Gas Fired Power Stations	Greenhouse and energy information by designated generation facility, CER Greenhouse and energy information - published data highlights (SA)	2023-24
Power station closure dates	Generation Information[a], AEMO	January 2025
Safeguard facilities	Safeguard facilities data, CER	2023-24
Major Industries		
Ranked Industries by most value	Economic data[b], REMPLAN	2025
Ranked Employing Industries	Census, ABS	2021
Major Investments		
All	Funded projects, ARENA HyResource[c], CSIRO Resources and Energy Major Projects, DISR	2025 2025 2024

a Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/energy-systems/electricity/national-electricity-market-nem/nem-forecasting-and-planning/forecasting-and-planning-data/generation-information

b Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://www.remplan.com.au

c Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://research.csiro.au/hyresource/projects/projects-spreadsheet/

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Section	Source	Date
Transmission Infrastructure Projects		
All	Integrated System Plan[d], AEMO	June 2024
Employment		
Average working age, median income, labour force participation	Census, ABS	2021
Regional Labour Market Index	Regional Labour Market Indicator, Jobs and Skills Australia	December 2024
Unemployment rate:		
• Adelaide	Small Area Labour Markets, Jobs and Skills Australia	December 2024
• SA	Labour Force, Australia, ABS	December 2024
Demographics		
All	Census, ABS	2021
Housing		
Homelessness, mortgage stress, rental stress	Census, ABS	2021
Commonwealth Rental Assistance	Benefit and Payment Recipient Demographics - quarterly data, DSS	December 2024
Maps		
All	Produced using data from Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), DAFF	December 2023

Note: All datasets maintained by third party providers listed above and date reflects most recent data available.

d Access may be restricted on a secure network: https://aemo.com.au/en/energy-systems/major-publications/integrated-system-plan-isp/2024-integrated-system-plan-isp

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

EIJP – Overview of Part 5

Key Messages:

- The Energy Industry Jobs Plan (**EIJP**) supports an effective, orderly and fair transition for workers directly impacted by the closure of coal-fired and gas-fired power stations.
- It does this by placing obligations on employers specified in a Fair Work Commission (FWC) determination to provide transition supports to its employees, following a community of interest assessment undertaken by the Authority.
- The legislation is not prescriptive enabling supports to be tailored to reflect the needs and requirements of the employers and their employees.
- The EIJP is a response to the impacts of past closures which were poorly managed.
- The Hazelwood closure shows that a lack of time and rushed support leads to bad outcomes for workers and communities: less than 40 per cent of workers had full-time employment two years after closure.
- In the next two years, there are six power station closures that the Authority will assess.
- Assessments of Torrens Island B and Eraring power stations are underway, and the Authority is soon to commence its assessment of Collie A and Yallourn.

Talking Points

What is EIJP designed to do?

- The EIJP is a framework to support employees in closing coal-fired and gas-fired power stations and dependent businesses to prepare for and find their next job.
- The EIJP ensures that:
  - Employers provide training, financial and career advice, and flexible work arrangements or paid leave to access these supports.
  - Supports are implemented well ahead of a plant closure so that workers have time to retrain and are supported to find alternative employment.
- The Authority also provides support to help connect workers with new roles provided by local employers, including assistance from local Jobs and Skills Coordinators, a dedicated jobs board and onboarding incentives.
- The EIJP is established by the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024* (**the *NZEA Act***), which commenced on 11 December 2024.

What is the process for setting up a Community of Interest (COI) process and how is an EIJP established once a COI process is complete?

- **Issuing a trigger notice:** Where the Authority's CEO is satisfied that the whole or part of a gas-fired or coal-fired power station has announced its closure, they may issue a legislative instrument deeming the announcement as a 'trigger notice'. This commences a 'community of interest' (COI) assessment process under Part 5 of the *NZEA Act*.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- **Specifying the geographic area:** Where a trigger notice has been issued, a geographic area is specified to delineate where the EIJP would operate.
- **Community of Interest Assessment:** The COI process helps the Authority's CEO determine if the EIJP should be implemented for a particular closure. It includes consultation with key stakeholders to understand what supports already exist, what opportunities there are for workers in the local labour market, and where supports provided by the EIJP may smooth the transition for workers.
- **Application to Fair Work Commission (FWC):** If the CEO considers that the EIJP is warranted post-consultation, they will apply to the FWC for a COI determination.
    - The FWC independently determines whether the EIJP should be established for a closure, and which employers should be included.
    - This includes the 'closing employer', or the owner and/or operator of the power station, and any 'dependent employers' - businesses that have a commercial relationship with, and will be substantially and directly impacted by the closure of, the power station. A dependent employer must be a constitutional corporation.
    - FWC must ensure relevant parties have an opportunity to be heard, including employers, relevant unions, affected employees and the Energy Industry Worker Redeployment Advisory Group (**EIWRAG**).
- **FWC COI determination:** If the FWC makes a determination to establish an EIJP for that closure, it enlivens legislative obligations on employers specified in their determination – which could include the closing power station and/or any identified dependent employers.
- **Operation:** Employers included in the FWC's COI determination must provide employees access to transition supports, such as access to retraining, career advice and financial advice, and flexible work arrangements or paid leave to access these supports.
    - Employers and unions are encouraged to work together to agree the supports that are provided to employees. Where agreement isn't reached, there are pathways available through the FWC to clarify the obligations of employers.
    - The Authority will help to link employees to suitable jobs offered by receiving employers in the local region, including on-the-ground co-ordinators, an online jobs board and on-boarding incentives.
- **Closure:** The COI determination will continue until six months after the closure of the power station.

[If asked] Why are the COI assessment processes so protracted?

- The NZEA Act requires the CEO to separately assess the closing employer as well as businesses in the supply chain likely to be substantially impacted by a closure.
- This assessment must be completed in order for the CEO to conclude the 'community of interest' process and make an informed decision on whether to make an application and which employers to specify (if any).
- This process can take time, particularly where the supply chain is complex, and information has to be collected and analysed from a lot of companies.
    - In gathering information, our strong preference is to work collaboratively with businesses. We take steps to tailor our information requests, taking into account the likelihood of whether a business is likely to meet the statutory test for inclusion in the EIJP.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- The Authority also has statutory information gathering powers which can be used if businesses are not providing information in a timely fashion.
    - Failure to comply with information requests using these powers can attract civil penalties. We will use these powers responsibly, and where businesses do not comply with reasonable requests for information.
    - We are continuing to refine our communications so businesses understand the requirements of our legislation. We also work proactively with local business groups and chambers of commerce.

What are the upcoming closures, the number of workers and types of businesses covered?

- The Authority has commenced two community of interest processes to date:
    - Torrens Island B, a gas fired power station in Adelaide, due to close in June 2028; and,
    - Eraring, a coal fired power station in the Hunter region of New South Wales, due to close in August 2027.
- Over the next 2 years, the Authority is expecting to assess an additional 4 power stations including Collie (scheduled to close in Oct 2027), Yallourn (June 2028), Muja (2029) and Callide B (2031).
    - *If asked about progress of COI process for Osborne*: We are in ongoing discussions with ATCO Ltd about the scheduled closure of Osborne. These conversations are informing any future decision about commencing a COI process.
- If an operator formally changes their closure date, the NZEA will assess what impact that has the specific community of interest process.
- The number of employees and businesses covered by the EIJP will depend on the outcomes of the assessment process undertaken by the CEO and determinations made by the FWC.
    - As of June 2025, Australia had 18 coal and gas power stations that have reported expected closure dates over the next 30 years, with 11 expected to close before the end of 2035.
    - The number of workers at each facility is commercial information that is not generally publicly disclosed.
    - *If required:* For the purpose of the Impact Analysis, the number of coal-fired power station workers estimated to experience disruption to their employment due to announced closures to 2035 was over 3,000.
    - Figures in the Impact Analysis on ongoing employee numbers are derived from data reported by facilities under the National Pollutant Inventory, and includes contractors working at these facilities.
    - As closures occur, the Authority will work closely with individual facilities to better understand the workforce impacts.
- *[Note: A list of coal-fired power stations and larger gas-fired power stations and expected closure dates is in the background section]*

What types of obligations will employers have if they are included in the EIJP?

- All closing and dependent employers must:
    - Determine which employees want to move to new employment
    - Provide information to employees on employer obligations
    - Co-operate with the Authority's CEO and staff in the administration of the EIJP.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- In addition, all closing and dependent employers specified in a COI determination must offer a range of transition supports (to the extent it is not unreasonable) such as:
    - Providing employees with **flexible work arrangements or paid time off** to receive career planning and financial advice, attend training that will assist finding new employment and to attend recruitment related activities such as job interviews.
    - Financial contributions to the cost of **career planning, financial advice and relevant training**
    - **Engaging with receiving employers** to help facilitate the employment of any relevant employee
    - Permitting all employees to **receive advice and support from a relevant employee organisation**, such as a trade union.
- In considering what is not unreasonable, the following factors must be taken into account:
    - the employer's operational requirements
    - the employees' need for supports to facilitate their search for other employment; and,
    - entitlements in relevant enterprise agreements or other industrial instruments.

How do the obligations under the EIJP interact with existing enterprise agreements and other industrial instruments?

- The EIJP has been designed to operate within the existing workforce relations framework: both the CEO and the FWC must consider existing industrial arrangements and supports when deciding whether or not to apply the legislative framework to a particular closure.
- As such, it is highly unlikely that an EIJP determination would create any inconsistencies or ambiguity in relation to existing industrial instruments.
- In the unlikely event that this occurred, the FWC can take action to correct this (either on their own initiative or on application by an employer or union).

[If required]

- Employers and employees can choose to include worker transition supports in their enterprise agreement when it comes up for re-negotiation.
- However, the EIJP cannot cause enterprise agreements to be reopened: this can only occur once an agreement has expired or both parties agree to re-open it.
- Enterprise agreements that have not expired can only be varied if all parties agree to a change.
- The EIJP provides a streamlined process for unions and employers to reach agreement and to have that ratified by the FWC.
- This includes being able to seek a determination from the FWC on the nature of transition supports that should be provided if the employer and union cannot agree after a period of three months.

Has the Authority undertaken any modelling on the workforce impacts of the transition or 2035 target?

Specifics on 2035 modelling should be referred to either the Treasury or the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

- The Authority undertakes a range of analysis when evaluating the impact of closing power stations on workers.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- This includes a detailed assessment of impacts on business and their workers based on information provided by companies, unions and other regional stakeholders.
- We also undertake analysis of the local labour market and an assessment of regional transition pathways for impacted workers. We use this analysis to consider the transition supports which need to be provided to workers to help them prepare for and transition to new employment.
- The Authority is working with communities to understand how regional economies will transition over time. While this differs by region, there are a range of transition pathways for power station workers which leverage their skills and qualifications.

Why should businesses be compelled to provide additional generous assistance to high income workers? What impact will these packages have on the cost of utilities?

- The NZEA supports regions that are experiencing the closure of coal and gas fired power stations.
- This includes minimising involuntary unemployment of workers who are being made redundant by those closures.
- We know from past experience that – regardless of income, skills and experience – workers, their families and communities experience very poor outcomes when power station closures are rushed and employees don't receive sufficient support to prepare and plan for their next move.
- Supporting workers to properly prepare and plan ahead for closures will assist in reducing the potential negative economic impacts that regional communities can face during periods of economic change and transformation.
- It includes ensuring those workers have the appropriate skills and training to transition and helping to link them to employment opportunities in the region.
- This will enable greater workforce mobility and help regional communities and employers to retain skilled and experienced workers.
- The Government has a range of other initiatives to assist workers not covered by the EIJP, including supports provided under Regional Workforce Transition Plans administered by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

[If required]

- The NZEA considers factors such as the size and sophistication of a business as part of its assessment process. Consistent with Commonwealth policy, we ensure that we are making decisions in a way that is risk-based and proportionate.

What pathways exist to clarify and enforce EIJP obligations?

- The NZEA Act provides a range of avenues for employers and employees to clarify obligations under the EIJP. There are also mandatory dispute resolution processes if disputes arise following a determination being put in place.
    - Section 60: If the details of the support package are agreed by employers, employees and unions at the workplace level, they can jointly apply to the FWC to have that agreement recognised.
        - The FWC can then issue a determination which confirms the actions the employer will take to meet its obligations under the Act and outlines a procedure for settling disputes.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- Section 61: If parties can't agree on obligations within 3 months, either the employer or union can seek a determination from the FWC on how the employer will meet its obligations
- Section 62: Where there is no determination under section 60 or 61 in place, the Authority, a union or an employee can also seek an order from the FWC on the actions that an employer must take to meet its obligations.

- If an employer breaches a FWC determination or order under Sections 60-62, the employer may be subject to civil penalties of up to 600 penalty units.
  - Civil penalties are enforceable through the courts under Part 4 (pecuniary penalties) or Part 7 (injunctions) of the Regulatory Powers Act.

What is the EIWRAG? What process was undertaken to appoint the members?

- The EIWRAG is an advisory body established under section 63 of the NZEA Act that has the opportunity to be heard in relation to various applications made to the FWC relating to the EIJP including:
  - Applications made by the Authority to set up a COI for a particular power station (section 57 of the NZEA Act)
  - Applications made by various parties to confirm how employers can comply with their obligations under a COI determination (sections 60, 61 and 62 of the NZEA Act).
- All EIWRAG members were appointed by the Minister after being nominated by a registered employer or employee organisation that is entitled to represent workers and employers from closing coal and gas fired power stations, and their dependent employers.
- Appointments are for a three year term and members are not entitled to receive remuneration for sitting on the advisory body.
- The Minister made the following appointments to the EIWRAG:
  - Alistair Sage (Senior National Legal Officer, Mining and Energy Union)
  - Ben Moxham (Director, Industrial and Policy, ACTU - nominated by the Australian Services Union)
  - Shaun Kelleher (Workplace Relations Practice Leader for Newcastle and the Hunter, Australian Industry Group)
  - Oliver Judd (Chief Executive Officer, National Election and Communications Association)
  - Kat Eather (General Counsel, Business Council of Australia)
  - Darcy Gunning (Campaigns Organiser, Australian Manufacturing and Workers Union)
- As detailed in the 2024-25 Federal Budget, secretariat support for the EIWRAG is provided by the FWC. Any questions relating to the operation of the EIWRAG should be referred to the FWC.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Background

Schedule of Expected Power Station Closures

FACILITY	REGION	EXPECTED CLOSURE YEAR
Eraring Power Station	Hunter Valley, NSW	Aug-2027
Collie Power Station	Collie, WA	Oct-2027
Osborne Power Station*	Adelaide, SA	Dec-2027
Torrens Island B*	Adelaide, SA	Jun-2028
Yallourn Power Station	Latrobe Valley, VIC	Jun-2028
Muja Power Station	Collie, WA	Oct-2029
Gladstone Power Station	Gladstone, QLD	2029
Loy Yang Power Station A	Latrobe Valley, VIC	2035
Tarong Power Station	South Burnett, QLD	2036-37
Tarong North	South Burnett, QLD	2037
Mount Piper Power Station	Lithgow, NSW	2040
Kogan Creek Power Station	Darling Downs, QLD	2042
Stanwell Power Station	Central QLD	2044-46
Loy Yang Power Station B	Latrobe Valley, VIC	2047
Millmerran Power Station	Darling Downs, QLD	2051
Callide Power Station C	Central QLD	Not provided
Bluewaters Power Station	Collie, WA	Not provided

* Gas-fired power station

Division:	Worker Transition Division	
Prepared by: s47F **Mob:** s47F **Ext:** s47F **Date:** 8 September 2025	**Cleared by General Manager:** Stuart Richardson **Mob:** s47F **Ext:** s47F **Date:** 11 September 2025	
Consultation: N/A **Name:** N/A	**Date:** N/A **Mob:** N/A **Ext:**	
Cleared by Division Head: Rachel Livingston		**Date:** 22 September 2025
Cleared by Chief Executive Officer: David Shankey		**Date:** 3 October 2025

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

EIJP – Regulatory Approach

Key Messages:

- NZEA's regulatory responsibilities are primarily related to Part 5 of the Act and the implementation of the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP).
- The Authority's regulatory responsibilities are varied and some are shared with other stakeholders and entities. For example, we
  - **Consult on, and decide whether it is reasonable to include individual businesses in an EIJP**. During Fair Work Commission (FWC) proceedings, unions can nominate additional employers to be covered by an EIJP, and the FWC makes the final decision on whether an EIJP is implemented.
  - **Promote and monitor compliance with the EIJP**, including by providing information, advice, education and assistance to closing, receiving and dependent employers and employees.
  - **Support enforcement through the FWC and the Courts**. While we don't issue penalties, we play a key role in regulatory actions. Unions also play an important role in being able to enforce worker rights under the EIJP.
- In exercising our regulatory powers, we ensure that our activities are targeted, risk-based, proportionate and outcomes-focused.
- This includes a thorough assessment of each business to understand the impacts of specific power station closures on the company and its employees, and the economic circumstances and workforce needs specific to each region.

Talking Points

What is NZEA's regulatory position?

- In exercising our regulatory powers, we ensure that our activities are targeted, risk-based, proportionate and outcomes-focused.
- We evaluate whether additional transition support is necessary to assist workers at closing power stations and affected supply chain businesses to prepare for, and secure new employment opportunities.
- This involves a thorough assessment of each business to understand the impacts of specific power station closures on the company and its employees, and the economic circumstances and workforce needs specific to each closure.
- As a new regulator, we are maturing as an organisation and developing processes and policies that are risk-based, repeatable and consistent.
- The Authority is taking a common-sense approach to using our legislative powers.
  - We aim to support baseline standards for worker transition in coal and gas facilities using our legislative powers, ensuring fair and structured pathways to new employment.
- We are conscious that decisions made by the FWC will also likely establish precedents that will inform and refine future processes.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

When will the NZEA publish their regulatory framework?

- As a new regulator, we are maturing as an organisation and implementing processes and policies that are risk-based, repeatable and will evolve over time.
- We have published materials on the NZEA website which provide information on what the EIJP is and how it works.
- The CEO is looking to publish a regulatory approach statement shortly which outlines his regulatory responsibilities, guiding principles which underpin his approach and key factors he will consider when making regulatory decisions.
- The Authority expects to receive a Statement of Expectations from Minister Ayres shortly. This will help inform the regulatory approach which will outline how the CEO aims to use his regulatory powers in relation to EIJP to address the Government's expectations.
- Over the coming months the Authority will develop its Regulatory Compliance and Enforcement Framework which sets out how we will assess, prioritise, and respond to risks and instances of non-compliance with the EIJP.

How will the NZEA balance its regulatory responsibilities without imposing undue costs on business and negatively impacting productivity?

- The EIJP has been designed to be implemented where it is needed. For the EIJP to apply to a specific power station closure, the CEO of the Authority has to:
    - First undertake an assessment process
    - Consult with relevant stakeholders
    - Determine if the framework should be applied to specific companies impacted by the closure.
- Each closure and every business is evaluated based on its specific circumstances such as the size of the impacted workforce, business capacity to redeploy workers, regional economic conditions and the needs of workers and communities.
- In considering these factors, the CEO must be satisfied that it is reasonable to include an individual business in an EIJP.
- The Authority consults all businesses who may meet the definition of a 'dependent employer' under the Act. We work collaboratively and seek to collect information voluntarily.
- Additionally, we tailor our information requests accordingly and only seek to collect information necessary to comply with the CEO's statutory assessment requirements.

[If required]

- The CEO has broad discretion to consider a range of factors when deciding whether or not to recommend the inclusion of a business in an EIJP. Where relevant, this includes taking into account factors such as:
    - The size and sophistication of the business, and
    - The nature and frequency of services provided to the power station.
- If an EIJP is put in place, it is not prescriptive in its application.
    - This recognises that businesses will have different operational requirements, and individual workers will have different needs.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- The FWC will ultimately decide which dependent employers are included in any determination it makes. No business – regardless of its size - will be included in the EIJP unless it is reasonable in the circumstances to do so.

What support is there for employers and workers to understand their obligations and rights under the EIJP?

- The Authority has a legislated requirement to support employers to comply with Part 5 of the Act. To help meet this requirement, the Authority is developing guidelines to promote understanding of employer obligations under the EIJP, and will support workers to understand and engage with the EIJP.
    - These materials are currently being developed and are being refined in consultation with employers and unions.
- The CEO is also looking to publish a regulatory approach statement shortly which outlines his regulatory responsibilities, guiding principles which underpin his approach and key factors he will consider when making regulatory decisions.

Division:	Worker Transition Division	
Prepared by: s47F **Mob:** **Ext:** s47F **Date:** 8 September 2025	**Cleared by General Manager:** Stuart Richardson **Mob:** s47F **Ext:** s47F **Date:** 11 September 2025	
Consultation: [Division/Branch/Section] **Name:** [Insert name]	**Date:** [insert consultation date] **Mob:** **Ext:**	
Cleared by Division Head: Rachel Livingston		**Date:** 23 September 2025
Cleared by Chief Executive Officer: David Shankey		**Date:** 3 October 2025

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

EIJP – Redeployment Supports

Key Messages:

- To support the delivery of the EIJP, the Authority is developing a package of redeployment supports that will assist participating employees to transition to new employment.
- The government has allocated $37.3 million over four years (2025-26 to 2027-28) to deliver these supports.
- This will include engaging regionally based Jobs and Skills Coordinators, developing an Online Jobs Board and delivering a grants program to encourage receiving employers to take on redeployed workers.
- The EIJP redeployment supports will be designed to complement but not replace supports that closing and dependant employers are required to deliver under the EIJP.
- In September, the Authority commenced consultations with a range of stakeholders, including unions, power station operators and the Stakeholder Panel on the detailed design of the redeployment supports.
- These discussions end in November and will inform the development of detailed program guidelines, due to be finalised in early 2026.

Expenditure/Budget

Administered funding breakdown ($37.3 million)

($m)	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
Total	0.000	-21.399	-5.490	-8.871	**-35.761**
Total after indexation	0.000	-21.999	-5.774	-9.553	**-37.325**
Total expenditure*	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Administered funding details are at page 28 of the PM&C 2024-25 Portfolio Budget
*As at 31 August 2025.

Talking Points

What redeployment supports will the Authority put in place to assist workers?

- Where a Community of Interest determination has been put in place, the Authority will:
    - Engage regionally based EIJP Jobs Coordinators to work with employers to link participating workers to job opportunities at businesses that have expressed interest in hiring workers; and
    - Provide an online EIJP jobs board that can be used to connect participating workers with potential vacancies and connect employers with skilled workers; and
    - Administer financial incentives for business to take on participating employees through the EIJP redeployment grant program.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Do the EIJP redeployment supports duplicate supports provided by employers?

- No.
- Under the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP), employers named in a Community of Interest determination by the Fair Work Commission will be legally required to provide their employees with workforce transition supports.
    - This may include access to training, financial and career advice, and paid time off or flexible work arrangements to access these supports.
- The Authority has been asked by government to deliver complementary services primarily aimed at connecting workers with local employers.

How will workers who are not covered by the EIJP be supported?

- The Authority is also supporting the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to develop Regional Workforce Transition Plans. These plans will offer tailored, place-based supports and services for workers, families and communities in regions expected to be heavily impacted by the transition.
- Any further questions should be referred to DEWR

What redeployment supports have the NZEA already implemented? When will they be put in place?

- The Authority's redeployment program is focused on connecting impacted workers with new jobs – which is anticipated to be required closer to the closure of a power station (for example, from about 12 months out from scheduled closure date).
- The Authority is currently consulting with stakeholders in impacted regions to finalise the design of the program including when supports should be rolled out.
- In finalising the design of the program, the Authority is focused on supporting a smooth transition for workers while also ensuring power station operators can safety operate their facilities until closure.
- We are also building relationships with potential employers who may take impacted workers in the future.

What incentives are being offered to employers? What is the status of the programs?

- The Authority is currently designing a grants program to incentivise businesses to take on workers from closing power stations and dependent employers. This may include:
    - A direct payment to a receiving employer to take on a participating employee from a closing power station or dependent employer;
    - Financial support for receiving employers to offer early retirement packages to create vacancies for participating workers from power stations or dependent employers.
- The Authority is currently consulting with potential receiving employers, unions and business groups on the design of the EIJP redeployment grant program.
- Eligibility requirements and funding amounts will be set out in Grant Opportunity Guidelines, which will be published after a Community of Interest determination has been made.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

If asked: What will be the level of incentives offered to employers under the EIJP?

- The Authority is consulting with stakeholders on the design of the EIJP grants, and these proposed conditions are subject to change.
    - The Authority is proposing a $10,000 hiring incentive payment which would be available for receiving employers for each participating employee engaged through the EIJP.
    - Where a receiving employer offers an early retirement package to an existing employee to create a vacancy for a participating employee, the Authority is proposing that the costs be shared with employers.
    - The detailed design of both payments is the subject of ongoing stakeholder consultations, with final program guidelines not due to be settled until early 2026.
- A receiving employer will not be eligible for both a hiring incentive and an early retirement payment for the same participating employee

If asked: What processes will be put in place to ensure that the grants for early retirement provide value for money?

- The consultation paper recognises that offering an early retirement package to an individual employee comes at a significant cost to employers, and as a result proposes Commonwealth assistance capped at $80,000 or 50 per cent of the cost of the package, whichever is the lower.
    - Sharing costs with the employer ensure that early retirement will only be offered where there is a benefit to the retiring employee and the employer (eg reducing future liabilities associated with redundancies).
    - We are also carefully considering the conditions required to ensure the funding is used effectively and efficiently and that perverse outcomes are avoided – e.g. that workers should receive independent financial advice, or that these incentives would only be available where the local labour market is unlikely to be able to offer sufficient and appropriate jobs for affected workers.
    - While the initial outlay may be large relative to the hiring incentive grants, the costs of long-term unemployment to the budget can be very large – particularly for the younger workers who will benefit from employment opportunities created by the early retirement program.
    - Early retirements have been used previously as part of the Hazelwood Worker Transfer Scheme, during the 2017 closure of Hazelwood power station in the Latrobe Valley, Victoria. The Victorian Government contributed $75,000 to the cost of early retirements in other power stations within the Latrobe Valley, to create vacancies that could be filled by Hazelwood workers.
- We are seeking feedback on the settings for the grants, including the early retirement grants, through the consultation process underway until the end of November.

[If required]

- The proposed $80,000 cap on early retirement payments is yet to be settled and is something that we are testing through consultation.

What is the process for finalising the grants programs?

- The Authority is consulting with a range of stakeholders, including unions, power station operators and the Stakeholder Panel on the detailed design of the redeployment supports. The consultation paper is available on the Authority's website.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- Feedback will be accepted until Friday 28 November 2025, and will be considered in the final design of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.
- More information will be published on the Authority's website once guidelines have been approved. This will include:
    - publication of the Grant Opportunities Guidelines (expected to be in mid-2026)
    - announcement of the grant rounds 4-6 months prior to each eligible scheduled power station closure
    - material to support receiving employers to access the redeployment grants program.

What is the role of EIJP Jobs Co-ordinators? How much funding is allocated?

- The Authority has been provided $1.9 million over four years to 2027-28 to engage EIJP Jobs Coordinators based in priority regions to help connect workers with jobs at receiving employers, based on their skills, experience and career preferences.
- EIJP Jobs Co-ordinators will be engaged through a competitive process after the FWC issues a determination to establish a community of interest at power station closure, with remuneration reflecting their skills and experience.

What is the role of the Jobs Board? How much funding is allocated? What is its status?

- The Authority will develop an Online Jobs Board that would support workers and employers to connect on opportunities under the EIJP.
- The contract with Acendre Pty Ltd (trading as HireRoad) was signed on 7 June 2025 for $337,161 following an open tender. Work on the project is ongoing.
    - The build is expected to be completed by the end of 2025, and the contract includes provision for hosting until the end of 2028.

What kinds of jobs will EIJP workers be redeployed to? Will incomes be maintained?

- Pay and conditions applicable to the new job will depend on the positon offered and the industrial instrument that applies
- It will be up to workers to choose which jobs to apply for and which offers of employment to accept.
- *[If required]* In February 2025, the CEO issued guidelines that enable the CEO to designate a business as a 'receiving employer' if they offer safe, ongoing work in geographic proximity to the closing facilities, and have a good track record of complying with Fair Work and WHS legislation.
- Other conditions being considered for the grants program include offering employment at a wage consistent with the relevant industrial instrument that applies to the business.

Will employee information provided to the Authority be protected?

- Under section 64 of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024* (the Act), the CEO may require the employer to give the CEO information that is relevant to the operation of Part 5.
- The CEO may seek information such as:
    - the occupations, qualifications and skill sets of impacted employees
    - the names of participating employees of the closing employer or dependent employer
    - contact details for those employees

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- This information helps the CEO
    - To make an assessment about whether an EIJP is needed, taking into account the characteristics of the workforce
    - To set up and run a redeployment program for each closing power station, enabling the connection of individual employees with local businesses offering work.
- The collection of personal information must be reasonable in the circumstances, and is subject to the Privacy Act 1988, including the Australian Privacy Principles.
- NZEA does not provide personal information collected under the Act to the Board.
- The Authority will ensure the privacy and confidentiality of any employee information provided to it, in line with its obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988* and the *Australian Privacy Principles*, and requirements under the *Net Zero Economy Act 2024*.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Background

Online Jobs Board – contractual arrangements

- The Authority received $1.9m in the 2024-2025 Budget (until 2027-28) to develop an Online Jobs Board that would support workers and employers to connect on employment opportunities under the EIJP.
- Following initial project work with PM&C IT that focussed on defining requirements, the Authority undertook an open tender process. A contract with Acendre Pty Ltd (trading as HireRoad) was signed on 7 June 2025 for $337,161.
- The build is expected to be completed by the end of 2025, and the contract includes provision for hosting until the end of 2028.

Administered funding breakdown ($37.3 million)

($m)	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
Early retirement (indicative)	0.000	-19.682	-5.297	-8.077	**-33.056**
Onboarding payments (indicative)	0.000	-0.717	-0.193	-0.294	**-1.204**
Legal representation	0.000	-1.000	0.000	-0.500	**-1.500**
Total	0.000	-21.399	-5.490	-8.871	**-35.761**
Total after indexation	0.000	-21.999	-5.774	-9.553	**-37.325**

Administered funding details are at page 28 of the PM&C 2024-25 Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS).

Departmental Budget Funding ($5 million)

($m)	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Total
Jobs and skills coordinators	-0.736	-0.397	-0.368	-0.368	**-1.869**
ICT costs - jobs board	-1.132	-0.265	-0.227	-0.227	**-1.852**
Business Grants Hub (to support the design and delivery of EIJP grants)	-0.194	-0.198	-0.059	-0.185	**-0.637**
Statutory Review*	-0.250	0.000	0.000	0.000	**-0.250**
Travel*	-0.112	-0.054	-0.027	-0.042	**-0.236**
AGS Application Review*	-0.030	0.000	-0.015	0.000	**-0.045**
Total	-2.454	-0.915	-0.697	-0.823	**-4.889**
Total after indexation	-2.454	-0.930	-0.717	-0.858	**-4.959**

***** Not directly related to the redeployment supports

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Departmental Expenses to date* ($0.357 million)

($m)	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	Total
Jobs and skills coordinators	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
ICT costs - jobs board	0.000	-0.318	-0.039	-0.357#
Business Grants Hub (to support the design and delivery of EIJP grants)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total	0.000	-0.318	-0.039	-0.357

*As at 31 August 2025.
#Includes cost of work undertaken by PM&C ICT in 2024-25

Division:	Worker Transition	
Prepared by: s47F **Mob:** s47F **Ext:** s47F **Date:** 8 September 2025	**Cleared by General Manager:** Stuart Richardson **Mob:** s47F **Ext:** s47F **Date:** 11 September 2025	
Consultation: Nil **Name:**	**Date:** [insert consultation date] **Mob:** **Ext:**	
Cleared by Division Head: Rachel Livingston		**Date:** 22 September 2025
Cleared by Chief Executive Officer: David Shankey		**Date:** 3 October 2025

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

OFFICIAL

EIJP – Torrens Island B Community of Interest Process

Key Messages:

- Torrens Island Power Station B is an 800MW gas-fired power station close to Port Adelaide in South Australia.
- The Station and its workers have produced power for Adelaide and the broader South Australian community since it was completed in 1976.
- AGL has already closed and decommissioned Torrens Island A, and was due to close the B station on 30 June 2026.
- On 1 October, it announced an agreement with the SA Government to extend its closure date to 30 June 2028.
- AGL has just over 100 employees at Torrens B, and this is the first power station we have assessed under the Energy Industry Jobs Plan.
- An exhaustive consultation process has been conducted, comprising a written submission process as well as numerous meetings with workers, unions, AGL, the state chamber of commerce, the South Australian Government and local businesses with an interest in redeploying affected workers.
- The CEO is expected to make a decision shortly.
- In making this decision, the CEO will consider all of the relevant factors under the NZEA Act including the number of impacted workers, the existing transition supports and the capacity of the local labour market to provide suitable alternative employment.
- If the CEO makes an application, the FWC will consider it and hear from AGL as well as relevant unions before deciding whether to make a determination to create an Energy Industry Jobs Plan for Torrens B Island, and which businesses to include.

Talking Points

What process have you undertaken? Who have you consulted with? What were their views?

- We held face to face and virtual meets with key stakeholders and a public written submission process in response to a consultation paper.
    - The public consultation process commenced on 13 January 2025, inviting written submissions by 21 February 2025. The 6 submissions received have been published on our website.
- The NZEA engaged with AGL as the owner and operator of the power station, union representatives, workers, the South Australian Business Chamber, South Australian Government, and local businesses with an interest in hiring Torrens workers after the power station's closure.
- Some of the key themes heard during consultation included:

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- Concerns about workers not being adequately supported to prepare for and transition into their next job – workers need a clear idea of what the available jobs are, how their skills and experiences would translate and what training they would need to do.
- The impact of uncertainty about the closure date on workers uptake of existing transition supports.
- The need to balance the benefits of the program for workers with the additional regulatory burden it would have on employers.

The Community of Interest Process commenced in January 2025, why has it taken so long to finalise and make an application?

- The legislation doesn't specify a timeline for the Authority to conduct its Community of Interest process.
- The Authority provided sufficient time for consultation to allow interested parties to engage deeply with the Authority and to ensure the CEO's decision was informed by all the relevant circumstances.
  - While the formal submission process concluded in late February 2025, we have continued to conduct many in-depth consultations with key stakeholders (including AGL and unions) over the following months to ensure we have a complete understanding of the relevant context.
- Given this was the first community of interest process undertaken by the Authority since its establishment in December 2024, the Authority's approach involved early and regular engagement to build trust and demonstrate its commitment to proactive engagement, accountability and transparency.
  - The workforce and supply chain of power stations are varied and complex, and we have taken the time to understand the unique situation at Torrens Island so that the CEO can make the best decisions possible.
- As with any new entity, we will continue to look for ways to streamline our processes and ensure that we are undertaking our functions in the most efficient and effective way possible.

What role will the NZEA board play in the CEO's decision?

- None.
- The Act gives certain powers and functions to the CEO, including powers to make a FWC application for a community of interest determination in relation to the closure of a power station.
- The Board is prohibited from giving the CEO directions with respect to their powers under Part 5 of the Act, which covers the Energy Industry Jobs Plan.
- The decision to make an application under Section 56 of the Act is the CEO's decision alone. The NZEA Board will not be involved in the decision.

AGL has transition supports in their EA. Does the NZEA believe they need to do more? Does the NZEA lack confidence AGL will deliver adequate transition supports for workers?

- The CEO is required to consider the existing supports available to transition employees to find other employment, and this has formed a significant part of the consultation that we have undertaken.
- We cannot pre-empt the CEO's decision as it has not yet been made.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

AGL has just announced the extension of Torrens Island B for another 2 years. What impact will this have on the assessment?

- In August 2025, AGL notified the Authority it had reached an in--principle agreement with the SA Government to extend the operation of Torrens Island for a further two years, until mid-2028, but had not reached a binding agreement.
- Subsequently, on 1 October 2025 AGL publicly announced that they had reached an agreement to extend operations at Torrens Island B for a further 2 years.
- The extension of operations will form part of the CEO's decision on whether to make an application to the FWC, and which employers to include.
- Without pre-empting the CEO's decision, the EIJP is designed to be implemented well ahead of a power station's closure to allow sufficient time for employees to access supports. The extension of Torrens Island B could increase the impact of the EIJP if it is implemented.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Background

Torrens Island B Power Station

- Torrens Island Power Station is an 800MW gas-fired power station in Adelaide.
- We understand the power station's closure will impact approximately 109 of AGL's employees.
- AGL notified the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) in November 2022 that the remaining three 200MW units at Torrens 'B' will retire on 30 June 2026.
- The power station comprises two parts, Torrens 'A' and Torrens 'B'. The four 120MW generating units comprising Torrens 'A' were progressively closed from September 2020, with the final unit formally closing in September 2022. One of the 200MW generating units of Torrens 'B' was mothballed in 2021 due to adverse market conditions.
- The current Enterprise Agreement outlines transition supports available for workers, including best endeavours to redeploy workers within the organisation, a $5,000 training budget, and a Transition Working Group to be consulted on the transition program. AGL is also offering workers Individual Transition Planning and an on-site transition hub outside of the Enterprise Agreement.

Timeline for the EIJP Community of Interest Process at Torrens Island B

Date	Milestone
July – December 2024	The Authority conducted early engagement with AGL and other key stakeholders ahead of the formal consultation period, aimed at providing information regarding the role of the NZEA and the purposed of the EIJP.
January 2025	Community of Interest process commenced for Torrens Island B
January-July 2025	The Authority met with stakeholders in Adelaide and spoke with workers on site at Torrens Island B
February 2025	Public submissions for the consultation process closed
From June 2025 onwards	The Authority assessed whether the program was needed for Torrens Island B, and which employers should be included
July 2025	AGL, dependent employers and relevant unions received the CEO's provisional views which indicated AGL would be listed as a closing employer in an application for a Community of Interest Determination by the FWC.
October 2025	The Authority applied to the FWC and specified AGL as the closing employer for Torrens Island B.

How will the FWC run its community of Interest process?

- President Hatcher has appointed Deputy President Saunders as the National Practice Leader for Net Zero.
- The FWC will work through its own process in coming to a determination. It's not the NZEA's role to comment on decisions or matters before the FWC.
- The Act provides the framework for what needs to be considered by the FWC along with the processes set out in the Fair Work Act.
- The FWC will give parties the opportunity to make submissions and genuinely engage with the open and public process before they make a determination.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- As per section 590 of the Fair Work Act 2009 (the Fair Work Act) the FWC already has broad powers to inform itself when making a decision, this includes:
  - by requiring a person to attend before the FWC;
  - by inviting, subject to any terms and conditions determined by FWC, oral or written submissions;
  - by requiring a person to provide copies of documents or records, or to provide any other information to the FWC;
  - by taking evidence under oath or affirmation in accordance with the regulations (if any);
  - by requiring an FWC Member, a Full Bench or the Minimum Wage Panel to prepare a report;
  - by conducting inquiries;
  - by undertaking or commissioning research;
  - by conducting a conference (see section 592);
  - by holding a hearing (see section 593).
- Questions about the operation of the FWC should be directed to the FWC.

<table>
<tr><td>Division:</td><td colspan="2">Worker Transition Division</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Prepared by:
s47F

Mob: Ext: s47F
Date: 11 September 2025</td><td>Cleared by Branch Head:
Stuart Richardson

Mob: s47F Ext: s47F

Date: 11 September 2025</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Consultation: [Division/Branch/Section]

Name: [Insert name]</td><td>Date: [insert consultation date]

Mob: Ext:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Cleared by Division Head: Rachel Livingston</td><td>Date: 22 September 2025</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Cleared by Chief Executive Officer: David Shankey</td><td>Date: 3 October 2025</td></tr>
</table>

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

OFFICIAL

EIJP – Eraring Community of Interest Process

Key Messages:

- Eraring is Australia's largest coal-fired power station, located on the shores of Lake Macquarie in NSW.
- It is owned and operated by Origin Energy.
- The Station recently celebrated its 40th year of operation.
- It is a key employer in the region and procures services from a range of local supply chain businesses.
- In May 2024, Origin provided AEMO with notice that all four generating units at Eraring Power Station will retire on 19 August 2027.
- A significant number of workers are expected to be impacted when this occurs.
    - This includes approximately 200 Origin employees at the station, as well as approximately 200 contractors regularly working on site and other workers in supply chain businesses, such as coal mines that supply Eraring.
- On 26 May 2025 the Net Zero Economy Authority commenced a community of interest consultation process for Eraring Power Station, ahead of its scheduled closure on 19 August 2027.
- The Authority undertook in person and virtual consultation and invited stakeholders to provide feedback through formal public consultation from 27 May to 18 July 2025.
    - NZEA has consulted a range of stakeholders, including Origin, supply chain businesses, relevant unions, workers, employer organisations, peak bodies; local government, community groups and potential receiving employers.
    - We received 34 public submissions which are available on our website.
- The NZEA is currently assessing information gathered through this consultation process and from information provided by employers to decide if an application will be made to the Fair Work Commission and which employers should be included.
- We anticipate the CEO will decide whether to make an application to the Fair Work Commission in late 2025.

Talking Points

When did the Eraring COI process commence and who is being consulted?

- The consultation process for Eraring commenced in late May 2025.
- The Authority has consulted with Origin to understand transition planning and available supports; supply chain businesses associated with Eraring to understand the impact of the closure on their operations and workforce; and unions and employer organisations to understand the interests and perspectives of their members.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- The Authority has also heard from workers directly at Eraring and several supply chain businesses; local and state government; local businesses in the region who may be interested in taking on impacted workers; and community organisations.

How has NZEA engaged with stakeholders throughout the Eraring COI process?

- **Direct engagement:** The CEO of the Authority and associated staff visited Eraring Power Station and met stakeholders in the Hunter region from 10-13 June 2025, followed by a second visit from 23-25 July. Staff also consulted additional stakeholders virtually.
- **Open public consultation:** NZEA invited public submissions from 27 May to 18 July 2025. The Authority received 34 public submissions which are available on our website.

What issues were identified through the public submissions process?

- A range of stakeholders expressed strong support to implement an EIJP for the Eraring closure, and include Origin as the station owner as well as dependent supply chain businesses.
- Some stakeholders raised issues about the scope and eligibility criteria for Origin's employee transition support program at Eraring (Future Directions), while others suggested that this program is sufficient to exempt Origin from inclusion in the EIJP.
- Some stakeholders raised concerns about the broader business and social impacts of the Eraring closure in the region and encouraged the Authority to work with all levels of government to address impacts of the closure holistically.
- The Authority is considering all feedback received through the consultation process to inform the CEO's final decision on whether to apply to the FWC for the EIJP to be implemented for the Eraring closure.

When will the CEO announce his final decision on Eraring? The Authority previously advised the decision would be made by September.

- Under the transitional provisions in the Act, the CEO must make any application to the FWC to establish the EIJP for Eraring *as soon as practicable*.
- The COI process involves a number of steps required under the Act.
    - This includes requirements to consult with a range of stakeholder groups, and gathering of detailed information from the station operator and supply chain businesses to allow the CEO to assess relevant statutory criteria under the Act.
- Eraring is a large power station with a significant number of supply chain businesses that may be relevant for inclusion under the EIJP framework.
    - The assessment process has therefore been complex and taken time, particularly where businesses have been slow in providing the required information. In a small minority of cases, the Authority has had to contact businesses repeatedly.
    - The Authority is analysing the information gathered as a matter of priority to inform a final decision on Eraring as quickly as possible.
- We anticipate the CEO will decide whether to make an application to the Fair Work Commission in late 2025.

Is the Authority likely to make an application to implement an EIJP for Eraring Power Station?

- The CEO will make his decision in accordance with the relevant factors outlined in the Act. This includes:

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- The impact of the closure on workers and businesses
- The support workers can already access
- The employment opportunities in the region
- Whether the EIJP will smooth the transition by placing obligations on employers to provide transition supports to their employees.

- This involves a thorough assessment of each business to understand the impacts of specific power station closures on the company and its employees, and the economic circumstances and workforce needs specific to each closure.
- Given the COI process is ongoing, we cannot comment further as this would pre-empt the CEO's decision before our analysis of all relevant information is finalised.

If asked: Why is the NZEA undertaking a COI process for Eraring Power Station when the closure date is likely to be extended?

- We acknowledge there has been recent speculation that the closure date for Eraring may be extended.
- However, the NZEA must fulfil its statutory obligation to undertake a COI process based on announced closure dates provided by power station operators.
- At this stage, Origin's formal notification to the Australian Energy Market Operator is for an August 2027 closure date.
- If an operator formally changes their station closure date, the NZEA will assess what impact that has on any community of interest process.

If asked: Which supply chain businesses might be included? Are any of them small businesses?

- Origin has provided the Authority with a list of businesses that supply or provide services at Eraring. This includes companies with a range of business sizes.
  - Work is underway to identify which of these businesses will be significantly impacted by the closure, how that impacts their employees and whether it is reasonable to specify them as a dependent employer under the EIJP.
- We assess each business on a case-by-case basis, according to the criteria outlined in the Act.
  - To be considered a 'dependent employer', a business:
  - must have a *direct commercial relationship* with the closing power station and
  - *must cease (or be likely to cease) a substantial part of their business operations at the closing power station* or in the same geographic area as a direct result of the power station's closure.
  - To be included, a business must also be a constitutional corporation – this means that independent contractors, sole traders and partnerships will not be included.
  - The CEO then must be satisfied that it is reasonable in the circumstances to impose regulatory obligations on the employer.
- NZEA is consulting closely with employers throughout the assessment phase of the EIJP to decide if the CEO should apply to the FWC and which businesses should be included. The FWC is then the final decision-maker on which businesses are included.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

If asked: Does the NZEA have confidence Origin will ensure there are adequate transition supports for its workers?

- Origin's Future Directions program supports workers as they transition into the next phase of their careers through reskilling and career planning. The program is led by a team based on site at Eraring, and it offers a range of supports including career information, access to training and recognition of prior learning, and well-being resources.
- The NZEA is currently assessing whether Origin's Future Directions program at Eraring provides sufficient assistance to employees at Eraring to transition to new employment when the station closes.
- The NZEA is using information provided by Origin, collected through the public consultation process and direct stakeholder feedback to inform this analysis.

If asked: Lake Macquarie City Council modelling predicts the closure of Eraring Power Station will result in a loss of 1800 jobs, and $4.5 bn to the local economy. How will the EIJP/NZEA address these impacts? Doesn't this show the cost of net zero transition is too high?

- The NZEA has engaged closely with Lake Macquarie City Council (LMCC) through the Eraring COI process, and as part of our broader regional work in the Hunter.
    - We are aware of their analysis on the removal of Eraring from the local economy.
- The EIJP is designed to help minimise the impact of power station closures on the local community.
- Broader flow-on economic impacts from power station closures, beyond any direct supply chain businesses included, are not addressed directly by the EIJP framework, but is a focus of the NZEA's broader regional transition role.
- The government has committed funding to develop Regional Workforce Transition Plans (RWTPs) to support regions most heavily impacted by energy system changes (Hunter NSW, Gippsland VIC, Central QLD and South West WA).
    - The Net Zero Economy Authority (NZEA) and DEWR are developing RWTPs in consultation with state and local governments, unions, employers, workers and communities.

If asked: Will workers at Myuna mine be supported under the EIJP if Centennial's supply contract with Eraring is not renewed?

- We do not have visibility of any commercial negotiations between Centennial Coal and Origin regarding the future coal supply contract for Eraring.
- The Authority is working closely with Centennial through the COI process to assess the potential impact of the Eraring closure on the Myuna workforce.
- Our current consultation and assessment process under the EIJP is based on arrangements as they currently exist. If Centennial's supply arrangements with Origin change in future, we will assess whether this has any implications for the EIJP at that time.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Background

- Eraring is Australia's largest coal-fired power station and is located in the Hunter, NSW, one of the NZEA's priority regions. Eraring is owned and operated by Origin Energy.
    - In May 2024, Origin provided AEMO with notice that all four generating units at Eraring Power Station will retire on 19 August 2027.
    - A significant number of workers are expected to be impacted when this occurs. This includes Origin's 216 employees at the station, as well as more than 200 contractors regularly working on site and other workers in supply chain businesses, such as coal mines that supply Eraring.
- Centennial Coal is the major supplier of coal for the Eraring Power Station, with coal provided from both its Myuna and Mandalong coal mines.
    - The Myuna coal mine is an entirely captured facility that provides 100% of its coal to Eraring. Mandalong mine provides approximately 50% of its coal to Eraring Power Station. Myuna will likely close when it stops supplying coal to Eraring.
    - Centennial has indicated that they have approximately 284 workers at Myuna.
- Concerns have been raised by key stakeholders, including unions, about the closure of export coal mines in the Hunter and their exclusion from the EIJP.
    - Workers who are not covered by EIJP will be able to access broader supports available in the region through Regional Workforce Transition Plans to be delivered by DEWR.
- There has been significant local media reporting on the Eraring COI process, including interviews with local stakeholders (unions, Hunter Joint Organisation and Origin). The *Newcastle Herald* (13/6/25) stated that the Authority would made a decision by August or September 2025.

Timeline for the Energy Industry Jobs Plan at Eraring

Date	Milestone
May 2025	Community of Interest process commenced for Eraring
June-July 2025	The Authority met with stakeholders in the Hunter and spoke with workers on site at Eraring
July 2025	Public submissions for the consultation process closed
From July 2025 onwards	The Authority is assessing whether the program is needed for Eraring, and which employers should be included
Late 2025	If the EIJP is needed for Eraring, the Authority will apply to the FWC and specify the companies it believes should be included. The FWC makes the final determination on whether it proceeds and which employers are included.
Following any FWC decision	If the FWC puts the EIJP in place, workers can access supports from their employer to help them prepare for their next job.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

OFFICIAL

Division:	Worker Transition Division
Prepared by: s47F, Director, EIJP Operations and Engagement Team **Mob:** s47F **Ext:** s47F **Date:** 09/09/2025	**Cleared by General Manager:** Stuart Richardson, Assistant Secretary, Worker Transition Branch **Mob:** s47F **Ext:** s47F **Date:** 11/09/2025
Consultation: [Division/Branch/Section] **Name:** [Insert name]	**Date:** [insert consultation date] **Mob:** **Ext:**
Cleared by Division Head: Rachel Livingston, Worker Transition Division	**Date:** 23 September 2025
Cleared by Chief Executive Officer: David Shankey	**Date:** 3 October 2025

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Statutory review of the Energy Industry Jobs Plan

Key Messages:

- The *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024* (the Act) requires the CEO to review Part 5 of the Act – the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP) – within 12 months of the commencement of the Act (s.68)
- The review is underway. Consultations have concluded and the independent reviewer, Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM, is now considering the written submissions and information raised in consultations.
- Professor Green must complete the Review by 10 December 2025.
- While the EIJP has only been in operation since December 2024, the review provides an early opportunity to evaluate how the legislation is working and whether it is operating in line with the Parliament's intent.
- The Minister must table the written report of the Review in both Houses of Parliament within 15 sitting days of that House after the report is given to him.
- The Minister does not have a role in determining how the review is conducted or its content but will consider the Review report and government response with support from the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (as the policy department).
- Key dates: *A more detailed timeline is at Attachment A*.
  - 26 June 2025 – Announcement of the appointment of Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM and release of the Terms of Reference
  - 4 August 2025 – Consultation Paper released and consultation period opened
  - 5 September 2025 – Written submissions closed
  - 25 September 2025 – End of consultation period
  - 10 December 2025 – Final report due to the CEO and Minister

Talking Points

Why is the Review being completed within 12 months? What will the Review achieve?

- The *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024* (the Act) requires the Authority's CEO to review of Part 5 of the Act – the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP) – within 12 months of the Act's commencement (s.68).
- This means the independent reviewer, Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM, must complete the Review no later than 10 December 2025 and provide it to both the CEO and the Minister.
- The Minister must table the report in each House of the Parliament within 15 sitting days of that House after the report is given to him.
- While the EIJP will have operated for only a short time at commencement of this Review, it will provide an early opportunity to evaluate how the legislation is working and to

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

consult key stakeholders in the Authority's priority regions, including workers, industry and local communities. By engaging with key stakeholders, the Authority can identify issues that may impact the success of the EIJP.

- This Review will also assess the merit and timing of future reviews, which will help to ensure the EIJP stays fit-for-purpose over the long term.

What will the Review cover?

- The Review will consider whether the EIJP is operating as Parliament intended and whether any amendments are desirable.
- The full Terms of Reference is at Attachment B and include:.
    - the operation of the EIJP's legislated elements, which are under or required for the operation of Part 5
    - the current and likely effectiveness of Part 5
    - whether any amendments to this Part 5 are desirable
    - the merit and timing of future reviews of the operation of Part 5 and associated redeployment supports provided by the Authority.
- The Terms of Reference also outline what is out-of-scope, which includes:
    - parts of the Act outside of Part 5 and not directly related to the operation of Part 5
    - the operation of the *Fair Work Act 2009*
    - the broader operation of the Fair Work Commission
    - other Commonwealth legislation
    - the administered funding appropriated to the Authority to establish redeployment pools.
- The Authority consulted with the Board, the Energy Industry Worker Redeployment Advisory Group and the Authority's Stakeholder Panel on the draft Terms of Reference.

What consultation was undertaken for the Review?

- The Review consulted with a range of stakeholders including employee and employer organisations, industry, government, academia and community groups across the Authority's priority regions.
    - To assist the consultation process, a consultation paper was released on 4 August 2025.
    - As at 26 September, a total of 193 stakeholders were invited to engage with the Review and 86 consultations have been conducted.
    - More information on the consultations is at Attachment C.
    - Stakeholder consultations were held between 29 July and 26 September.
- As at 26 September, consultations included:
    - Virtual meetings – 29-30 July, and 20 and 29 August
    - Latrobe Valley – 4-7 August and 8-10 September
    - Hunter Valley – 12-14 August
    - Adelaide – 1-3 September
    - Canberra union and employer group roundtables – 12 September

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- Brisbane and Central Queensland (Gladstone and Biloela) – 15-18 September
- Collie and Perth – 22-25 September

- The public written submission process was open from 4 August to 5 September 2025. As at 26 September, a total of 33 submissions were received and there were four requests for an extension. Late submissions have been accepted on a case by case basis.
- As at 30 September, submissions have not yet been published on the Authority's website. [Check with Rachel McVicar for a more recent update on submissions].

If asked: what views have stakeholders expressed in submissions?

- Stakeholders recognise the important role of the EIJP in supporting a just and orderly transition for Australian workers impacted by the closure of coal- and gas-fired power stations.
- Many stakeholders have also emphasised how important it will be for the EIJP to deliver widely accessible, high-quality transition supports, attract enough regional employers into the program to absorb impacted workers, and ensure workers have the opportunity to transition with dignity into secure, well-paid jobs.
- More broadly, many stakeholders have emphasised the need for good coordination between the EIJP and relevant federal, state and local government programs, and that the long-term success of the EIJP is contingent on greater investment in regional economic diversification.
- Professor Green is currently considering all stakeholder views expressed in consultations and submissions.

If asked: what is the Authority's view with respect to stakeholder recommendations for reforms to EIJP?

- The Authority does not have a position on stakeholder recommendations raised during consultation, and looks forward to receiving Professor Green's report.
- Decisions around the adoption of any recommendations presented in the final report will be a matter for Government (e.g. amendment to the legislation) or the CEO (e.g. internal processes and operation) – depending on the specific recommendation.
- Further questions about the policy intent of the legislation should be directed towards the Department of Industry, Science and Resources.

If asked: what involvement has the Minister had in the review or the appointment of Professor Green?

- Minister Ayres has not had any involvement in the review or the appointment of Professor Green as the independent reviewer.
- The Authority briefed Minister Ayres on 17 June 2025, advising him of the finalised terms of reference and decision to appoint Professor Green as the reviewer.
- The Act requires the Minister *to table the* completed review report in both Houses of Parliament within 15 sitting days after receiving the report.

If asked: what discussions has the CEO had with the reviewer over the course of the Review?

- The CEO met with Professor Green on 17 July 2025 to discuss his appointment and provide background on the requirements of the Review.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- The CEO also met with Professor Green on 3 October 2025 to receive an update on the progress of the review to date.

If asked: what was the process for Professor Roy Green's appointment?

- Professor Green's engagement is the result of a robust selection process, including:
  - the establishment of a skills matrix, which was tested with the Authority's Board and Stakeholder Panel;
  - discussions with several potential candidates; and
  - selection of Professor Green based of the combination of skills, experience and availability.
    - Professor Green is Special Innovation Advisor at the University of Technology Sydney. He has over 30 years of experience across research, innovation and public policy development, including in the areas of industrial policy and regional economic development.
    - In addition to his experience as an adviser to state, Commonwealth and international governments, Professor Green has held board and chair roles across multiple sectors, including manufacturing, infrastructure and energy transition.
- The Authority's CEO was the delegate for the decision of appointing Professor Green.

If asked: what is the value of Professor Green's contract?

- Professor Green was engaged through a contract for labour hire on 23 June 2025 until 11 December 2025. The contract has an option for extension to 31 January 2026.
- Total value of the contract is $292,000.
  - The contract was published on AusTender on 25 June 2025.

[If required]

- The agreed rate is commensurate with the considerable skills and experience of the reviewer and takes into account the complexities of the process, which has intersections with workplace relations, structural adjustment, employment, skills, energy and economics
- The contract also includes travel costs with flights and accommodation covered by the department. Travel-related expenses, including taxis to and from the airport, are included in the maximum contract price.

If asked: about the Freedom of Information request from S47F [redacted] regarding appointment of Professor Roy Green to conduct a review of Part 5 of the Net Zero Economy Authority Act.

- The Freedom of Information (FOI) request was received on 28 July 2025. The applicant was notified of a decision on 26 September and the document packages were provided to the applicant on 30 September 2025.
- There were 7 documents released in full, 31 documents released in part and 1 document withheld. These included all briefs of advice, correspondence, notes and records relating to the appointment of Professor Roy Green as the independent reviewer.
- Any redactions made were consistent with legal advice and provisions of the FOI Act.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Background

Taskforce

- The Energy Industry Jobs Plan Review is supported by a Taskforce within the Worker Transition Division. The Taskforce consists of 11 people:
  - 1 SES Band 1
  - 2 EL2s
  - 5 EL1s
  - 2 APS 6
  - 1 APS 5
- The Taskforce was stood up on 26 June 2025 and will be in place until 31 January 2025.

Freedom of Information application relating to Professor Green's appointment

- The Freedom of Information (FOI) request was received on 28 July 2025. The applicant was notified of a decision on 26 September and the document packages were provided to the applicant on 30 September 2025.
- On 21 August, the applicant was notified that NZEA needed time to consult with the relevant third party (Professor Green). As a result the period for processing the request was extended by 30 days under section 15(6) of the Freedom of Information Act. As such, the due date for a decision was extended to 26 September 2025.
  - The documents requested in the freedom of information application contained another individual's personal information and information concerning another person's business or professional affairs. Under sections 27A and 27 of the FOI Act, NZEA is required to consult with the affected person before making a decision on access to those documents.
- The scope of the requested documents included
  - *All briefs or advice (however described) to the CEO or the relevant decision-maker regarding the procurement process (if any) conducted by the Authority for this review.*
  - *All correspondence between the Authority and any relevant Minister(s) or their office in relation to the proposal and decision to appoint Professor Green.*
  - *All briefs or advice (however described) to the CEO or the relevant decision-maker in relation to the decision to appoint Professor Green.*
  - *All correspondence between the Authority and Professor Green in relation to his appointment.*
  - *All file notes or records (however described) which provide a record of any discussions between the Authority and Professor Green in relation to his appointment*

Attachments

- Attachment A: Timeline of the Energy Industry Jobs Plan Review
- Attachment B: Consultation Paper and Terms of Reference
- Attachment C: Consultation and submissions breakdown

Division:	Worker Transition Division
Prepared by s47F [redacted]	**Cleared by General Manager:** Rachel McVicar

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Mob:s47F Ext: s47F **Date:** 11 September 2025	Mob:s47F Ext:s47F **Date:** 23 September 2025
Consultation: NZEA Governance and Legal **Name:**s47F	**Date:** [insert consultation date] **Mob:** **Ext:**
Cleared by Division Head: Rachel Livingston	**Date:** 23 September 2025
Cleared by Chief Executive Officer: David Shankey	**Date:**

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Attachment A: Timeline of the Energy Industry Jobs Plan Review

Date	Milestone
3 June 2025	The CEO agreed to commence the section 68 review of Part 5 of the NZEA Act (Energy Industry Jobs Plan), the appointment of Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM as the reviewer and the terms of reference
17 June 2025	Minister Ayres noted the commencement of the Review, Professor Green's appointment and the terms of reference
23 June 2025	Contract signed with Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM
26 June 2025	Announcement of Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM as reviewer and release of the Terms of Reference
29 July 2025	Start of consultations
4 August 2025	Consultation paper released and opening of Converlens submissions portal
4-7 August 2025	Consultations held in Latrobe Valley
11-14 August 2025	Consultations held in the Hunter Valley
1-3 September 2025	Consultations held in Adelaide
5 September 2025	Closure of Converlens submissions portal
8-10 September 2025	Consultations held at the Gippsland New Energy Conference
12 September	Union and employer groups roundtables held in Canberra
15-16 September 2025	Consultations held in Brisbane
17 September 2025	Consultations held in Biloela
18 September 2025	Consultations held in Gladstone
22-24 September 2025	Consultations held in Collie
25 September 2025	Consultations held in Perth
26 September 2025	Completion of consultations
10 December 2025	Completion of review and report transmitted to CEO and Minister

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Attachment B: Consultation Paper and Terms of Reference

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Government

Net Zero Economy Authority

Energy Industry Jobs Plan Statutory Review

Consultation Paper

August 2025

Australia's energy transition is a significant source of economic opportunity for our industries, regions and workers.



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Contents

Introduction 3

The Energy Industry Jobs Plan 5

Theme one: Operation of the EIJP to date 6

Theme two: Expected operation of the EIJP 8

Theme three: A fit-for-purpose EIJP into the future 10

Submission guidelines 12

Privacy collection notice 12

Appendix A: Glossary 15

Appendix B: The EIJP process 18

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Introduction

The Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP) is an Australian Government initiative to support workers affected by the closure of coal- or gas-fired power stations to transition to new employment. The EIJP was established by Part 5 of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024* (NZEA Act), which commenced on 11 December 2024, and is administered by the Net Zero Economy Authority (the Authority).

The design of the EIJP and its application has been subject to significant consultation to date, including a Parliamentary inquiry into the legislation as well as place-based consultations in impacted regions.

On 26 June 2025, the Authority's CEO, Mr David Shankey, announced that Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM (the Reviewer) will undertake a review of the operation of Part 5 of the NZEA Act, including whether any amendments to Part 5 are desirable. The Review's terms of reference are available on the Authority's website.

The Review is required under section 68 of the NZEA Act and must be delivered by 10 December 2025, which is within 12 months of commencement of the NZEA Act.[1]

A glossary of the terms used within the consultation paper has been provided at Appendix A. The steps involved in the EIJP process are detailed in Appendix B.

The scope of the Review

The Review is considering whether the EIJP is working effectively and as intended, as well as its likely success into the future. It is focused on whether the EIJP (specifically Part 5 of the NZEA Act) could be improved to better support employees impacted by coal- and gas-fired power station closures. No power stations involved in the EIJP will have closed within the Review period and some parts of the EIJP won't have been used. Therefore, the Review will also consider the merit and timing of any future review.

The scope of the Review means it will not propose changes to the purpose of the EIJP or assess the broader operation of the NZEA Act beyond Part 5. It also will not consider the operation of other government initiatives or legislation separate to the EIJP. For example, the Review won't consider how the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Fair Work Act) is operating but may consider the components of the EIJP legislation that refer to that Act.

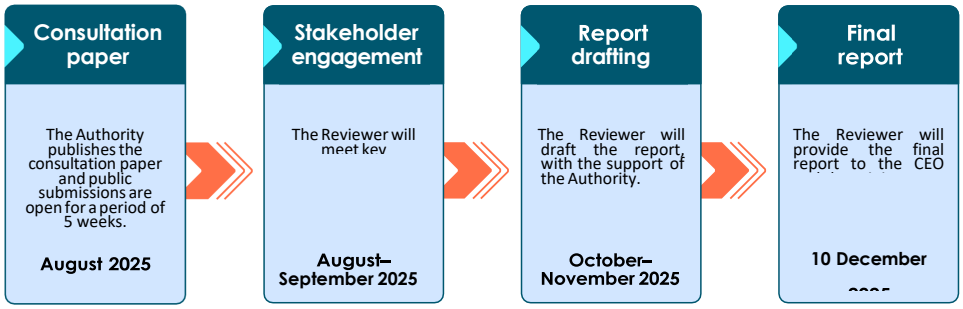
The EIJP has both legislated and non-legislated components. The non-legislated component includes funding assistance for employers when offering new employment to participating employees. This funding won't be available at the time of the Review – it may only become available closer to the expected closure date of a coal- or gas-fired power station involved in the EIJP. Because the funding hasn't been used, this Review won't look at its effectiveness.

[1] See provisions on conducting a review of the operation of Part 5 under subsection 68(4) of the NZEA Act.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

What is the process for the Review?

The Reviewer will consult widely so diverse perspectives inform the Review's findings and recommendations. The release of this consultation paper coincides with the start of the public engagement process. The Review process consists of four stages:



How to participate in the Review

The Reviewer wants to hear from people, employers and organisations that could be impacted by a coal- or gas-fired power station closure, or who have a broader interest in the impact of coal- and gas-fired power station closures on workers, regional economies and communities. This could include, but is not limited to:

- workers at coal- and gas-fired power stations
- workers at businesses associated with coal- and gas-fired power stations
- unions, including unions that represent workers in coal- and gas-fired power stations and associated employers and sectors
- owners and operators of coal- and gas-fired power stations and businesses associated with coal- and gas-fired power stations, including coal mines that supply coal-fired power stations
- industry and/or employer peak bodies
- businesses in regions with coal- and gas-fired power stations that may want to employ workers who could be impacted by a power station's eventual closure
- academics, policy and legal practitioners and other people with an interest in areas including workplace relations, industry policy, structural adjustment, regional development, productivity and the net zero transition
- people and community, advocacy and business organisations with an interest in the socioeconomic impacts associated with the expected closure of coal- and gas-fired power stations and/or the economic development of the regions where coal- and gas-fired power stations are located.

By speaking about your experience with the EIJP (such as the 'community of interest' processes), you can help the Reviewer understand what has worked well or needs improvement. At the time of publication, the EIJP has been operationalised in Adelaide (in relation to the expected closure of Torrens Island B Power Station) and the Hunter region (in relation to the expected closure of Eraring Power Station). More broadly, your knowledge and understanding of the EIJP's operation can help the Reviewer contextualise its effectiveness as a critical lever in supporting an orderly and positive economic transformation for Australia's regions, communities and workers.

Your input will support findings and recommendations to government, including whether any amendments to the legislation (specifically, Part 5 of the NZEA Act) are desirable, feasible and practical. Using specific examples, data or case studies to support your views and suggestions will help the Reviewer to develop these findings and recommendations.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

The Consultation Paper has three themes:

- Operation of the EIJP to date
- Expected operation of the EIJP
- A fit-for-purpose EIJP into the future

Discussion questions have been provided under each of the 3 themes to help you provide input. The discussion questions are a guide only and we welcome any feedback in the scope of the Review's terms of reference. You can respond by providing a written submission (or alternatively answer the discussion questions via a survey) at the Authority's Consultation Hub.

Submissions close on 5 September 2025. Late submissions will be accepted at the discretion of the Reviewer. The Authority will publish information on the outcome of the consultation on the Authority's website. The outcomes of the Review and final report will also be published after completion.

For general enquiries on the consultation process, including alternative ways to make a submission or contribute to the Review, please contact EIJPReview@pmc.gov.au.

The Energy Industry Jobs Plan

Where needed, the EIJP will support employees of closing coal- and gas-fired power stations[2] as well as employees of some employers with a commercial relationship with the closing power station ('dependent employers'). Dependent employers[3] may be involved in the EIJP if their business operations in the same geographical region as the power station will be substantially impacted by its closure.

A number of Australia's coal-fired power stations have retired in the last 15 years and over half of the remaining coal-fired power stations have announced expected closure dates over the next 10 years. Some gas-fired power stations, including Torrens Island B Power Station, have also announced they expect to close in the coming years.

The government established the EIJP to respond to the phase out of ageing energy assets in an orderly, predictable and safe way and to mitigate the negative socioeconomic impacts of power station closures on local communities. In introducing the legislation, the government described its purpose as "supporting workers on the front line of the energy transition and … businesses to access the skills and experience they value."[4] The EIJP is underpinned by several policy objectives, including:

- minimising involuntary unemployment when facilities close
- maximising opportunities for affected workers to transition into similar employment
- providing appropriate supports, training and skills to impacted employees
- enabling the skills and experience of employees, which will support them to be redeployed within their communities.[5]

The EIJP has been designed to give participating employees sufficient time to effectively plan and prepare for their next career move, including undertaking training and seeking new jobs. This is why the CEO is generally required to consider whether to apply the EIJP several years before the power station's expected closure date.[6] This is enabled by the fact that coal- and gas- fired power stations are separately required to provide notice of their expected closure. Specifically, the majority of power stations in Australia must provide notice to the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) of a closure several years in advance under the National Electricity Rules (NER) and Western Australian Wholesale Energy Market rules.[7] These notices can 'trigger' the consultation processes under the NZEA Act, but the CEO can also use a range of other notices (such as an announcement to the Australian Stock Exchange or a media release) provided they are satisfied that a power station is closing.[8]

[2] See the definition of 'closing employer' under subsections 6(1) and 6(2) of the NZEA Act and the glossary in Appendix A.
[3] See the definition of 'dependent employer' under subsections 6(3) and 6(4) of the NZEA Act and the glossary in Appendix A.
[4] Second Reading Speech, delivered by the Hon Patrick Gorman MP, Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister, on Wednesday, 27 March 2024.
[5] Revised Explanatory Memorandum, p. 108.
[6] See provisions on the timing of an application under subsection 56(2) of the NZEA Act.
[7] Under National Electricity Rules clause 2.10.1(a)(2) and Wholesale Electricity Market Rules.
[8] Revised Explanatory Memorandum, p.19.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Even once a power station has given a formal notice of its expected closure, this does not prevent the closure date from changing – either by being accelerated or delayed. For example, while the NZEA Act was being considered by the Parliament, Origin Energy and the New South Wales Government reached agreement to extend the closure of Eraring Power Station from August 2025 to at least August 2027.

Why focus on power stations?

Negative employment and other socioeconomic impacts can be exacerbated where power station closures are poorly planned or executed with a short lead time. Some facilities in Australia have previously closed at short notice. For example, the owner of the Hazelwood power station in Victoria announced in November 2016 the station would close in March 2017, providing less than

5 months' transition time prior to closure. This led to significant impacts on workers, the local community and the Australian electricity market, which may have been mitigated with additional lead time and preparation.

Following the Hazelwood closure, additional market rules have been put in place to reduce the risk of sudden power station closures. National Electricity Market (NEM) generators are now required to provide AEMO at least 42 months advance notice of their intention to close, unless granted an exemption by the Australian Energy Regulator. AEMO also publishes longer-term expected closure dates for NEM generators. The Western Australian Electricity Market has similar arrangements under the Wholesale Electricity Market Rules. Relevant companies are required to inform AEMO of an expected generator closure date no less than 3 years before closure.

Theme one: Operation of the EIJP to date

At the time of the Consultation Paper's release, the Authority's CEO has applied provisions in Part 5 of the Act to two power station closures:

1. Torrens Island B Power Station in Adelaide
2. Eraring Power Station in the Hunter Valley.

This process started with the CEO issuing 'trigger notices'[9] based on notices given to AEMO under the NER. Once a trigger notice is in place, the CEO must conduct a 'community of interest' process [10] and decide whether to make an application to the Fair Work Commission (FWC) for a 'community of interest determination'.[11] Part of the community of interest process requires the CEO to determine the closing and dependent employers to be included in any such application.[12] This approach reflects Parliament's intent to "target the [EIJP] to closures where it is most needed, and not set up redeployment plans where the number of employees is small, pre-existing redeployment measures are in place or where the local labour market can effectively transition those employees without additional government intervention."[13]

The community of interest consultation processes underway for Torrens Island B and Eraring power stations have been supported by online discussion papers, in-person consultations and visits to affected power stations, as well as one-on-one meetings with a range of relevant stakeholders including unions, local chambers of commerce, local employers, councils and state governments.

Noting businesses of varying sizes and sectors could be included in a community of interest application or determination (provided they are constitutional corporations and meet the other definitional criteria of a 'dependent employer'), employer consultation under community of interest processes can be broad and aims to support Parliament's intent to focus the EIJP to where it is most needed. It is anticipated the CEO will carry out community of interest processes for Collie Power Station in Western Australia in the second half of 2025 and Yallourn Power Station in Victoria in 2026, with notifications already made to AEMO.

[9] See provisions on the 'trigger notice' under section 9 of the NZEA Act and the glossary in Appendix A.

[10] See provisions on the 'community of interest process' under section 55 of the NZEA Act and the glossary in Appendix A.

[11] See provisions under sections 56 and 57 of the NZEA Act and in the glossary in Appendix A.

[12] See provisions on the matters to which the CEO must have regard under subsections 56(4) and 56(5) of the NZEA Act.

[13] Revised Explanatory Memorandum, p.42.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

The EIJP is intended to focus on the immediate region where the closing power station is located and minimise the impact by supporting participating employees to find other employment where they live. The CEO does this by defining a 'geographic area', which sets parameters for which employers in the closing power station's supply chain could be involved in the EIJP.[14] While the NZEA Act does not require receiving employers to be located in the geographic area, the Authority will consider their geographic proximity to the closing power station. The geographic areas for both the Torrens Island B and Eraring power stations consist of a number of Statistical Area Level 3.[15]

As part of the community of interest consultations, the CEO is required to seek expressions of interest from local businesses interested in becoming 'receiving employers', which are businesses interested in offering jobs to suitable participating employees.[16] This process is underway for the Torrens Island B and Eraring power station closures. The CEO has issued guidelines setting out factors that will be considered in the selection of receiving employers, including that the employer:

- has the ability to provide ongoing employment in roles that are an appropriate match for the identified skills, competencies and career aspirations of participating employees
- is in geographic proximity of participating employees' current workplaces
- has a safe workplace
- has a record of meeting workplace relations and work health and safety legislation obligations.[17]

Becoming a receiving employer is voluntary. Receiving employers may be eligible for redeployment grants (separately managed by the Authority) as a way to smooth the transition of affected employees into new jobs. A range of additional eligibility requirements will apply to any receiving employer that accepts redeployment funding. The Authority is consulting separately to settle these requirements.

For the Muja C Unit 6 generator in Collie, which closed in April 2025, the CEO did not issue a trigger notice. This meant no further action could be taken by the Authority under the EIJP, since the operation of other sections of Part 5 of the NZEA Act require a trigger notice to be in place. The decision was informed by consultation and considered that the closure of Muja C Unit 6 would not result in any involuntary redundancies in the broader Muja Power Station or within its supply chain.

Discussion questions

General questions

1. Is the process for identifying when and where the EIJP should apply, and which employers it could be applied to, operating as intended? Are there any aspects which could be improved so the EIJP is better aligned with Parliament's intent?
2. Given power station closure dates can change, what other feasible options could be considered to ensure the EIJP, and its subsequent consultation processes, commence at the most appropriate time?

Questions for people and organisations consulted under a community of interest process

3. What was your experience of the community of interest process? What worked well and what could be improved?

[14] See provisions on the 'geographic area' under section 8 of the NZEA Act and in the glossary in Appendix A.

[15] Statistical Area Level 3 are geographic areas recognised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The geographic area for Torrens Island B Power Station includes Adelaide City; Burnside; Campbelltown (SA); Norwood – Payneham – St Peters; Prospect – Walkerville; Unley; Gawler – Two Wells; Playford; Port Adelaide – East; Salisbury; Tea Tree Gully; Holdfast Bay; Marion; Mitcham; Charles Sturt; and Port Adelaide – West; West Torrens. The geographic area for Eraring Power Station includes Lake Macquarie – East; Lake Macquarie – West; Lower Hunter; Maitland; Newcastle; Port Stephens; and Wyong.

[16] See the definition of 'receiving employer' under subsection 6(5) of the NZEA Act and the glossary in Appendix A.

[17] See provisions on guidelines for determining 'receiving employers' under subsection 6(10) of the NZEA Act.

[

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Theme two: Expected operation of the EIJP

At the time of this consultation paper's publication, the Authority's CEO is yet to decide whether to apply to the FWC for community of interest determinations in relation to the Torrens Island B and Eraring power station closures.

Key parts of the EIJP will only operate if the FWC makes a community of interest determination. Specifically, obligations on closing and dependent employers to support their employees only commence once specified in a FWC determination. Practically, this means many aspects of the EIJP are yet to be applied, however the Review provides an opportunity to test whether there are any potential issues which may prevent the legislation from operating as intended, and seek evidence to support any desired changes.

Should the CEO decide to apply to the FWC for a determination, the FWC will hear from relevant parties including employers named in the application, relevant employee and employer organisations, and transition employees who wish to be heard. The FWC will also hear from the Energy Industry Worker Redeployment Advisory Group (EIWRAG).[18] Current EIWRAG members were appointed by the Minister on 26 March 2025:

- Alistair Sage, Senior National Legal Officer, Mining and Energy Union
- Ben Moxham, Director, Industrial and Policy, Australian Council of Trade Unions
- Darcy Gunning, Campaigns Organiser, Australian Manufacturing and Workers Unions
- Kat Eather, General Counsel, Business Council of Australia
- Oliver Judd, Chief Executive Officer, National Electrical and Communications Association
- Shaun Kelleher, Workplace Relations Practice Leader for Newcastle and the Hunter, Australian Industry Group.

The EIWRAG may also provide information to the FWC when it considers whether to make further determinations or an order about employer obligations once an EIJP framework is in place for a closure.[19]

If the FWC makes a community of interest determination, employers specified in the determination must provide a range of supports to their employees.[20] All 'transition employees' will have access to supports such as career planning and financial advice.[21] Participating employees who have notified their employer that they want to find new employment can also access training and attend recruitment related activities.[22] The design of the obligations set out in the legislation was informed by previous examples of power station and other industrial closures, which highlighted the importance of access to training and tailored reskilling. Training ensures workers can upskill or reskill to access future employment opportunities, and allows workers to transition into new industries.

The circumstances and size of each employer specified in a community of interest determination will be different. For this reason, the NZEA Act doesn't prescribe exactly how obligations should be fulfilled.[23] Instead, employers are required to provide supports to the extent it would not be unreasonable, whilst balancing a range of factors including an employer's operational requirements, workforce needs and existing industrial instruments.[24] This includes providing paid time off or flexible working arrangements and, where relevant, financial contributions to help their employees access supports.

[18] Provisions on the EIWRAG are under section 63 of the NZEA Act and the glossary in Appendix A.
[19] Specifically, a determination under section 60 or 61 or an order under section 62 of the NZEA Act.
[20] Provisions on obligations are under sections 58 and 59 of the NZEA Act.
[21] See the definition of 'transition employee' under section 7 of the NZEA Act and the glossary in Appendix A.
[22] See the definition of 'participating employee' under section 5 of the NZEA Act and the glossary in Appendix A.
[23] Revised Explanatory Memorandum, p.44.
[24] See provisions under subsection 59(1) of the NZEA Act.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Under the NZEA Act, an employer and all relevant unions can come to an agreement on the specific actions the employer will take to meet its obligations under the EIJP. Where this occurs, the employer and relevant unions can jointly apply to the FWC for a determination.[25] If the employer and relevant unions can't come to an agreement in three months, the employer or a relevant union can apply to the FWC individually for a determination specifying the actions that the employer will take to meet its obligations under the EIJP.[26] Under certain circumstances, the CEO or a relevant union or employee may apply to the FWC for an order setting out the actions the employer must take to fulfil its obligations.[27] These determinations and orders can be enforced through the courts.

Relationship between the EIJP and existing industrial instruments

The EIJP is designed to operate within the existing workplace relations framework. The EIJP requires the CEO and FWC to consider existing workplace arrangements when deciding how the legislative framework applies to a particular power station closure. This means both the CEO and FWC will need to consider (among other things) whether and what supports are already available under the relevant industrial instrument, such as the applicable modern award or enterprise agreement.

The EIJP has no impact on Fair Work Act entitlements including notice of termination and redundancy, or on existing industrial instruments that set out the circumstances and amount of entitlements. Similarly, the operation of the EIJP framework does not cause enterprise

agreements to be renegotiated – this can occur through the normal avenues as set out in the Fair Work Act including applications to vary agreements if the employer and employees both agree to a specific change.

The CEO is responsible for promoting and monitoring compliance with Part 5 of the NZEA Act by providing education, assistance, advice and information to the closing, dependent and receiving employers, and their employees.[28] The Authority has developed information materials on the EIJP, which are available on its website, including specific material about each of the community of interest processes it has commenced. The Authority is continuing to develop and amend guidance materials for employers and employees, in consultation with power station operators and unions.

Employers may be subject to civil penalties of up to 600 penalty units if they contravene a FWC determination or order.[29] The civil penalty provisions are enforceable under Part 4 and Part 7 of the Regulatory Powers (Standard Provisions) Act 2014 (Regulatory Powers Act). Unlike the standard approach under Part 4 of the Regulatory Powers Act, the court can order the employer to pay the whole or part of a penalty to a particular organisation or person (for example, an employee organisation or transition employee) rather than the Commonwealth,[30] which aligns with established processes under the Fair Work Act.

The ability for the CEO to make decisions and support the EIJP's operation relies on relevant information from closing and dependent employers. For example, information about employer's workforce and operational requirements can help the CEO make a well-informed decision about whether it is reasonable to name the employer in an application to the FWC for a community of interest determination. Under Part 5 of the NZEA Act, the CEO may require, inspect and retain information or documents from a closing or dependent employer to provide the CEO with information relevant to the operation of Part 5.[31] The CEO can also provide information to receiving employers to support them to consider employing participating employees.[32] To date, the CEO has not issued any written notices to employers, and all information has been provided voluntarily.

[25] See provisions under section 60 of the NZEA Act.
[26] See provisions under section 61 of the NZEA Act.
[27] See provisions under section 62 of the NZEA Act.
[28] See provisions on the CEO's promotion and monitoring of compliance under subsections 68(1) and 68(2) of the NZEA Act.
[29] See provisions under subsections 60(7), 61(9) and 62(9) of the NZEA Act.
[30] See provisions under subsection 67(6) of the NZEA Act.
[31] See provisions under sections 64 and 65 of the NZEA Act.
[32] See provisions under section 66 of the NZEA Act. It would be subject to the consent of the employee who the personal information belongs to. As per page 56 of the Revised Explanatory Memorandum, collection and disclosure of the personal information will be reasonable in the circumstances and subject to the Privacy Act, including the Australian Privacy Principles.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Discussion questions

General questions

4. What aspects of the EIJP could be clarified or improved to support its operation in line with Parliament's intent and/or to avoid any unintended consequences?

Questions for people and organisations that may be impacted by the EIJP

5. What kinds of information, advice, products or activities would assist affected employers, employees and their representatives understand their rights and obligations under the EIJP?

Theme three: A fit-for-purpose EIJP into the future

Australia's coal- and gas-fired power stations will close progressively over the coming decades, and as such the EIJP will have a long lifespan. This will see the EIJP applied in a range of different contexts, including closures of coal- and gas-fired power stations in capital cities as well as regional areas, with different operating structures and sizes of the workforce. There are several existing mechanisms to support the EIJP to remain fit-for-purpose over the long term:

- The CEO is able to evaluate the application of the EIJP at any time[33]
- Additionally, the NZEA Act requires the Minister to commission an independent review of the operation of the entirety of the Act, which must include Part 5, within 10 years of the NZEA Act's commencement.[34] This review can be triggered by a recommendation from the NZEA Board to the Minister.

One of the objects of the NZEA Act is to "promote orderly and positive economic transformation … and ensure Australia's regions, communities and workers are supported to manage the impacts, and share in the benefits of Australia's transition to a net zero economy."[35] The EIJP is a critical lever the Authority can use to help achieve this object and is complemented by a multitude of Commonwealth, state and territory policies and programs that each play a role in the transition. While the EIJP provides a baseline of supports to help employees directly affected by the closure of coal- and gas-fired power stations, its effectiveness is contingent on a range of other variables, including the availability of suitable alternative employment within the local area, accessible and high quality skills and training, and the diversity and adaptability of local economies.

The EIJP cannot, and is not intended to, operate in isolation and initiatives such as the Future Made in Australia agenda will be fundamental to its success. The capacity for the EIJP to support workers affected by coal- and gas-fired power station closures depends on the availability of new jobs in Australia's regions. Broader government efforts will be critical, including to strengthen sovereign capability, diversify Australia's industrial base, and unlock private sector investment to drive the next wave of productivity growth supported by cheaper, cleaner energy.

As part of its role in supporting a better future for industrial regions, communities and workers in the net zero economy, the Authority contributes to the government's broader economic agenda by facilitating public and private sector participation and investment in greenhouse gas emissions reduction and net zero transformation initiatives in Australia. This includes referring proposals to the Commonwealth Specialist Investment Vehicles, such as the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation, Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. Additionally, initiatives from state, territory and local governments will be critical to the economic future of regions impacted by the transition to a net zero economy. The Authority coordinates across governments to support a complementary approach.

The EIJP can support access to a skilled and adaptable workforce and fill skills shortages in regional areas, which is critical to realising the benefits of investment in Australia's areas of emerging strength and comparative advantage. Many employees participating in the EIJP will have transferrable skills, but

[33] In line with the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy.

[34] Provisions for this review are under section 80A of the NZEA Act.

[35] Object ensuring regions, communities and workers are supported is prescribed under subsection 3(c) of the NZEA Act.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

will benefit from either diversifying, or gaining new skills and qualifications. This is also true for other workers within regions that are transitioning, and the ability for workers to upskill will depend on broader programs and investment from governments, including through the National Skills Agreement. The Authority is collaborating closely across government to help support the coordination of cross-cutting transition policies and programs.

The economic transition away from fossil fuels to clean energy is not unique to Australia. Australia can learn from other countries that have sought to respond to the challenges of a transitioning workforce by combining worker supports with a broad range of interventions and programs. For example:

- Spain has established tripartite agreements between the government, trade unions and the companies involved in mine and power station closures to support the workforces at closing coal mines and power stations. Spain also provides funding through Just Transition Agreements which engage national, regional and local stakeholders to develop economic opportunities and promote the upskilling and reskilling of workers, among other initiatives. Funding is available to support regional transition, including business diversification, industry attraction, improving industrial estates, and protecting the natural and cultural heritage of former mining towns. Significant funding has been provided to regional and local entities to support a range of activities.[36]
- Scotland has established a Just Transition Fund for the North East and Moray to support projects which contribute to the region's transition to net zero and align with the government's National Just Transition Outcomes. The Just Transition Fund recognises the need to diversify the regional economy of the North East and Moray away from carbon-intensive industries, and aims to capitalise on the opportunities that the transition to net zero will bring including jobs and prosperity. This is in addition to funding for a range of other initiatives including training and career advice.[37]

Domestically, employers and governments have also sought to manage the impacts of large scale closures by combining worker supports with regional economic development assistance. One example is the 1999 BHP Newcastle steelworks closure. On announcement of the closure in 1997, major efforts commenced to prepare for the upcoming loss of 4,000 direct and contracting jobs. In the time leading up to the closure, negotiations between unions and management resulted in comprehensive redundancy packages and redeployment benefits for workers and the creation of a Personal Pathways program to provide individual, employee-tailored retraining, financial services, and mental health supports. An estimated 90 per cent of participants in this program found new employment within a year of the steelworker's closure.[38]

The New South Wales Government established the Economic Development Office, an Economic Development Strategy and the Hunter Advantage Fund for the Hunter region. These provided land for new manufacturing ventures and coordinated studies on the development of a new container port on the steelworks site. BHP, the New South Wales Government and the Australian Government pledged $30 million towards new projects in the Hunter region. Ultimately, the Newcastle and Hunter economies were able to diversify and successfully adjust to the closure of the steelworks, with employee numbers increasing in sectors such as healthcare, education, tourism and professional services.[39] The coal mining industry remains a key employer for the Hunter region, with many coal mines in the region being export-driven.

Discussion questions

6. When should the EIJP be reviewed again and how should its impact be measured (for example, what metrics or outcomes should be considered)?
7. What could an "orderly and positive" transition supported by the EIJP look like? What does best practice look like for supporting the transition of affected workers to new employment under the EIJP?

[36] Just Transition Institute, 2023, Spain, 4 years towards a just energy transition.
[37] Scottish Government, 2025, Just Transition Fund: application form and guidance.
[38] Stockholm Environment Institute, 2021, Closure of steelworks in Newcastle Australia: Lessons from industrial transitions.
[39] Stephen Jones and Chai Tee, Experiences of Structural Change

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Submission guidelines

To support transparency in the Review process, generally the Authority will publish submissions on its website in accordance with our Privacy Policy.

The Authority may choose not to publish submissions on our website at our discretion, or to withhold certain content in submissions from publication (for example, by removing defamatory material from the published version of submissions, or where appropriate, de-identifying personal or sensitive information).

Additionally, we will not publish confidential submissions. To claim confidentiality on behalf of a person or an organisation, the first page of a submission should clearly state that the content should be treated as confidential (for example, an individual's name, so that it is not published on the internet). Alternatively, confidential information can be placed in an attachment to a submission, with a request to keep the attachment confidential. Confidential submissions will only be considered by the Reviewer and relevant staff at the Authority and will not be released publicly. In some instances, the Authority may consider it helpful to publish de-identified summaries of confidential submissions. De-identified summaries of these submissions will not be made public without permission of the submitter.

Submissions can be made anonymously or using a pseudonym. However, as we may be unable to verify or clarify the information provided in anonymous submissions, this may impact how we consider the submissions as part of the open consultation process.

If a submission is published on the Authority website, the information in it, including the name of the person lodging the submission, can be searched for on the internet, including from overseas.

Any submission to the Review may be subject to a request under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth).

Privacy collection notice

Statutory review of the Energy Industry Jobs Plan

This notice relates to consultation processes underpinning the statutory review of the EIJP under Part 5 of the NZEA Act.

Subsection 68(3) of the Act provides that the CEO of the Net Zero Economy Authority (the Authority) must conduct, or cause to be conducted, a review into the operation of Part 5, including consideration of whether any amendments to that Part are desirable.

Under the Act, the CEO must ensure a review of Part 5 of the Act is completed within 12 months of the Act commencing (by 10 December 2025). The CEO has appointed Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM, to lead the statutory review of the EIJP.

Emeritus Professor Green will consider the effectiveness of the EIJP, which has been set up to support employees impacted by the closure of closing coal-fired and gas-fired power stations to prepare for and transition to new employment.

Professor Green must provide the CEO of the Authority and the responsible Minister with a written report of the Review (subsection 68(6) refers). In line with subsection 68(7) of the Act, the Minister must table a copy of the report in each House of Parliament within 15 sitting days of that House after the report is given to the Minister.

The Authority adheres to the Australian Privacy Principles and personal information is handled in accordance with the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) (Privacy Act).

Participation in the Review is voluntary, however if you choose to participate, **we** (the **Authority**) may collect your personal information to inform the Reviewer's analysis and refer to non-confidential submissions in the final report where you have provided permission to do so.

We use technology by Converlens Pty Ltd to provide this consultation service and website. Our contractual arrangements require Converlens to comply with the Privacy Act and store data securely in Australia.

For more information, please refer to our Privacy Policy or Converlens' Privacy Policy.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

What we collect

Through the consultation process, we will collect a range of personal information (some of which could be sensitive information), including your:

- name
- contact information
- organisation you represent and your role
- personal views about the operation or likely operation of the EIJP and the related policy and program environment the EIJP operates within.

We do not require any other personal information. If we need further personal information to clarify or verify your submission, we will seek this from you and provide a reason for requesting the information.

While we seek your opinions to inform the consultation process, we do not need (a) your sensitive information or (b) personal information about anyone else. We will deal with any unsolicited personal or sensitive information in accordance with our Privacy Policy.

Sensitive information includes (but is not limited to) personal information that includes information or an opinion about an individual's trade union membership or associations.

If you need to provide information about any other person, you must obtain their consent to include their information in your submission and provide them with a copy of this notice.

Why we collect your personal information?

The Review is an opportunity for stakeholders to have their say and assist Professor Green to consider the impact, or likely impact of the operation of Part 5 of the Act.

Your personal information is collected for the purpose of obtaining your views, or the views of the organisation you represent (if any), on the operation of the EIJP including considering matters raised and seeking further feedback where appropriate and for research and evaluation related to the Review of the EIJP.

We will collect your personal information when you choose to participate in the Review, including to inform the Reviewer to make findings and recommendations.

We will not otherwise use or disclose your personal information without your consent, except where authorised or required by law.

You may provide information anonymously or by using a pseudonym. However, if you choose to do this, we may not be able to verify or clarify the information you provide which may impact how we consider your submission as part of the consultation.

Who we disclose personal information to

Publication on our website

We may publish non-confidential submissions on our website. Submissions may be accessed by overseas recipients who are not bound by the Australian Privacy Principles.

Disclosure to government entities

Where submissions are not provided in confidence, your personal information may be shared with relevant Australian Government and state government departments and agencies involved in the Review to allow them to consider your comments and feedback.

Where information is provided in confidence, this will not be shared by the Authority without your permission.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Storage of personal information

We store your personal information securely in accordance with the Privacy Act and government requirements.

More information

Please read our Privacy Policy on our website for more information on how we handle your personal information, including how you can:

- access any personal information that we hold
- seek correction of personal information that we hold
- complain about a breach of the Australian Privacy Principles in the Privacy Act.

If you have any concerns or questions, you can contact us at NZEA-Privacy@pmc.gov.au.

How will the Authority use information provided through consultation?

Written feedback will be collated and considered in development of the final report. Excerpts of non-confidential written submissions may be used in the final report and attributed to the relevant stakeholder.

If a submission is published on the NZEA website, the information within it, including the name of the person lodging the submission, may be searched for on the internet, including from overseas.

We may choose not to publish submissions on our website, or to withhold certain content in submissions from publication (e.g. by removing defamatory material or, where appropriate, de-identifying personal or sensitive information).

The Authority will not publish confidential submissions. To indicate information is provided in confidence, the first page of a submission should clearly state which content should be treated as confidential (e.g. an individual's name, so that it is not published on the internet). The option also exists to place confidential information in an attachment to a submission, with a request to keep the attachment confidential.

Confidential submissions will only be reviewed by relevant Authority staff and the Reviewer, Professor Roy Green, and will not be released on the website. De-identified summaries of these submissions will not be made public without permission of the submitter.

The Authority will collect information in face-to-face and virtual consultation sessions which will then be collated and considered in development of the final report.

Quotes attributable to individuals or organisations from any verbal consultation sessions will not be disclosed in the final report without express permission of the individual or organisation.

If you do not consent to the disclosure of verbal feedback, please notify the Authority staff and it will not be disclosed in the final report. You also have the right to:

- access your personal information
- request corrections to accurate information
- withdraw your consent for certain uses of your information
- request the deletion of your information (subject to legal requirements).

Any submission to the Authority on the Energy Industry Jobs Plan Statutory Review may be subject to a request under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982* (Cth) (**FOI Act**).

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 143 of 375

Appendix A: Glossary

Term	Definition
Authority	The Net Zero Economy Authority
CEO	The Chief Executive Officer of the Authority
Closing employer	Closing employers are defined in subsections 6(1) and 6(2) of the NZEA Act. Under each subsection, a closing employer must be constitutional corporation. The definitions are intended to capture the diverse corporate structures and labour supply chain arrangements that are present across the electricity generation and mining industries. Under subsection, 6(1) an employer is a closing employer if it owns or operates one or more parts of a coal- or gas-fired power station that is the subject of a trigger notice (section 9 of the NZEA Act). The employer could own or operate the power station alone or jointly and can be defined as a closing employer whether or not it employs employees to perform work at the power station. Under subsection 6(2) an employer would also be a closing employer if it is an associated entity of another constitutional corporation that either alone or jointly owns or operates one or more parts of a coal- or gas-fired power station that is the subject of a trigger notice. Additionally, the employer must meet either or both of the following criteria to be defined as closing employer: · employs employees to perform work at the coal- or gas-fired power station · where the power station that is subject to the trigger notice is a coal-fired power station and the employer alone or jointly operates a coal mine that supplies coal to the power station to generate electricity at that power station, the employer employs employees to perform work at the coal mine.
Community of interest process	The community of interest process described under section 55 of the NZEA Act is one of the first steps the CEO takes under the EIJP when they are aware of an expected closure date for of a coal- or gas-fired power station and have made a trigger notice (section 9 of the NZEA Act). Where the CEO has made a trigger notice, a 'trigger situation' (under subsection 55(2) of the NZEA Act) exists and the CEO must undertake a community of interest process of: · identifying employers as closing and dependent employers · seeking expressions of interest from employers that are constitutional corporations that may be interested in becoming 'receiving employers' · identifying the number of transition employees of the closing employers or dependent employers and the kinds of jobs performed by those employees and obtaining details relating to the employment of transition employees · identifying an estimate of the number of transition employees who are, or who will become, participating employees of the closing employers or dependent employers. The purpose of obtaining this information is to enable the CEO to make an application to the FWC for a community of interest determination under section 56 of the NZEA Act. The community of interest process relies on the CEO undertaking consultation. This includes consulting with employers that may be closing or dependent employers, relevant employer and employee organisations and, to the extent that the CEO considers appropriate, the community. Additionally, the CEO will seek information from employers that may become receiving employers on the number, nature and location of the jobs they could offer and the skills required. As part of the community of interest process, the CEO must consult.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

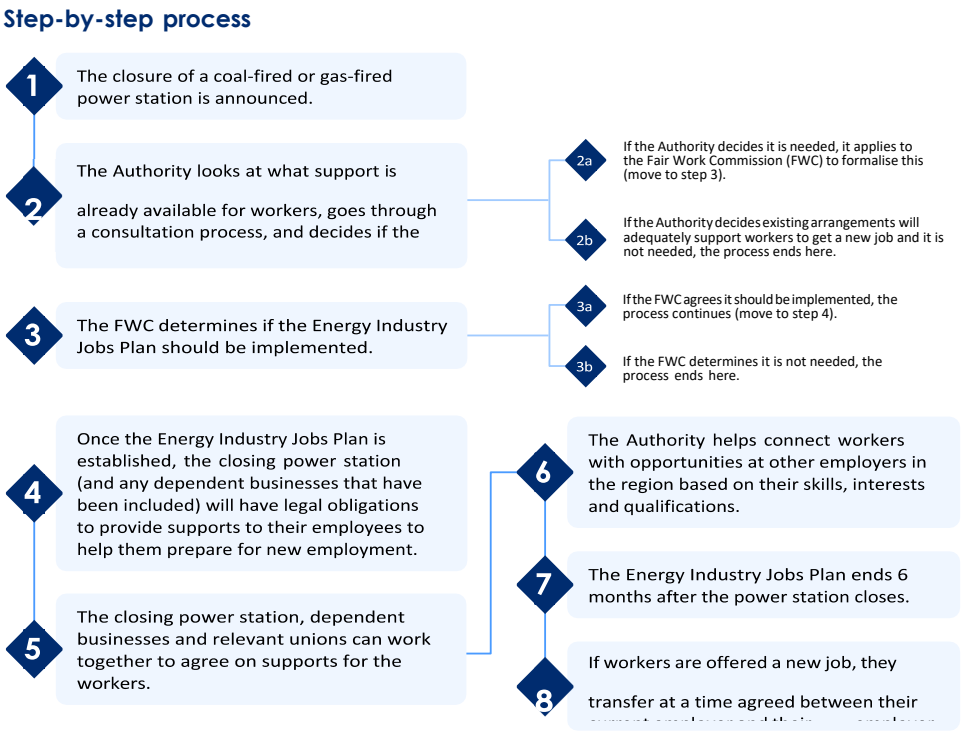
Term	Definition
Community of interest determination	The CEO will consider a range of factors in deciding whether to make an application under section 56 of the NZEA Act to the FWC for a community of interest determination and which employers to include. These factors include the object of the NZEA Act, existing supports available to transition employees to find new employment, the number of transition employees, the number of transition employees likely to become participating employees, employers' capacity to redeploy transition employees in other business operations and the capacity of other employers in the power station's geographic area to offer employment to transition employees. The CEO is not limited to considering only these factors. If the CEO decides to make an application to the FWC for a community of interest determination, the FWC will have regard to these same matters in deciding whether to specify a closing or dependent employer in that determination but is not limited to only having regard to those matters. If the CEO decides to make an application, they generally need to make that application at least 2 years before the scheduled closure of whole or part of a coal- or gas-fired power station (provided the trigger notice is given at least 42 months before the closure). Otherwise, the CEO must make the application as soon as practicable after completion of the community of interest process under section 55 of the NZEA Act. The FWC will hear from relevant parties in relation to any application from the CEO: · the Authority's CEO or their nominated representative · the EIWRAG (as defined below) · each employer named in the Authority's application · employee organisations entitled to represent the industrial interests of a transition employee of a closing or dependent employer named in the Authority's application · any employers nominated by a relevant employee organisation for inclusion in the community of interest determination · each employer organisation entitled to represent the industrial interests of an employer named in the Authority's application or nominated by a relevant employee organisation · transition employees who have notified the FWC that they would like to be heard. Where the FWC specifies an employer in a community of interest determination, that employer will have obligations under sections 58 and 59 of the NZEA Act, including to provide supports to facilitate their employees to find other employment. The CEO must inform employers that they have been specified in a determination as soon as practicable after the determination is made.
Dependent employer	Dependent employers are defined in subsections 6(3) and 6(4) of the NZEA Act. Under each subsection, a closing employer must be a constitutional corporation. The definitions are intended to capture the diverse corporate structures and supply chain arrangements that are present across the electricity generation and mining industries Under subsection 6(3), an employer is a dependent employer if it has a commercial relationship with a closing employer (where the closing employer meets the definition under subsection 6(1), or 6(2) where the closing employer employs employees to work at the power station concerned) and will, or will be likely to, cease a substantial part of its business operations at the power station or in the same geographic area as the power station, as a direct result of the power station's eventual closure. Subsection 6(4) captures outsourced workers at coal mines that are included in the EIJP. Under subsection 6(4), an employer is a dependent employer if they have a commercial relationship with another constitutional corporation that operates a coal mine (alone or jointly); or has a commercial relationship with an associated entity of another constitutional corporation, where the other constitutional corporation operates a coal mine (alone or jointly); or is an associated entity of another constitutional corporation, where the other constitutional corporation operates a coal mine (alone or jointly). Under each of these options, the coal from the coal mine must be supplied to a closing employer to generate electricity at the relevant coal-fired power station and the other constitutional corporation will, or will be likely to, cease a substantial part of the business operations in the same geographic area as the power station, as a direct result of the power station's eventual closure. Additionally, the employer must employee employees to perform work at the coal mine.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Term	Definition
Energy Industry Worker Redeployment Advisory Group (EIWRAG)	The EIWRAG is established under section 63 of the NZEA Act. It is an advisory group with the right to be heard in relation to various applications made to FWC. EIWRAG members are appointed by the Minister. The membership of the EIWRAG comprises persons who are members of, or who have been nominated by, employer and employee organisations entitled to represent the industrial interests of: · one or more employers, if that employer became a closing employer; · one or more employers, if that employer became a dependent employer; · one or more employees, if those employees became the transition employees of a closing employer; and · one or more employees, if those employees became transition employees of a dependent employer.
Employer organisation and employee organisation	An employer organisation or employee organisation is an organisation registered under the *Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009*.
Fair Work Commission (FWC)	The FWC is Australia's national workplace relations tribunal and registered organisations regulator. The FWC was established by the *Fair Work Act 2009*.
Geographic area	Provisions for the geographic area are under section 8 of the NZEA Act. By notifiable instrument, the CEO can specify a geographic area consisting of one or more areas. The geographic area may consist of one or more Statistical Areas level 2 (as per the Australian Bureau of Statistics). However, alternative types of area can be selected.
NZEA Act	*Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024*
Part 5	Part 5 of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024*
Participating employee	A participating employee is defined under section 5 of the NZEA Act. Participating employees are transition employees (defined under section 7 of the NZEA Act) of closing or dependent employers who have provided expressions of interest to their employer in finding other employment.
Receiving employer	Receiving employers are defined under subsection 6(5) of the NZEA Act. A receiving employer is a constitutional corporation that has: · given an expression of interest to the CEO (as mentioned under the community of interest process described under section 55 of the NZEA Act) and has not withdrawn it; and · is specified in a determination by the CEO.
Transition employee	Transition employees are defined under subsections 7(1), 7(2), 7(3) and 7(4) of the NZEA Act. Subsections 7(1) and 7(2) define transition employees of closing employers. A transition employee is an employee employed by a closing employer (as defined under subsections 6(1) or 6(2) of the NZEA Act) to perform work at a relevant coal- or gas-fired power station or a coal mine (under subparagraph 6(2)(c)(ii) of the NZEA Act). Subsections 7(3) and 7(4) define transition employees of dependent employers. A transition employee is an employee employed by a dependent employer (as defined under subsections 6(3) and 6(4) of the NZEA Act) to perform work in the business operations that will, or will be likely to, cease as a direct result of the closure of the relevant power station.
Trigger notice	Provisions for trigger notices are under section 9 of the NZEA Act. By notifiable instrument, the CEO can specify a kind of notice or a particular notice as a trigger notice if they are satisfied that the notice relates to the closure of the whole, or part of a coal- or gas-fired power station. This could include a notice given under a provision of the National Electricity Rules or a provision under a law of Western Australia. However the CEO can specify other types of notice as a trigger notice and that notice doesn't need to be a notice under the law of the Commonwealth, a state or a territory.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Appendix B: The EIJP process



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Government

Net Zero Economy Authority

netzero.gov.au

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

OFFICIAL

Terms of Reference

Terms of Reference – Statutory Review of Part 5 of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024*

Context

The *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024* (the Act) commenced in December 2024, establishing the Net Zero Economy Authority (Authority) and the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP). The objects of the Act include ensuring that Australia's regions, communities and workers are supported to manage the impacts, and share in the benefits, of Australia's transition to a net zero emissions economy.
Most of Australia's coal-fired power stations, and some gas-fired power stations, have announced expected closure dates over the coming decades. The retirement of ageing energy assets will cause significant economic and workforce changes, particularly in Australia's industrial regions. Accordingly, the EIJP was designed to promote a coordinated response to these changes by ensuring that workers directly impacted by power station closures and workers in some dependent businesses in their supply chains (such as coal mines) have the right supports, skills and opportunities to access new employment. The intent is to provide these supports well ahead of facility closures to give people more time to prepare for new employment and to avoid the adverse impacts experienced by communities from previous unplanned closures.

Legislative scope and framework

The EIJP provisions are set out in Part 5 of the Act. The implementation of this Part realises Parliament's intention to build a world-leading and consistent approach to worker support in the context of the energy transition while recognising the individual circumstances of each business. The legislative framework targets the EIJP to closures where it is most needed.[1] The model "reflects the outcomes of detailed consultations with employee and employer groups. [It is] about supporting workers on the front line of the energy transition."[2]

Parliament intended for this framework to operate within the existing workplace relations framework. Likewise, the intent is not to set up separate reporting obligations to announce closure dates, but rather to link to existing obligations and reporting methods (such as under electricity rules or notices to the Australian Stock Exchange).[3]

The EIJP framework enables the Authority to identify, and the Fair Work Commission (FWC) to determine, which employers and workers would benefit from the application of the EIJP provisions. Part 5 of the Act is administered by the CEO of the Authority. Under this Part, the CEO may undertake a process (i.e. the community of interest process set out in section 55) to assess whether the EIJP is needed for an upcoming closure (i.e. through an application for a community of interest determination under section 56). The process includes consultation with key stakeholders including employers, employee organisations, employer organisations and community groups. After completing the process, the CEO may apply to the FWC to make a determination (i.e. under section 57 of the Act). In this application, the CEO must have regard to various matters, including factors that could impact the employment outcomes of workers, and the impact on the broader community, after the closure. The CEO of the Authority and FWC are required to consider existing industrial arrangements and supports, among other things, when deciding how the legislative framework applies to a particular power station closure.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Where the CEO decides to apply to the FWC for a community of interest determination, and the FWC makes a determination, closing power stations and dependent employers specified in that determination will have legislated obligations under Part 5 of the Act to support their employees to seek and obtain new employment, including access to training, career planning and financial advice. The legislative framework specifies the types of support that participating employers must provide to their employees and establishes pathways for employers and unions to clarify what actions the employer must take for employers to meet their obligations.

Since the Act commenced on 11 December 2024, the Authority has applied Part 5 of the Act in three separate instances:

- On 19 December 2024, the Authority's CEO exercised statutory discretion to not undertake a community of interest process under Part 5 for the closure of Muja C Unit 6 in Collie, Western Australia. This decision was informed by significant consultation and took into account that the closure of the unit would not result in any involuntary redundancies in the broader Muja Power Station or within its supply chain.
- On 13 January 2025, the CEO announced a community of interest process under Part 5 of the Act for Torrens Island B Power Station in Adelaide, South Australia, which is scheduled to close in June 2026.
- On 27 May 2025, the CEO announced a community of interest process under Part 5 of the Act for Eraring Power Station in Lake Macquarie, New South Wales, which is scheduled to close in August 2027.

In relation to Torrens Island B and Eraring power stations, the community of interest processes will support the CEO to decide whether to make an application to the FWC for a community of interest determination for either closure. The Authority will announce the outcome of these processes as soon as practicable.

Upcoming closures where the EIJP provisions in Part 5 of the Act may apply include Collie Power Station in Western Australia scheduled to close in October 2027 and Yallourn Power Station in Victoria scheduled to close in June 2028.

Legislative basis for the Review

Subsection 68(3) of the Act states that the CEO must conduct, or cause to be conducted, a review into the operation of Part 5, including consideration of whether any amendments to that Part are desirable. Subsection 68(4) provides that the CEO must ensure that the review is completed within 12 months of the day on which section 68 commenced (i.e. the review must be completed by the end of 10 December 2025).

Subsections 68(5) and 68(6) of the Act state that the responsible Minister must be provided with a written report of the review. Under subsection 68(7), the Minister must then table a copy of the report in each House of Parliament within 15 sitting days of that House after the report is given to the Minister.

Matters to be considered by the Review

The review will seek to identify the effectiveness (including the likely effectiveness) of Part 5 and include consideration of whether any amendments to this Part are desirable (because, for example, there are unintended consequences of the legislative framework).

Noting some provisions in Part 5 may not have been used due to the timing of the review, this will necessarily limit the assessment of their practical operation.

1. The review will assess whether the following aspects of Part 5 are operating, or are expected to operate, as the Parliament intended:

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

1. The definitions of employers (closing, dependent and receiving) and transition employees, and how trigger notices and geographic areas are specified (sections 6-9 of the Act).[4]
2. The community of interest process outlined in section 55 of the Act, including the expression of interest for employers who may offer impacted workers new employment, the application process for a community of interest determination outlined in section 56, and the process in section 57, which provides for the FWC to make a community of interest determination.
3. Obligations applying to closing and dependent employers specified in a community of interest determination, as outlined in sections 58 and 59 of the Act.
4. Processes available to employers, employee organisations, workers and the CEO of the Authority for the FWC to determine actions that closing or dependent employers must take to meet their obligations, as outlined in sections 60, 61 and 62 of the Act, and the dispute resolution process in section 61A.
5. The Energy Industry Worker Redeployment Advisory Group established under section 63, and whether the group is undertaking its role as set out in the Act.
6. Information management provisions under sections 64, 65 and 66, including whether these provisions have worked as intended where the CEO has relied on them to require or inspect information or documents, or to provide information to employers.
7. Enforcement, compensation, injunction and costs provisions under sections 67, 67A, 67B, 67C.
8. The CEO's promotion of compliance with Part 5 under section 68, including through the provision of education, assistance, advice and information to closing, dependent and receiving employers and employees of those employers, and whether the CEO has monitored compliance with Part 5.

2. The review will also assess the merit and timing of future reviews of the operation of Part 5 and associated redeployment supports provided by the Authority.

Out of scope

The review will not consider changes to or make recommendations on:

- Parts of the Act outside of Part 5 and not directly related to the operation of Part 5
- The operation of the *Fair Work Act 2009*
- The broader operation of the Fair Work Commission
- Other Commonwealth legislation (e.g. relating to energy, resources or industrial facilities)
- The administered funding appropriated to the Authority to establish redeployment pools

Process and timing

The Authority CEO has appointed Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM (the Reviewer) to undertake the Review. The Reviewer will be supported by staff from the Authority.

The Review will commence in July 2025. The Review will involve a period of public consultation, commencing with a call for public submissions. Consultation must be conducted with relevant stakeholders, including but not limited to employee organisations, employer organisations, designated closing and dependent employers, non-governmental organisations, relevant communities, and other interested groups and individuals.

Once the Review is complete, the Reviewer must give the CEO and the Minister a written report of the Review.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Attachment C: Consultation and submissions breakdown

Headline figures of stakeholder engagement to date (as at 26 September 2025).

Category	Total number
Invitation to meet sent	193
Stakeholder meetings held	86
Written submissions received	33

Breakdown by organisation type

Organisation type	Number of invitations to meet	Number of meetings	Number of submissions
Employers	23	8	3
Closing employers	13	5	3
Dependent employers	2	1	0
Potential receiving employers	8	2	0
Education and training	20	154	4
Academia	16	12	4
Education and training	4	3	0
Industry	45	13	4
Business	23	5	0
Employer organisation	22	8	4
Government	48	15	7
Local	19	6	7
State	19	7	0
Federal	10	2	0
Other	57	35	15
Employee organisations (Unions)	37	25	8
Policy organisation	11	6	5
Community	5	2	0
First Nations organisations	2	0	0

Formatted Table

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Peak body	1	1	0
Individual	1	1	2

List of submissions received

Organisation	Publication status	Date received
Charles Sturt University – Simon Wright	Public	27/8/2025
Hunter Jobs Alliance	Public	22/8/2025
Australian Local Government Association	Public	3/9/2025
Hunter Joint Organisation	Public	4/9/2025
Gippsland Climate Change Network	Public	3/9/2025
EnergyAustralia	Public	1/9/2025
Lake Macquarie City Council	Public	2/9/2025
Banana Shire Council	Public	4/9/2025
Master Electricians Australia	Public	4/9/2025
University of Western Australia – Dr Caleb Goods	Public	4/9/2025
Lithgow City Council	Public	4/9/2025
Committee for the Hunter	Public	5/9/2025
Civil Contractors Federation	Public	5/9/2025
Dantia	Public	5/9/2025
Southerly Ten	Public	5/9/2025
Singleton Council	Public	5/9/2025
Australian Services Union	Public	5/9/2025
Electricial Trades Union	Public	11/9/2025
Mining and Energy Union	Public	9/9/2025
Australian Workers Union	Public	12/9/2025
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry	Public	19/9/2025
Alinta Energy	Public	5/9/2025
Centre for Policy Development	Public	5/9/2025

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Manufacturing Workers	Public	5/9/2025
University of Sydney – Net Zero Institute	Public	5/9/2025
Origin	Public	5/9/2025
Private withheld	Private	5/9/2025
Federation University	Public	5/9/2025
Beyond Zero Emissions	Public	5/9/2025
Anonymous	Public – Name Withheld	9/9/2025
Business Hunter	Public	10/9/2025
Private withheld	Private	5/9/2025
Hunter Workers	Public	5/9/2025

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

EIJP – Monitoring and Evaluation Framework: Contract information

Key Messages:

- The Net Zero Economy Authority (the Authority) is required to measure, assess and report on performance of the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP) under Commonwealth resource management and performance frameworks, established under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act), the PGPA Rule and associated instruments and policies.
- The Authority is developing an EIJP monitoring and evaluation framework (M&E Framework) to meet these requirements.
- A draft framework will be presented to the Board for endorsement with a finalised Framework scheduled for delivery in December 2025.
- The M&E Framework will set benchmarks for what the EIJP is expected to achieve to meet its policy intent and establish how impacts of the EIJP will be measured over time.
- The M&E Framework will also provide an opportunity to test whether policy parameters for the program are fit-for-purpose, and to identify any gaps in the Authority's worker support functions over the longer-term.
- The contracted value of the procurement is approximately $307,000 (GST inclusive) and will run from 3 July 2025 to 10 November 2025.

Talking Points

How did you procure the monitoring and evaluation framework and who was the successful supplier?

- The consultancy was procured using the Management Advisory Services (MAS) panel. The panel reference number is SON3751667.
- The successful supplier is ARTD Consultants. The contract number ID is CN4176553.
- The contracted value of the procurement is approximately $307,000 (GST inclusive) and will run from 3 July 2025 until 10 November 2025.
- This contract is reported on AusTender.

How many suppliers were approached for this work?

- A request for quote (RFQ) was issued to six specialist suppliers with experience in public policy monitoring and evaluation services relevant to EIJP, such as program development and design, evaluation, research and data collection.

How was the successful supplier chosen?

- Three specialist suppliers responded to the RFQ.
- The procurement process complied with the Commonwealth Procurement Rules, the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act)* and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 (PGPA Rule)*.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- The Authority's Procurement Policy in conjunction with the Accountable Authority Instruction (AAI) 2.3 – Procurement was also followed.

How will the EIJP M&E Framework fulfil the Authority's performance and reporting requirements under the PGPA Act 2013?

- Provision of the EIJP M&E Framework will satisfy government oversight requirements to measure, assess and report on performance of the EIJP under Commonwealth resource management and performance frameworks, established under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 (PGPA Act), the PGPA Rule, the Commonwealth Evaluation Policy and Resource Management Guide 130 (Commonwealth Evaluation Toolkit).
- This includes:
    - what the EIJP is expected to achieve and establish how impacts of the EIJP will be measured over time
    - enabling the Authority to collect evidence of the program's impact and allow for assessment of whether the EIJP's policy settings should change, and
    - developing a suite of monitoring items suitable at both the program level and for each individual power station closure and planned complementary supports.

Who outside of the Authority have you consulted with about the development of this monitoring and evaluation framework?

- The Authority has consulted with a range of unions and industry peaks..
- Further engagement is planned with the Authority's Board and Stakeholder Advisory Panel.

What were stakeholders asked to consult on? What documents or information were they given?

- Stakeholders were provided with a draft version of an EIJP specific program logic (see Attachment A) and a discussion guide (see Attachment B).
- Stakeholders were asked to comment on:
    - direct outcomes of an EIJP, and
    - indirect outcomes that an EIJP would contribute to but cannot meet on its own.

If asked: What is a program logic?

- A program logic model is a diagram, or visual representation, of how program components are intended to contribute to a set of specific outcomes through a series of intermediate results.
- It illustrates how the elements work together to create the desired change in the target groups and achieve the desired outcomes.
- It shows the logical connections between inputs, outputs, assumptions and outcomes.

If asked: Does this Monitoring & Evaluation Framework include compliance monitoring?

- EIJP Monitoring and Compliance activities fall under NZEA's regulatory functions (see 4.2 EIJP - Regulatory Approach - NZEA Additional Information October 2025).
- NZEA is developing a Compliance and Enforcement Framework which will outline how NZEA will identify and respond to non-compliance as part of its Regulatory Framework.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- EIJP Monitoring and Compliance functions are activated following Fair Work Commission processes, such as issuing an EIJP determination/order.

If asked: Are you planning a longitudinal study of coal fired power station workers?

- The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) is undertaking a Longitudinal Study.
- Further questions on this study should be directed to DEWR.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Background

Purpose and scope of the EIJP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

- The EIJP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework will
    - set benchmarks for what the EIJP is expected to achieve to meet its policy intent and establish how impacts of the EIJP will be measured over time;
    - enable the Authority and Australian Government to collect evidence of the program's impact on workers and businesses covered by the program;
    - assess the redeployment support services administered by the Authority including the regionally-based on ground coordinators, online jobs board and EIJP incentive grants program for businesses that hire participating workers;
    - support assessment of whether the EIJP's policy settings are fit for purpose or should change, in order to better meet the Authority's function of supporting workers in emissions-intensive industries who are, or will be, affected by Australia's transition to a net zero emissions economy; and
- The Framework will include:
    - an evaluation approach, objectives and key evaluation questions
    - program logic
    - key performance measures, indicators and targets, and clearly identified data sources;
    - methodologies and their rationales;
    - data collection and reporting options.

Next steps in the development process

- September 2025
    - Update program logic based on external stakeholder interviews
    - Present updated program logic to first round of internal review
- October 2025
    - Second round of internal review
    - Present program logic at Authority Board meeting
    - Development of Key Evaluation Questions (KEQ)
    - Develop performance measures
    - Present and refine KEQs and performance measures at third round of internal review
- November 2025
    - Prepare and finalise EIJP Monitoring and Evaluation framework.

Attachments

- Attachment A: External EIJP program logic (draft)
- Attachment B: Program logic discussion guide

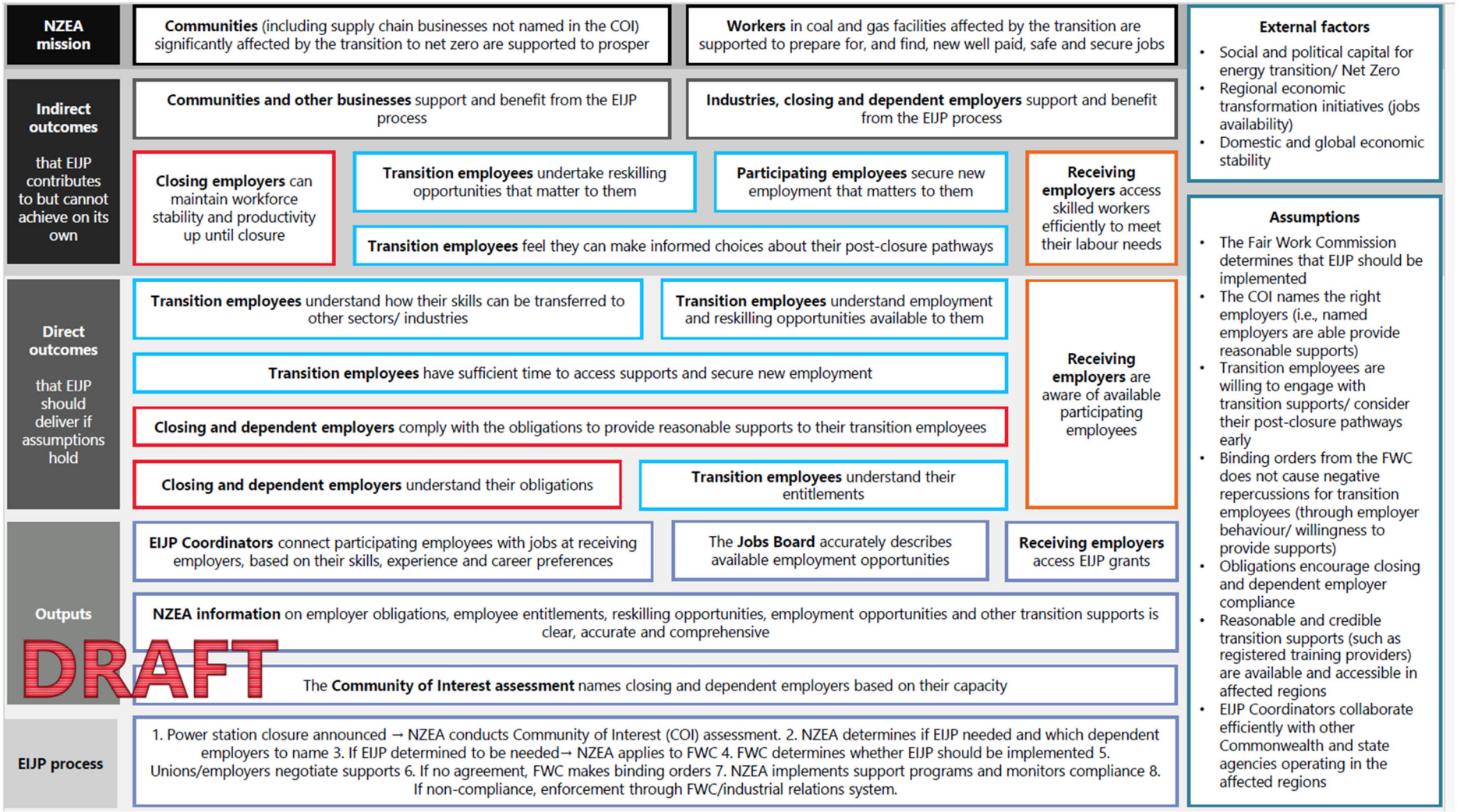
This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

OFFICIAL

Division:	Worker Transition Division	
Prepared by: s47F **Mob:** s47F **Ext:** s47F **Date:** 10 September 2025	**Cleared by General Manager:** Stuart Richardson **Mob:** s47F **Ext:** s47F **Date:** 11 September 2025	
Consultation: [Division/Branch/Section] **Name:** [Insert name]	**Date:** [insert consultation date] **Mob:** **Ext:**	
Cleared by Division Head: Rachel Livingston		**Date:** 22 September
Cleared by Chief Executive Officer: David Shankey		**Date:**

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Attachment A: External EIJP Program Logic (draft)



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

OFFICIAL

Attachment B: Program logic discussion guide

Discussion guide

1. Do these outcomes reflect what you see as important goals for the EIJP?
2. Are we missing any important stakeholder types?
3. Are there any direct outcomes that seem overly ambitious or not feasible?
4. What factors outside the NZEA's control will affect whether these outcomes are achieved?
5. Is there any data your organisation collects that could help NZEA track whether these outcomes are being achieved?
6. What kinds of data should be used to measure or track outcomes (official statistics like Australian Bureau of Statistics data [quantitative data], or survey data and focus groups [qualitative data].
7. What questions will you want the answers to at the time of an evaluation of the EIJP program?
8. Are the outcome statements clear and easy to understand?
9. Is there any language or terminology that could be improved or clarified?
10. Do you have any other comments on the outcome statements at this stage?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

FIRST NATIONS

Key Messages:

- The Authority has a legislated function to support First Nations people to participate in and benefit from the net zero transition.
- A First Nations Working Partnership has been established to guide this work.
- The Authority's First Nations focused work is guided by the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- The Authority is exploring ways to partner with First Nations peoples to achieve genuine participation and benefit-sharing, using a place-based approach. The aim is to ensure benefits flow in ways that are locally driven and reflect community priorities.
- The Authority is well positioned to support, complement and build on existing Commonwealth policies and initiatives – such as the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy and First Nations Economic Partnership - that are driving positive outcomes for First Nations communities in the clean energy transition.

The Authority's Approach to supporting First Nations peoples and outcomes

- One of the responsibilities of the Net Zero Economy Authority (the Authority) is to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate in, and benefit from, Australia's transition to a net zero emissions economy.
- In February, the Authority's Board agreed to establish a First Nations Working Partnership to guide the Authority's approach to facilitating and empowering First Nations participation, engagement and benefit-sharing. This partnership approach is consistent with commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- The Working Partnership is supporting the Authority to identify the range of First Nations benefits that can be achieved through the transition to net zero. It will also provide strategic guidance with a focus on the practical actions the Authority can take to support First Nations communities to secure those benefits and shape their economic futures.
- The Authority's Working Partnership includes First Nations senior representatives from the following organisations:
    - Central Land Council
    - Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Peak Organisations
    - First Nations Clean Energy Network
    - National Native Title Council
    - New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council
- The Authority is represented in the Partnership by its CEO, First Assistant Secretary (Regional Transformations Division) and Assistant Secretary (Hunter, Latrobe & First Nations Branch).
- The Working Partnership has met 3 times (19 March, 16 June, 25 August) since it was established.
- It is anticipated that the working partnership will meet a further 2-3 times to finalise its work.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Who has been contracted to progress this work and how much has been spent to date?

- In October 2024, Equity Economics was commissioned to review and analyse best practice approaches to First Nations engagement (phase one) and develop a First Nations Engagement Strategy (phase 2) with a contract value of $79,825.9 GST Inc. Equity Economics was successful through a direct tender approach.
- Following completion of phase one and consistent with best practice recommendations highlighted in the report produced during this phase, the Authority's Executive agreed to progressively explore establishing a partnership and developing a Participation and Engagement Strategy (phase 2) through a 'working partnership' in the first instance.
- The Authority sought expanded support from Equity Economics to progress phase 2 of this work, with a contract variation undertaken, varying the contract value to $191,365.9 GST Inc. due to expire 15 August 2025.
- A delay in finalising the Strategy, driven by a rescoping of the work occurring through discussion with the Working Partnership, led to a further contract variation, increasing the contractual value to $200,934.2 GST Inc with a revised end date of 30 June 2026.
- No further contract variations will take place.

Progression of First Nations work within the Authority's Priority Regions

- The Authority focuses on priority regions with significant exposure to the transition to a net-zero economy. The Authority is progressing work to ensure First Nations peoples and communities are not left behind and that benefits are realised within these priority areas.
- The Authority continues to work within priority regions to ensure First Nations benefits from a Net Zero transition are realised.
- One of the Authority's legislated functions (section 16b) is to facilitate public and private sector participation and investment in net zero transformation initiatives.
    - The Authority's investment mandate includes working to identify investment that could enable improved First Nations outcomes.
- Work is underway to identify a select number of First Nations-led projects or activities where the Authority is well placed to support or drive outcomes.
- The Authority works on building relationships with First Nations stakeholders following principles of FPIC (Free, Prior, Informed Consent) and laying foundations to identify future opportunities in true partnership.

How does the Authority First Nations work differ from the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy?

- The Authority is working closely with DCCEEW and the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy Advisory Committee to ensure our work complements their efforts. The Authority's will focus on our broader mandate – to ensure First Nations participation and benefits across the net zero economy in our priority regions, including through improved coordination, , economic diversification, workforce supports, and investment facilitation.
- We will continue to work with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water to support the implementation of the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy, with the Authority articulating its intent to support this work outlined in the soon to be released First Nations Clean Energy Strategy Implementation Plan.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

OFFICIAL

What involvement does The Authority have with the First Nations Clean Energy Program?

- A key part of the Australian Government's commitment to implement the Strategy is the First Nations Clean Energy Program (the Program). The government has allocated $70 million in funding for the Program over 3 years starting in 2025-26. DCCEEW is managing this program. The Authority is continuing to provide support to DCCEEW as appropriate on both the Program and the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy.

Division:	Regional Transformational Division
Prepared by: First Nations Policy Team **Mob:** s47F **Ext:** s47F **Date:** 28 August 2025	**Cleared by General Manager:** Sacha Edema **Mob:** **Ext:** **Date:** 15 September 2025
Consultation: HR Operations, Investment Strategy and Facilitation, Monitoring, Research and Policy Development, Hunter Region, Latrobe Region, Central Queensland and Collie, Pilbara Projects **Name:** s47F s47F s47F	**Date:** N/A **Mob:** N/A **Ext:** N/A
Cleared by Division Head: Travis Bover	**Date:** 24 September 2025
Cleared by a/g Chief Executive Officer: Travis Bover	**Date:** 24 September 2025

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

OFFICIAL

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Key Messages:

- The Net Zero Economic Transformation Campaign ran for 10 weeks from 22 September to 30 November 2024 and was extended for a further period from 2 February to 28 March 2025.
- The campaign was implemented in the Hunter and Gladstone and Central Queensland; these are priority regions of focus for the Authority that will be significantly impacted by the net zero transition.
- The Net Zero Economy Agency was provided $10 million over two years from 2023--24, in the 2024-25 Budget. Total expenditure is $9 million. Unspent funds will be returned to the Department of Finance.
- Engagement continues to be a key focus of the Authority's work. Between 28 February 2025 and 31 August 2025, the Authority met with over 160 stakeholders from community, business, government and unions.

Why did an independent Authority deliver an advertising campaign for Government?

- One of the key functions of the Net Zero Economy Authority in the Act is to promote an orderly and economically responsible transition. This includes ensuring that communities understand why the transition is happening, when it will occur, and how it will impact their regions.
- The campaign was developed in line with the Australian Government Guidelines on Information and Advertising Campaigns and its 5 Principles. (the Guidelines).
    - The campaign was reviewed by the Independent Communications Committee (ICC). On 15 August 2024, the ICC wrote to the PM&C Secretary advising that the campaign complied with Principles 1-4 of the Guidelines. These principles ensure that campaigns are relevant (Principle 1), presented in an objective, fair and accessible manner (Principle 2), not directed at promoting party political interests (Principle 3) and justified and undertaken in an efficient, effective and relevant manner (Principle 4).
    - On 18 September 2024, the PM&C Secretary certified that the campaign complies with the Guidelines, including Principle 5 (compliant with legal requirements and procurement policies and procedures). The certification is available on PM&C's website.

How much did you spend on the campaign?

- The Net Zero Economy Agency was provided $10 million over two years from 2023–24, under the Net Zero Economy Budget 2024-25 measure. Total campaign expenditure was around $9 million (including $447,288.48 in departmental expenditure for staff, travel and legal).

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Contract information

Below is a breakdown of the supplier expenses (Administered) from FY23-24 to 30 June 2025.

Supplier	Description	AusTender Reference	Total contract value (ex GST)	Total expenditure
Ipsos	Market research	CN4047245 CN4047245-A1	$563,479	$563,480
The Monkeys	Creative development	CN4059480 CN4059480-A1 CN4059480-A2	$2,806,555	$2,519,830
Horizon	Public relations	CN4071658 CN4071658-A1	$2,140,296	$2,129,192
Embrace society	Multicultural public relations	CN4075107 CN4075107-A1	$577,311	$578.811
Cox Inall Ridgeway	First Nations public relations	CN4084477 CN4084477-A1	$450,000	$432,500
Universal McCann / Mediabrands Australia Pty Ltd	Media buy	CN4087130	$1,600,000	$1,598,928
		CN4131677	$700,000	$543,213
Hall & Partners	Evaluation market research	CN4093284 CN4093284-A1	$382,592	$232,833
				$8,598,787

Below is a total expenditure including departmental (employee expenses, staff travel and legal advice).

Campaign spend to 30 June 2025			
	2024-25	2023-24	Total Spend
Departmental	$317,978	$129,310	$447,288
Administered	$8,045,555	$553,230	$8,598,787
TOTAL	**$8,363,533**	**$682,541**	**$9,046,075**

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

OFFICIAL

Can you provide a breakdown of the four events in Hunter and Gladstone spend?

- The costs of campaign activity in the Hunter and Gladstone/Central Queensland were not itemised by event. However, we are able to break down the costs by category of activity, reflected in the table below.
- The majority of costs associated with managing the events in the Hunter and Gladstone/Central Queensland will be a sub-set of the community engagement costs ($141,824).

Embrace Society Activities	Cost (ex GST)
Strategy development	$18,455
Asset development (fact sheets, infographics, case studies, testimonials, photography and video, including translations)	$346,961
Community engagement (distribution of assets and follow up, information sessions and forums)	$141,824
Reporting and evaluation	$20,072
Total	**$527,312**

See also: QoN 0036 – Additional Estimates 2024-25 February 2025 – Four events in Hunter and Gladstone – breakdown of $527,000 spend

Has the campaign been evaluated? Can you provide the report?

- The campaign was evaluated by the whole of government evaluation agency, Hall & Partners, and shows the campaign performed well. The combination of a modest advertising spend with community engagement activities extended the reach and recognition of key communication messages. The focus on local projects has increased understanding of how the transition is relevant to local communities.
- It has also enabled the Authority to develop partnerships with local organisations to ensure that we are not taking a Canberra-centric view of the transition and can reflect the localised impact and opportunities the net zero transition is likely to have in different regions.
- The campaign evaluation is being considered by Government and cannot be shared at this stage. [If pressed, take this on notice, noting that we would need to consult with the Government Communications Subcommittee and the Department of Finance prior to releasing the evaluation].

Are there plans to extend the campaign again or expand to other regions?

- No there are no plans to extend this campaign.
- [If pushed] while there are no plans for a campaign like this, the Authority will continue with its legislated function of '... promoting an understanding of, and enabling participation on, Australia's transition to a net zero emissions economy.' (s.16(e))" (We are repurposing some of the material and doing other research, local engagement and communication activities in the regions but no current plans for anything of this scale).

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Between 28 February and 31 August, 2025, how many stakeholders did the Authority meet and consult with?

- Between 28 February and 31 August 2025, the Authority met with at least 162 stakeholders. This includes unions, First Nations groups, industry and investors, academia, international counterparts, non-government organisations, community groups, state, local and Commonwealth government teams.

How many regional visits did the Authority Chair and CEO undertake in 2025, and to which regions?

- The CEO had a number of regional engagements in 2025 (dated to 31 August), including visits to:
    - South Australia as part of the Torrens Island COI process in February
    - Collie as part of the Authority Board meeting in February
    - Central QLD to meet with various stakeholders in May
    - The Hunter, as part of the Eraring Community of Interest process in June
    - The Pilbara, for the Pilbara Summit in June
- The Chair visited Collie as part of the February Authority Board meeting, and will be traveling to Latrobe for the October Authority Board meeting. During these visits, the Chair meets with a range of diverse stakeholders and hears first-hand about their vision for the future and the challenges that need to be addressed to achieve this.

How many times has the CEO met with Unions?

- The CEO has had a number of meetings with Unions as part of both the Torrens Island Community of Interest process in February and the Eraring Community of Interest process in June– including a union roundtable. The CEO also attended the Electrical Trade Unions of Australia National Conference in March and the Mining and Energy Union Forum in August.

Can you provide a detailed list of stakeholders the Authority met with in 2025??

- You could provide such a list on notice.

Why did the Authority spend $180,000 on rebranding?

[Relevant Media Article: Federal government slammed after spending $180,000 on net zero revamp | NT News]

- Establishment of the Authority as an independent statutory body required the creation of a professional and consistent visual identity, as the former “Agency” branding under the Australian Government crest was no longer current.
- The Authority engaged Folk under a creative and digital services contract to deliver foundational branding work, which included brand identity deliverables: logo, brand promise, typography, colour palette, visual and written style guides, and usage guidelines. (Further information available on notice).
- This work ensures the Authority is recognised as an independent authority on the net zero transition and presents as trusted, professional, and consistent across all platforms.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Background

Campaign

- The Net Zero Economy Authority's functions include supporting and delivering educational and promotional initiatives to increase understanding of, and encourage participation in, Australia's transition to a net zero emissions economy.
- Australia is committed to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. To get there, Australia must transition away from fossil fuels and invest in clean energy, clean technologies and decarbonise emission intensive industries.
- These changes will have a significant impact on regional communities that currently host large coal-fired power stations and industrial facilities, and communities that will host large renewable energy and transmission infrastructure.
- The Net Zero Economic Transformation campaign aimed to increase awareness of Australia's transition to a net zero economy within priority regions by improving knowledge and understanding about what the net zero transition means for them and their regions.
- The campaign aligned with the Government's plan for a Future Made in Australia to help build a stronger, more diversified and more resilient economy as Australia and the world decarbonises.

Attachments

Nil.

<table>
<tr><td>Division:</td><td colspan="3">Policy and Communications Division</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Prepared by:
s47F

Mob: N/A Ext: 6987
Date: 5 September 2025</td><td colspan="2">Cleared by General Manager:
Adam Carlon

Mob: s47F Ext: s47F
Date: 10 September 2025</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Consultation: N/A

Name: N/A</td><td colspan="2">Date: N/A

Mob: N/A Ext: N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Cleared by Division Head: John Connor</td><td>Date: 18 September 2025</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Cleared by a/g Chief Executive Officer: Travis Bover</td><td>Date: 24 September 2025</td></tr>
</table>

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

OFFICIAL

CORPORATE MATTERS

Key Messages:

- The financial result for 2024-25 (unaudited) was a surplus of $19.3 million, driven by the delay in establishing the Authority, impacting recruitment and major procurements. Note that this is based on the combined Agency and Authority spend for the year.
- The Authority's 2025-26 budget allocation as disclosed in its chapter of PM&C's Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) for Budget 2025-26 is $75.453 million, comprising $53.372 million in departmental operating funding, $21.956 million in administered funding (re. EIJP early retirement and onboarding payments) and $0.125 million in capital funding.
- YTD departmental operating expenditure to 31 August 2025 is $6.589 million (refer to Attachment A for detail).
- The Authority has been impacted by the extension of the whole of Government *Savings from External Labour* measure announced at Budget 2025-26, with a $1.106 million reduction applied to the 2028-29 appropriation. This is disclosed in Section 1.3 of the Authority's PBS chapter.
- As at 31 August 2025, the Authority had 137.45 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) and 140 headcount, compared to its ASL cap of 157.5 in 2025-26 (refer to Attachment A for detail).
- The target date to complete the Machinery of Government processes has slipped from 1 July 2025 as a result of delays in the development of the Authority's ICT environment.
    - Since commencing the MoG processes, the Authority was also moved from the PM&C portfolio to the Industry portfolio – Administrative Arrangement Order issued 13 May 2025 refers.
- There were reports in specialist media outlets in March 2025 about Digital61 securing the contract to build the Authority's IT environment.
    - The Authority is establishing its own ICT and corporate functions to enable it to transition from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in line with standard machinery of government processes.
    - The IT environment will be a cloud-based secure Microsoft solution with standard business applications. It is being developed in accordance with requirements that apply to Government agencies.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

How much have you spent on consultants?

- During the financial year ended 30 June 2025, the Agency and the Authority spent a combined $1,497,221 (GST excl) of its Departmental operating budget on contracts with consultants, as follows:

Supplier Name	Description	PM&C Annual Report (GST incl)	NZEA Annual Report (GST incl)	Total (GST incl)	2024-25 Commitment (GST incl)
1 and One Pty Ltd	Framework for Energy Industry Jobs Plan	$ 149,875.00	$ -	$ 149,875.00	$ 149,875.00
Lazard Australia Pty Ltd	Northern Water and Hydrogen Jobs Plan	$ 307,812.00	$ 120,523.01	$ 428,335.01	$ 750,000.00
Baringa Partners LLP	Hydrogen Jobs Plan SA Project	$ 360,800.00	$ -	$ 360,800.00	$ 360,800.00
APP Corporation Pty Limited	Desktop review of OHPSA's report	$ 18,480.00	$ -	$ 18,480.00	$ 18,480.00
Proximity Advisory Services Pty Ltd	Review of governance framework documents	$ 33,153.12	$ -	$ 33,153.12	$ 36,836.80
McGrathNicol Advisory	Internal audit service provider	$ -	$ 23,826.00	$ 23,826.00	$ 125,000.00
Athru Solutions Pty Ltd	Audit and Risk Committee Chair	$ -	$ 16,087.50	$ 16,087.50	$ 25,000.00
PFM Advisory Services Pty Ltd	Audit and Risk Committee member	$ -	$ 9,900.00	$ 9,900.00	$ 16,500.00
Spark Integrity Pty Ltd	Audit and Risk Committee member	$ -	$ 10,500.01	$ 10,500.01	$ 16,500.00
Korda Mentha	Independent assurance services	$ -	$ 184,428.90	$ 184,428.90	$ 400,000.00
BIS Oxford Economics Pty Ltd	Regional economic profiles and forecasts	$ -	$ 182,765.00	$ 182,765.00	$ 292,424.00
Sparke Helmore Lawyers	Legal services	$ -	$ 1,902.95	$ 1,902.95	$ 33,500.00
Minter Ellison	Legal services	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 16,500.00
HWL Ebsworth	Legal services	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 16,500.00
Maddocks	Legal services	$ -	$ 20,202.16	$ 20,202.16	$ 33,500.00
Clayton Utz	Legal services	$ -	$ 56,965.15	$ 56,965.15	$ 33,500.00
Ashurst Australia	Legal services	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ 16,500.00
		$ 870,120.12	**$ 627,100.67**	**$ 1,497,220.79**	**$ 2,341,415.80**

- Refer to Attachment B for all procurements, noting that the following consultancies listed above were not novated to the Authority and therefore, have not been reported on the Authority's AusTender instance, because they were finalised prior to Authority establishment on 11 December 2024.
    - 1 and One Pty Ltd – Framework for Energy Industry Jobs Plan
    - Baringa Partners LLP – Hydrogen Jobs Plan SA Project
    - APP Corporation Pty Ltd – Desktop review of the Office of Hydrogen Power South Australia (OHPSA)'s report
    - Proximity Advisory Services Pty Ltd – Review of governance framework documents

Why have you allocated so much to legal services?

- The Authority has set up standing arrangements with several law firms to enable the Authority to obtain legal advice as required on a timely basis. Actual expenditure will depend on use.

The PMC gift registry shows two instances where staff members were taken out for meals.

- The employees involved disclosed the hospitality received in accordance with the PM&C gifts and benefits policy, as the Authority was still operating under the PM&C policy at that time.
- The Authority has established its own Conflict of Interest Policy, which requires all Authority employees to report incidents that may give rise to actual or perceived conflicts of interest, such as gifts and hospitality of this kind.
    - We are developing a specific policy on Gifts and Hospitality, along with guidance for staff on the circumstances in which it is appropriate to accept gifts or hospitality, and if so, the disclosure and reporting requirements.
- *If asked* on the specific nature of gifts and benefits on the register relating to Authority staff:
    - There has been two gifts/benefits accepted by Authority staff since 1 July 2024:

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Date received	Date recorded	Item	Received by	Presented by	Occasion	Value
07/11/24	22/11/24	Dinner	s47F	s47F Windlab, Australia	Dinner - Investor Group on Climate Change (IGCC) Summit 2024	$250.00
05/06/25	10/06/25	Breakfast	s47F	s47F , Folk, Australia	Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) Circular Economy Event	$135.00

How much have you spent on travel across the Authority? And how much has this travel contributed to Australia's carbon footprint?

- The Agency and the Authority spent a combined $625,021 on domestic travel during 2024-25.
    - Authority officials have not travelled overseas in 2024-25.
- For the current FY, as at 31 August 2025, the Authority spent $164,646 on domestic travel.
- Not in a position to comment on the impact that travel by the Authority has had on Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. But I can say that Authority staff use virtual meetings extensively.
- The Authority has developed an emissions reduction plan, in accordance with the Government's commitment to APS Net Zero by 2030, which was published on our website in July 2025.

How are you managing greenhouse gas emissions arising from the Authority's activities?

- The Authority has published its emission reduction plan on its website, reflecting our commitment to the Government's APS Net Zero by 2030 target under the APS Net Zero in Government Operations Strategy.
- Progress against the plan, along with our annual emissions reporting in accordance with the Commonwealth Emissions Reporting Framework, will be presented in the Climate Disclosure section of the 2024-25 Annual Report. The Authority was included in Tranche 1 of the Government's climate disclosure reporting requirements in 2024-25.
- The Authority did not proceed to tender for technical support to assess climate risk. Instead, Nous Group a consulting firm, developed the Climate Risk and Opportunity Management Program (CROMP) risk register in accordance with DCCEEW guidance. Following review by the Authority Governance team, no enterprise level climate risks were identified. These risks will be monitored and reviewed in line with existing risk management practices.

How many positions at the Authority are diversity/inclusion designated positions?

- The Authority does not have any diversity or inclusion designated positions.
- The Authority is committed to the APS-wide policies to enhance the diversity of the APS workforce and embedding a culture of inclusion.
- The Authority is currently operationally supported by PM&C, as such the PM&C inclusion and diversity policies apply.

How much have you spent this year on office accommodation?

- The Agency and the Authority spent a combined $2,146,944 on office accommodation arrangements during 2024-25, which are sublease arrangements from larger, established agencies (principally the National Indigenous Australians Agency and Austrade).
    - For the current FY, as at 31 August 2025, the Authority spent $362,499 on property operating expenses, including $349,837 on office accommodation.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

OFFICIAL

Details of recent Freedom of Information (FOI) requests

- The Authority will provide its quarterly return on FOI statistics for Q1 FY2025-26 to the OAIC by 21 October 2025.
- Details of FOI requests for the past year are provided at **Attachment C.**

FOI/25-26/002 - current FOI

Under the FOI Act, a request was submitted by s47F for access to all documents created by the Net Zero Economy Authority concerning a complaint lodged by s47F on 24 January 2025. This request also seeks all documents relating to:

a) the non-renewal of s47F contract, and

b) the decision not to offer them an ongoing role following an April/May 2024 recruitment process.

The response is due 2 October 2025.

FOI/25-26/001 - current FOI

On 28 July 2025, s47F, lodged a request under the FOI Act seeking access to documents dated between 1 January 2025 to 28 July 2025 concerning the appointment of Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM, to lead the statutory review of the Net Zero Economy Authority's Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP).

The response is due 26 September 2025, following an extension granted to allow third party consultation.

FOI/24-25/005 - closed

On 23 May 2025, s47F, submitted a request under the FOI Act for access to the Authority's style, brand and writing guides. On 12 June 2025, the applicant withdrew the request on the condition that the style guide was released administratively. The document was released on 12 June 2025.

FOI/2025/029 - closed

On 7 February 2025, s47F made a request under the FOI Act to PM&C for the 'invoice and a document that contains the scope of the project related to: Public Relations, Communications, Marketing - This arrangement was entered into under the Authority - Photographic and recording media: Schmitt, Kelli Jo – AusTender Contract Notice: CN4123044. If a document does not exist, please provide the final contract and any variations to the contract.'

The request was transferred to the Authority on 12 February 2025.

The Authority did not issue a decision by the statutory deadline (10 March 2025), resulting in a deemed refusal under section 15AC of the FOI Act. The matter was referred to Sparke Helmore for assistance on 26 March 2025. The applicant was formally notified of their review rights 6 April 2025 and subsequently refined the scope on 30 April 2025.

Sparke Helmore provided a response to the revised scope 9 May 2025, and again 13 May 2025. No response was received from the applicant. Accordingly, the FOI request was finalised and closed 29 May 2025, due to the applicant's failure to respond, in accordance with section 24AB(7) of the FOI Act.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

FOI/2024/294 - closed

On 29 August 2024 s47F made a request under the FOI Act to PM&C for the invoice contract and any documents (excluding drafts) relating to Creative, Design and Editorial Services - Graphic design: Folk Pty Limited - AusTender Contract Notice: CN4088548.

- This request was originally made to PM&C on 29 August 2024.
- On 3 December 2024, applicant agreed with PM&C to limit the scope of the request to 'a signed work order document'.
- On 28 February 2025, PM&C sought the Authority's agreement to transfer the request to the Authority.
- On 5 March 2025, the Authority agreed to accept the transfer and on 5 March 2025, the matter was transferred from PM&C to the Authority.
- On 27 March 2025, the applicant was given access to part of the document, with some parts removed/redacted due to being irrelevant, having a substantially adverse impact on the Authority or contained personal information.
- Following the release, there was media coverage questioning the cost (refer to Additional Information Brief 6. – Communications and Engagement)

FOI 23-24/002 - under review by OAIC

- On 31 October 2023, s47F made a request under the FOI Act to PM&C seeking copies of board meeting agendas, papers and records of meetings.
- On 22 December 2023, the applicant was granted access to three documents in full and four documents in part.
- On 23 December 2023, the applicant requested an internal review of the redacted elements in the released documents. Following review, additional information released on the basis that, while deliberative in nature, it was 'purely factual' and in the public interest to disclose.
- On 22 January 2024, the applicant was granted further access to parts of the previously released documents.
- PMC disclosure logs:
  - The documents disclosed to the applicant on 22 December 2023 were published on the PM&C disclosure log on 9 January 2024.
  - The documents disclosed to the applicant on 22 January 2024 were published on the PM&C disclosure log on 23 January 2024.
- The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC):
  - On 9 February 2024 the OAIC advised the applicant had applied for review by the Information Commissioner (IC).
  - On 12 April 2024, the Authority notified the OAIC of a revised decision to granting the applicant access to additional documents, within the scope of the applicant's request.
  - On 2 May 2024, OAIC sought confirmation of whether the applicant wished to proceed – the applicant confirmed to OAIC they wished to proceed.
  - The Authority holds no further records in relation to this matter.
  - On 16 September 2024, the Authority wrote to OAIC seeking an update on the status of the review. As at 18 September 2025, we are still awaiting a response.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Status of machinery of government changes

- We had been targeting July 2025 to complete Machinery of Government processes to off-board from PM&C. We further delayed the target date to late 2025 due to ongoing ICT establishment issues.
    - The build of our corporate systems (Technology One, Expense8 and CTM) have progressed well but other elements have taken longer than expected due to a range of issues.
    - In practical terms, the delay has limited impact.
        - We already have full control and responsibility for our funding, property and people – we are just obliged to use PM&C IT systems and processes to manage them.
        - Staff will continue to be employed by PM&C and there is no impact to pay and conditions.

Attachments

- Attachment A: Financial, Staffing and Property data
- Attachment B: Details on Procurement
- Attachment C: Details of FOI requests for the past year

<table>
<tr><td>Division:</td><td colspan="2">Corporate</td></tr>
<tr><td>Prepared by:
Finance/procurement – s47F
HR/Property – s47F
FOI – s47F
Mob: Ext:
Date: 15 September 2025</td><td colspan="2">Cleared by General Manager:
Linda Rademakers
Mob: s47F Ext:
Date: 17 September 2025</td></tr>
<tr><td>Consultation: N/A

Name: N/A</td><td colspan="2">Date: N/A

Mob: N/A Ext: N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Cleared by Division Head: N/A</td><td>Date: N/A</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Cleared by a/g Chief Executive Officer: Travis Bover</td><td>Date: 24 September 2025</td></tr>
</table>

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Attachment A: Financial, Staffing and Property data

Budget 2025-26

As reported in the Authority's PM&C Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) 2025-26 chapter, the Authority has been allocated $75.453 million for 2025-26. The breakdown of the Budget for 2025-26, and over the forward estimates is as follows:

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	TOTAL
	$M	$M	$M	$M	$M
Departmental Funding - Operating					
Base	51.107	51.768	51.919	53.726	**208.520**
Energy Industry Jobs Plan	0.930	0.717	0.858	-	**2.505**
Net Zero Jobs Plan	1.335	1.341	1.363	-	**4.039**
Total Departmental Funding - Operating	**53.372**	**53.826**	**54.140**	**53.726**	**215.064**
Departmental Funding - Capital					
Base	0.125	0.127	0.128	0.128	**0.508**
Total Departmental Funding - Capital	**0.125**	**0.127**	**0.128**	**0.128**	**0.508**
Total Departmental Funding	**53.497**	**53.953**	**54.268**	**53.854**	**215.572**
Administered Funding					
Energy Industry Jobs Plan	21.956	5.794	9.593	10.624	**47.967**
Total Administered Funding	**21.956**	**5.794**	**9.593**	**10.624**	**47.967**
Total Funding	**75.453**	**59.747**	**63.861**	**64.478**	**263.539**

	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	TOTAL
Funding by Measure	$M	$M	$M	$M	$M
Base	51.232	51.895	52.047	53.854	**209.028**
Net Zero Jobs Plan	1.335	1.341	1.363	-	**4.039**
Energy Industry Jobs Plan	22.886	6.511	10.451	10.624	**50.472**
Total Funding	**75.453**	**59.747**	**63.861**	**64.478**	**263.539**

ASL (number)					
Base	150.0	150.0	150.0	150.0	
Net Zero Jobs Plan	7.5	7.5	7.5	-	
Total ASL	**157.5**	**157.5**	**157.5**	**150.0**	

In relation to 2024-25, the estimated actual reported in the Authority's 2025-26 PBS chapter of $50.241 million (comprising $43.040 million departmental operating, $2.086 million departmental capital and $5.115 million administered operating) is based on the section 75 transfer made to the Authority on its establishment. This amount was derived as follows:

2024-25 NZEA Appropriation - section 75 transfer reconciliation	
Balances at MYEFO 2024-25	**$M**
- Departmental Operating	56.154
- Departmental Capital	2.380
- Administered	8.843
Total	**67.377**
Less:	
- Expenditure to 31 October 2024	
- Departmental operating	-8.959
- Departmental capital	-0.294
- Administered	-3.728
Total	**-12.981**
Less:	
- Efficiency dividend approved by PM&C Exec Board	-0.842
- Corporate overheads (less property operating expenses)	-3.313
Total	**-4.155**
Balances transferred on 11 December 2024	
- Departmental Operating	43.040
- Departmental Capital	2.086
- Administered	5.115
Total	**50.241**

NB. A section 75 transfer refers to transferring an appropriation from one Government entity to another, and it is arranged for under the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

The 60 Average Staffing Level estimated actual reported for 2024-25 in the Resourcing Statement on page 229 of the PBS was based on an anticipated MoG finalisation date of 14 February 2025. It is a pro-rata of the 157.5 full-year ASL, due to the period of time that the Authority was expected to be with PM&C during 2024-25 (DoF required entities to report their ASL figures for Budget 2025-26 in early February 2025 – at that point in time, the MoG finalisation was still set for mid-February).

While the Authority was not impacted by the *Further reducing spending on consultants, contractors and labour hire, and non-wages expenses* election commitment, it was impacted by the extension of the whole of Government *Savings from External Labour* measure announced at Budget 2025-26, with a $1.106 million reduction applied to 2028-29 funding. Other movements from the MYEFO 2024-25 round relate to indexation adjustments. A reconciliation of the movement from MYEFO 2024-25 to Budget 2025-26 is shown in the table below.

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	TOTAL
Funding Reconciliation - MYEFO to Budget	**$M**	**$M**	**$M**	**$M**	**$M**	**$M**
MYEFO 2024-25						
Base	54.326	51.570	52.035	53.261	54.215	**265.407**
Communications	9.274	-	-	-	-	**9.274**
Energy Industry Jobs Plan	2.454	22.929	6.491	10.411	10.634	**52.919**
Net Zero Jobs Plan	1.323	1.335	1.341	1.363	-	**5.362**
Total Funding at MYEFO 2024-25	**67.377**	**75.834**	**59.867**	**65.035**	**64.849**	**332.962**
Add/subtract:						
- PM&C portion of approp, efficiency dividend, corp overheads	- 17.136	-	-	-	-	**- 17.136**
- Indexation adjustments - Pre-ERC and MYEFO 2024-25	-	- 0.286	- 0.050	- 1.227	0.691	**- 0.872**
- Indexation adjustments - Budget 2025-26	-	- 0.095	- 0.070	0.053	0.044	**- 0.068**
- Savings from external labour - extension	-	-	-	-	- 1.106	**- 1.106**
Total movements	**- 17.136**	**- 0.381**	**- 0.120**	**- 1.174**	**- 0.371**	**- 19.182**
Budget 2025-26						
Base	41.015	51.232	51.895	52.047	53.854	**250.043**
Communications	5.449	-	-	-	-	**5.449**
Energy Industry Jobs Plan	2.454	22.886	6.511	10.451	10.624	**52.926**
Net Zero Jobs Plan	1.323	1.335	1.341	1.363	-	**5.362**
Total Funding at Budget 2025-26	**50.241**	**75.453**	**59.747**	**63.861**	**64.478**	**313.780**

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Authority results for 2024-25

The Authority's unaudited financial result for 2024-25 is a surplus of $19.3 million. Note that this is the combined result for the Net Zero Economy Agency and Authority for the year, and was due to the delay in establishing the Authority, impacting recruitment (ASL was 48.1 less than budget) and major procurements.

Net Zero Economy Authority June 2025	Actuals $'000	Budget $'000	Variance $'000	Variance %
Employee				
Salaries	16,839	21,787	4,948	23%
Superannuation	2,542	3,417	875	26%
Other Entitlements	56	23	-33	-144%
Employee Total	**19,437**	**25,227**	**5,789**	**23%**
Supplier				
Office Accommodation	2,196	2,081	-116	-6%
Communications	1,052	1,286	235	18%
Service Fees	7,255	17,072	9,817	58%
General Expenses	123	158	35	22%
Equipment, Repairs & Maintenance	1,542	4,047	2,505	62%
Staff Costs	110	1,013	903	89%
Credit Card Expense Clearing Account	5	0	-5	-100%
Staff Travel	625	1,116	491	44%
Write-down of Assets	318	0	-318	-100%
Supplier Total	**13,226**	**26,773**	13,547	51%
Result	**32,663**	**52,000**	**19,337**	**37%**

Authority YTD results to 31 August 2025

The total YTD expenditure to 31 August 2025 is $6.6 million, which is $1.7 million less than the YTD budget. This is expected to mostly be a timing issue, relating to delays in contracting and the delivery of supplier services.

Net Zero Economy Authority YTD 31 AUGUST 2025	Actuals $'000	Budget $'000	Variance $'000	Variance %
Employee				
Employee expenses	3,780	4,078	298	7%
Employee Total	**3,780**	**4,078**	**298**	**7%**
Supplier				
Communications, Advertising and Sponsorship	23	144	120	84%
Service Fees	1,563	2,750	1,187	43%
Meeting Costs	12	52	39	76%
Information & Communication Technology Costs	263	331	68	21%
Financing Costs	169	18	-151	-835%
Office Expenses	167	54	-114	-213%
Property Operating Expenses	362	378	16	4%
Other Employee Expenses	36	76	40	53%
Staff Development & Training	49	182	133	73%
Travel	165	262	98	37%
Supplier Total	**2,809**	**4,247**	**1,438**	**34%**
Result	**6,589**	**8,325**	**1,735**	**21%**

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Staffing

The Authority has an ASL allocation of 157.5 for 2025-26.

As at 31 August 2025, the Authority had 137.45 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) and 140 headcount.

The split of Authority staff by classification is provided below:

SES Band 2	3
SES Band 1	8
Executive Level 2	23
Executive Level 1	65
APS 6	21
APS 5	18
APS 4	1
APS 3	1

- In addition to the 140 headcount, the Authority has eight Public Office Holders:
- Chief Executive Officer (full time)
- Chair (part time), and
- six board members (part time).

Additionally, there were 22 contractors engaged by the Authority (not included in the headcount).

The majority of the Authority's workforce are ongoing employees.

Ongoing	123
Non-ongoing	17
Total	140

Staff by location:

Canberra	Sydney	Remote	Total
79	45	16	140
57%	32%	11%	100%

Diversity

As at 31 August 2025, the Authority had:

- 58% female employees
- 42% male employees
- 4.3% of employees have identified as having a disability
- 1.4% of employees have identified as First Nations
- 21.2% of employees have identified as CALD
- 5.7% of employees have identified as LGBTIQA+

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Accommodation Arrangements

The Authority has four locations in Canberra, Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne – all of which are under MoU arrangements with other agencies.

The Canberra office is a sub-lease from the National Indigenous Australians Agency. The office is located on Level 1, Charles Perkins House, Woden.

- The current lease term is to 30 June 2026.
- The annual cost of the lease, including operating expenses is $1.5 million.
- 106 workstations

The Sydney office is a sub-lease from Austrade. The office is located on Level 7, Tower 3 of the International Towers, Barangaroo.

- The current lease term to 30 June 2026.
- The annual cost of the lease including outgoings is $0.5 million. A service-level agreement is also in place, to cover administrative support and meeting room usage.
- 42 workstations

The Brisbane presence is also a sub-lease from Austrade, located on Level 16, 307 Queen Street, Brisbane.

- This arrangement includes one office for the CEO, and one workstation.
- This arrangement commenced in January 2025, and we are continuing to work with Austrade to agree an MoU.

The Melbourne presence is a sub-lease from the Australian Securities and Investments Commission, located on Level 6, 120 Collins Street, Melbourne.

- This arrangement includes one office for the Chair, one workstation and one meeting room only.
- The current head lease term is to 31 May 2029.
- The annual cost of the lease is $0.04 million.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Attachment B: Procurements as at 4 September 2025

1. Authority AusTender reporting

- As at 4 September 2025, the Authority is reporting a total of 88 contracts with a combined contract value of **$27,611,539** (GST incl.) on its instance of AusTender. This includes 71 active contracts with a total contract value of **$16,760,343** (GST incl.). ICT, security and other corporate contracts account for $11,260,328 of the active contracts ($5,694,317 in ICT and security contracts and $5,566,011 (GST incl.) in other corporate contracts respectively). Contracts that are no longer active are highlighted in yellow.

Contract Notice	Supplier Name	Description	Funding Source	Consultancy	Procurement Method	Exemption / Condition	Procurement Process	Start Date	End Date	Contract Value
CN4047245-A1	IPSOS Public Affairs Pty Ltd	Market Research	Administered	No	Limited tender	App A: 12. Government advertising services.	Assigned provider under mandatory WoAG panel	22/03/2024	22/03/2025	$ 619,827.73
CN4059480-A2	The Monkeys Pty Limited	Public Relations, Communications, Marketing	Administered	No	Limited tender	App A: 12. Government advertising services.	Assigned provider under mandatory WoAG panel	9/05/2024	7/05/2025	$ 3,087,210.98
CN4059545	Kyan Technology Pty Ltd	Project Management	Departmental	No	Limited tender	APP A: 17. SME Procurements up to $500,000.	Direct approach to one supplier - SME, known, highly competitive quote	13/05/2024	30/06/2025	$ 103,600.00
CN4071658-A1	Horizon Communication Group Pty Limited	Public Relations, Communications, Marketing	Administered	No	Limited tender	App A: 12. Government advertising services.	Assigned provider under mandatory WoAG panel	26/06/2024	26/06/2025	$ 2,354,326.67
CN4071752	Expense8 Pty Limited	Travel and expense management system build and 3 years SaaS fee	Departmental	No	Open tender		One supplier on the GovERP panel approached.	17/06/2024	16/06/2027	$ 723,000.00
CN4072075	Technology One Limited	Financial management information system build and 3 years SaaS fees	Departmental	No	Limited tender	10.3.e. Additional deliveries by original supplier intended as replacement parts, extensions, or continuation for existing goods or services for compatibility.	PMC piggy-back arrangement utilising DISR head agreement	18/06/2024	17/06/2027	$ 800,000.00
CN4075107-A1	Embrace Society Pty Ltd	Public Relations, Communications, Marketing	Administered	No	Limited tender	App A: 12. Government advertising services.	Assigned provider under mandatory WoAG panel	3/07/2024	30/06/2025	$ 635,042.12
CN4081646-A2	Mindavation Pty Limited	Authority establishment & MoG transition	Departmental	No	Open tender		Four suppliers on the DTA Labour Hire approached.	8/07/2024	30/09/2025	$ 659,086.00
CN4084477-A1	Cox Inall Ridgeway Pty Ltd	Public Relations, Communications, Marketing	Administered	No	Limited tender	App A: 12. Government advertising services.	Assigned provider under mandatory WoAG panel	26/07/2024	30/06/2025	$ 495,000.00
CN4084510	Lazard Australia Pty Ltd	Strategic Advice and Review Services	Departmental	Yes	Open tender		Four suppliers on the MAS Panel approached.	22/07/2024	30/06/2025	$ 750,000.00
CN4087133-A2	Janas, Michelle	Procurement specialist engagement	Departmental	No	Limited tender	APP A: 17. SME Procurements up to $500,000.	Recommended by PMC procurement. SME. Competitive quote.	6/08/2024	30/06/2026	$ 252,600.00
CN4093284-A1	Hall & Partners Pty Ltd	Public Relations, Communications, Marketing	Administered	No	Limited tender	App A: 12. Government advertising services.	Assigned provider under mandatory WoAG panel	2/09/2024	30/06/2025	$ 420,851.72
CN4096982	Acendre Pty Ltd	e-Recruit build	Departmental	No	Open tender		One supplier on Cloud Marketplace approached.	28/08/2024	1/10/2027	$ 111,864.00
CN4098531	Nous Group Pty Ltd	Corporate Objectives	Administered	No	Open tender		Four suppliers RES panel approached.	24/09/2024	31/01/2025	$ 173,800.00
CN4098536-A2	Future Friendly Team Pty Ltd	ICT Services	Administered	No	Open tender		Five suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached.	23/08/2024	30/06/2025	$ 685,217.50
CN4100774	Davenport Campbell (CANBERRA) Pty Limited	Building, Construction and Maintenance Services	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers DCCEE Building panel approached.	2/10/2024	31/01/2025	$ 54,065.00
CN4108377-A1	Digital61 Pty. Ltd.	ICT Services	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached.	24/10/2024	30/08/2025	$ 2,178,928.64
CN4108380-A1	Cordelta Pty. Ltd.	ICT implementation manager	Departmental	No	Open tender		Eight suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached	16/10/2024	28/09/2025	$ 378,056.50
CN4108381	Peoplebank Australia Ltd	ICT Contractor Services	Departmental	No	Open tender		Eight suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached	16/10/2024	28/03/2025	$ 176,418.00
CN4114937	WHON Pty Limited	Executive coaching	Departmental	No	Limited tender		Selected from PMC pre-approved coaching providers	1/12/2024	30/11/2025	$ 11,770.00
CN4114943	Enigma Indigenous Peoples Pty Ltd	ICT Equipment	Departmental	No	Open tender		Four suppliers on Hardware Marketplace approached	26/11/2024	30/06/2025	$ 468,784.80
CN4114945-A2	Chalfont Consulting Pty Ltd	Organisational Change Manager	Departmental	No	Open tender		Four suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached	25/11/2024	31/03/2026	$ 667,012.50
CN4114948-A2	Equity Economics and Development Partners Pty. Ltd.	Stakeholder engagement and consultation services	Departmental	No	Limited tender	APP A: 17. SME Procurements up to $500,000.	One SME supplier approached.	14/10/2024	30/06/2026	$ 200,934.20
CN4114951	Clonalvy Nominees Pty Ltd & Others (AKA McGrathNicol Advisory)	Internal audit service provider	Departmental	Yes	Open tender		Six suppliers on the MAS panel were approached.	29/11/2024	28/11/2026	$ 500,000.00
CN4118897-A1	Excelium Consulting Pty Ltd	Cyber security Services	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached.	20/01/2025	20/01/2026	$ 423,920.00
CN4118903	Optus Networks Pty Limited	Enterprise mobility	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on Telco Marketplace approached.	19/12/2024	19/12/2026	$ 69,360.00
CN4121433	Cordelta Pty. Ltd.	ICT service delivery manager	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached.	13/01/2025	12/01/2026	$ 411,860.80
CN4121436	Kyocera Document Solutions Australia Pty Ltd	Multi-function devices/printers	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on Hardware Marketplace approached.	20/12/2024	10/01/2030	$ 34,401.49
CN4121437-A1	TPG Network Pty Ltd	Enterprise ethernet	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on Telco Marketplace approached.	23/12/2024	22/12/2027	$ 55,360.80
CN4123041-A1	Nous Group Pty. Ltd.	Strategic Advice and Review Services	Departmental	No	Open tender		Four suppliers on MAS Panel approached	20/01/2025	31/07/2025	$ 380,480.10
CN4123042	Spark Integrity Pty Ltd	Audit and Risk Committee member	Departmental	Yes	Limited tender		EoI issued in line with RMG202.	17/01/2025	17/01/2026	$ 27,000.00
CN4123043	PFM Advisory Services Pty Ltd	Audit and Risk Committee member	Departmental	Yes	Limited tender		EoI issued in line with RMG202.	17/01/2025	17/01/2026	$ 25,000.00

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Contract Notice	Supplier Name	Description	Funding Source	Consultancy	Procurement Method	Exemption / Condition	Procurement Process	Start Date	End Date	Contract Value
CN4123044	Schmitt, Kelli Jo (AKA Wardandi Media)	Public Relations, Communications, Marketing	Departmental	No	Limited tender		One indigenous supplier was approached.	20/11/2024	30/06/2025	$ 28,600.00
CN4123047	Athru Solutions Pty Ltd	Audit and Risk Committee Chair	Departmental	Yes	Limited tender		EoI issued in line with RMG202.	16/01/2025	16/01/2026	$ 45,000.00
CN4123049	Renewmap Pty Ltd	Online mapping application	Departmental	No	Limited tender		One supplier - proprietary product.	20/01/2025	20/01/2026	$ 60,500.00
CN4124480	Digital61 Pty. Ltd.	ICT networking equipment	Departmental	No	Open tender		Four suppliers on Hardware Marketplace approached	29/01/2025	29/01/2030	$ 76,397.66
CN4124481	Capital Recruit Pty Ltd	Recruitment Services	Departmental	No	Open tender		One supplier on People Panel was approached	13/01/2025	30/06/2025	$ 16,576.00
CN4131303	RM Hassall & AS White & Others (AKA Sparke Helmore Lawyers)	Legal services	Departmental	Yes	Open tender		Seven suppliers on WoAG Legal Panel approached	14/02/2025	14/02/2026	$ 100,000.00
CN4131304	Minter Ellison	Legal services	Departmental	Yes	Open tender		Seven suppliers on WoAG Legal Panel approached	14/02/2025	14/02/2026	$ 50,000.00
CN4131305	The East HWL Practice Trust & The Warat HWL Practice Trust & The Marin Hwl Practice Trust & Others (AKA HWL Ebsworth)	Legal services	Departmental	Yes	Open tender		Seven suppliers on WoAG Legal Panel approached	14/02/2025	14/02/2026	$ 50,000.00
CN4131306	L Baring & M Hayes & M.S Henry & R.K Jackson & P Jones & T Montebello (AKA Maddocks)	Legal services	Departmental	Yes	Open tender		Seven suppliers on WoAG Legal Panel approached	14/02/2025	14/02/2026	$ 100,000.00
CN4131307	Clayton Utz	Legal services	Departmental	Yes	Open tender		Seven suppliers on WoAG Legal Panel approached	14/02/2025	14/02/2026	$ 100,000.00
CN4131308	Ashurst Australia	Legal services	Departmental	Yes	Open tender		Seven suppliers on WoAG Legal Panel approached	14/02/2025	14/02/2026	$ 50,000.00
CN4131309	Kyan Technology Pty Ltd	ICT Software	Departmental	No	Open tender		Direct approach to an SME following outstanding services re. financial systems establishment. Competitive quote.	13/02/2025	13/02/2026	$ 179,720.00
CN4131310	Hudson Global Resources (Aust) Pty Limited	Labour Hire Services - Finance function establishment	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on People Panel 2 approached.	27/02/2025	27/08/2025	$ 108,225.52
CN4131677	Mediabrands Australia Pty Ltd	Advertising	Administered	No	Open tender		Assigned provider under mandatory WoAG panel	2/02/2025	12/04/2025	$ 770,000.00
CN4132762	WHON Pty Limited	Executive coaching	Departmental	No	Limited tender		Selected from PMC pre-approved coaching providers	6/02/2025	6/02/2026	$ 13,035.00
CN4138992	The Trustee for KM Unit Trust (AKA Korda Mentha)	Independent assurance services	Departmental	Yes	Open tender		Nine suppliers on the MAS panel were approached.	29/01/2025	19/12/2025	$ 800,000.00
CN4139355	Akolade Pty Ltd	Training and Development Services	Departmental	No	Limited tender		One supplier approached (providing a unique event)	14/05/2025	16/05/2025	$ 11,875.60
CN4143311-A2	Compelling Economics Pty Ltd	RemPlan subscription - online analytical tool and information resource	Departmental	No	Limited tender		One supplier - proprietary product.	20/05/2025	1/04/2026	$ 62,161.00
CN4143313-A1	SolsticeIT Pty Limited	SharePoint EDRMS	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers from the Digital Market Place 2 Panel - Professional and Consulting Services were approached	11/04/2025	11/11/2025	$ 237,000.00
CN4143317	WHON Pty Limited	Executive coaching	Departmental	No	Limited tender		Selected from PMC pre-approved coaching providers	1/04/2025	1/04/2026	$ 22,330.00
CN4146121	Cordelta Pty. Ltd.	ICT contractor - Business Analyst	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on the Digital Market Place Panel 2 - Professional and Consulting Services were approached	8/04/2025	8/10/2025	$ 205,920.00
CN4146122	Cordelta Pty. Ltd.	ICT contractor - Business Analyst	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on the Digital Market Place Panel 2 - Professional and Consulting Services were approached	15/04/2025	15/10/2025	$ 205,920.00
CN4148354	Chalfont Consulting Pty Ltd	Labour Hire Services - HR policy writer	Departmental	No	Limited tender		Initially conducted an ATM of the People Panel without success. Direct approach to a known supplier then used.	12/05/2025	31/07/2025	$ 69,052.50
CN4148355-A2	CBR Recruitment Pty Ltd	Labour hire - HR policy writer	Departmental	No	Open tender		Five suppliers on the People Panel were approached.	12/05/2025	31/08/2025	$ 110,507.25
CN4148356-A1	Indigeco Pty Ltd	Labour hire - HR policy writer	Departmental	No	Open tender		Five suppliers on the People Panel were approached.	12/05/2025	31/08/2025	$ 96,498.00
CN4148357	Indigeco Pty Ltd	Labour hire - HR policy writer	Departmental	No	Open tender		Five suppliers on the People Panel were approached.	12/05/2025	31/07/2025	$ 78,527.48
CN4148363	Willyama Services Pty Limited	Corporate services management platform, ServiceNow	Departmental	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on the Cloud Market Place were approached	22/04/2025	22/04/2028	$ 582,381.13
CN4148364	Altius Group Holdings Pty Ltd	Employee assistance program provider	Departmental	No	Open tender		Six suppliers on the Employee Assistance Program Panel were approached	5/05/2025	4/07/2026	$ 60,000.00
CN4152270	Syfa Solutions Pty Ltd	Senior security advisor services	Departmental	No	Open tender		Four suppliers on the Digital Market Place 2 Panel - ICT Labour Hire were approached.	15/05/2025	15/05/2026	$ 227,590.00

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

2. Major (>$200K) Active Contracts on AusTender

As at 4 September 2025

Detailed descriptions of these contracts can be found in section 3 below.

Contract Notice	Supplier Name	Description	Consultancy	Procurement Method	Exemption / Condition	Procurement Process	Start Date	End Date	Total Value
CN4071752	Expense8 Pty Limited	Travel and expense management system build and 3 years SaaS fee	No	Open tender		One supplier on the GovERP panel approached.	17/06/2024	16/06/2027	$ 723,000.00
CN4072075	Technology One Limited	Financial management information system build and 3 years SaaS fees	No	Limited tender	10.3.e. Additional deliveries by original supplier intended as replacement parts, extensions, or continuation for existing goods or services for compatibility.	PMC piggy-back arrangement utilising DISR head agreement	18/06/2024	17/06/2027	$ 800,000.00
CN4081646-A2	Mindavation Pty Limited	Authority establishment & MoG transition	No	Open tender		Four suppliers on the DTA Labour Hire approached.	8/07/2024	30/09/2025	$ 659,086.00
CN4087133-A2	Janas, Michelle	Procurement specialist engagement	No	Limited tender	APP A: 17. SME Procurements up to $500,000.	Recommended by PMC procurement. SME. Competitive quote.	6/08/2024	30/06/2026	$ 252,600.00
CN4108377-A1	Digital61 Pty. Ltd.	ICT Services	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached.	24/10/2024	30/08/2025	$ 2,178,928.64
CN4108380-A1	Cordelta Pty. Ltd.	ICT implementation manager	No	Open tender		Eight suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached	16/10/2024	28/09/2025	$ 378,056.50
CN4114945-A2	Chalfont Consulting Pty Ltd	Organisational Change Manager	No	Open tender		Four suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached	25/11/2024	31/03/2026	$ 667,012.50
CN4114948-A2	Equity Economics and Development Partners Pty. Ltd.	Stakeholder engagement and consultation services	No	Limited tender	APP A: 17. SME Procurements up to $500,000.	One SME supplier approached.	14/10/2024	30/06/2026	$ 200,934.20
CN4114951	Clonalvy Nominees Pty Ltd & Others	Internal audit service provider	Yes	Open tender		Six suppliers on the MAS panel were approached.	29/11/2024	28/11/2026	$ 500,000.00
CN4118897-A1	Excelium Consulting Pty Ltd	Cyber security Services	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached.	20/01/2025	20/01/2026	$ 425,920.00
CN4121433	Cordelta Pty. Ltd.	ICT service delivery manager	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on Digital Marketplace approached.	13/01/2025	12/01/2026	$ 411,860.80
CN4123041-A1	Nous Group Pty. Ltd.	Strategic Advice and Review Services	No	Open tender		Four suppliers on MAS Panel approached	20/01/2025	31/07/2025	$ 380,480.10
CN4138992	The Trustee for KM Unit Trust (AKA Korda Mentha)	Independent assurance services	Yes	Open tender		Nine suppliers on the MAS panel were approached.	29/01/2025	19/12/2025	$ 800,000.00
CN4143313-A1	SolsticeIT Pty Limited	SharePoint EDRMS	No	Open tender		Three suppliers from the Digital Market Place 2 Panel - Professional and Consulting Services were approached	11/04/2025	11/11/2025	$ 237,000.00
CN4146121	Cordelta Pty. Ltd.	ICT contractor - Business Analyst	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on the Digital Market Place Panel 2 - Professional and Consulting Services were approached	8/04/2025	8/10/2025	$ 205,920.00
CN4146122	Cordelta Pty. Ltd.	ICT contractor - Business Analyst	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on the Digital Market Place Panel 2 - Professional and Consulting Services were approached	15/04/2025	15/10/2025	$ 205,920.00
CN4148363	Willyama Services Pty Limited	Corporate services management platform, ServiceNow	No	Open tender		Three suppliers on the Cloud Market Place were approached	22/04/2025	22/04/2028	$ 582,381.13
CN4152270	Syfa Solutions Pty Ltd	Senior security advisor services	No	Open tender		Four suppliers on the Digital Market Place 2 Panel - ICT Labour Hire were approached.	15/05/2025	15/05/2026	$ 227,590.00
CN4154866	Urbis Ltd	Adaptive Re-use research	No	Open tender		Eight suppliers on the Research Evaluation Services Panel were approached	21/04/2025	22/08/2025	$ 350,650.00
CN4154877	University of Technology Sydney	Research services - transition monitoring and performance framework	No	Open tender		Eight suppliers on the Research Evaluation Services Panel were approached	28/05/2025	28/11/2025	$ 399,767.50
CN4158509-A1	BIS Oxford Economics Pty Ltd	Assessment and evaluation services - regional economic profiles and forecasts	Yes	Open tender		Four suppliers on the MAS panel were approached	30/06/2025	3/10/2025	$ 534,490.00
CN4162890	Karuah Enterprises Pty Ltd	Review of Part 5 of the Act	Yes	Limited tender	App A: 14. Contracts for labour hire.	Six suppliers were approached following a market research phase	23/06/2025	11/12/2025	$ 292,000.00
CN4162891	Randstad Pty Limited	Governance and Legal 12-month labour hire	No	Open tender		Two suppliers on the People Panel Phase 2 were approached	5/06/2025	4/06/2026	$ 348,500.00
CN4163590	Kay, Ian Andrew	Strategic advice and review services	No	Limited tender	APP A: 17. SME Procurements up to $500,000.	One SME supplier was approached due to relevance of their background to NZEA (former CFO of ARENA and expertise in the investment	1/07/2025	24/12/2026	$ 362,340.00

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

3. Detailed Descriptions of Major (>$200K) Active Contracts

Technology One Pty Ltd - NZEA's financial management information system solution

AusTender reference	**CN4072075**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Technology One Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $800,000 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to build a fit-for-purpose financial management information system and provide a 3-year software as a service to the Authority.

Expense8 - NZEA's travel and expense management solution

AusTender reference	**CN4071752**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Expense8 Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $723,000 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to build a fit-for-purpose travel and expense management system and provide a 3-year software as a service to the Authority.

Mindavation Pty Limited – Project Manager, NZEA corporate establishment and MoG transition

AusTender reference	**CN4081646, CN4081646-A1, CN4081646-A2**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Mindavation Pty Limited
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $659,086 (GST incl). Initial contract value: $220,000 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to provide project management services to lead the Authority's corporate establishment and Machinery of Government transition change management activities in establishing the separate entity from PM&C. This includes the development and oversight of detailed implementation plans, development of a change management strategy and supporting communications plan, supporting the build of the Authority's ICT environment and ensuring PM&C's obligations are met under the transitional MoU.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Michelle Janas – Procurement Specialist Engagement

AusTender reference	**CN4087133, CN4087133-A1, CN4087133-A2**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Michelle Janas
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $252,600 (GST incl). Initial contract value: $118,800 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to provide specialist procurement advise during the establishment of the Authority and the disengagement from PM&C. This includes ensuring compliance with the CPRs and procurement connected policies as well as assisting in establishing procurement processes and documentation to meet the operational needs of the Authority.

Clonalvy Nominees Pty Ltd and Others (McGrathNicol Advisory) – Internal Audit Service Provider

AusTender reference	**CN4114951**
Consultancy	Yes
Supplier	Clonalvy Nominees Pty Ltd and Others (McGrathNicol Advisory)
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $500,000 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged as the Authority's internal audit service provider. The internal auditor will report to the Audit and Risk Committee on the development and progress of the internal audit work program.

Cordelta Pty Ltd – ICT Implementation Manager

AusTender reference	**CN4108380, CN4108380-A1**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Cordelta Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $378,057 (GST incl). Initial contract value: $173,745. The supplier has been engaged to assist the Authority in the planning for moving to a new ICT Service operating model, enabling infrastructure and supporting transition change activities that deliver against the Authority's business plan.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Digital 61 Pty Ltd – Discovery, Design and Build NZEA ICT Environment

AusTender reference	**CN4108377, CN4108377-A1**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Digital 61
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $2,178,929 (GST incl). Initial contract value: $1,393,700. The supplier has been engaged to undertake the discovery, design, build and migration stages of the NZEA ICT environment, and the design and implementation of a secure cloud gateway. The outcome is a robust protected-level ICT environment capable of meeting the operational needs of Authority personnel.

Chalfont Consulting Pty Ltd – Organisational Change Manager

AusTender reference	**CN4114945, CN4114945-A1, CN4114945-A2**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Chalfont Consulting Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $667,013 (GST incl). Initial contract value: $246,592.50. The supplier has been engaged to provide the services of a skilled and experienced organisational change manager capable of managing changes relating to the standing up of the Authority and the disengagement from PM&C. The organisational change manager will work closely with the Transition Manager and Senior Officers.

Equity Economics and Development Partners Pty Ltd – First Nations Engagement Strategy

AusTender reference	**CN4114948, CN4114948-A1, CN4114948-A2**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Equity Economics and Development Partners Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $200,934 (GST incl). Initial contract value: $79,826. The supplier has been engaged to develop a First Nations engagement strategy in two phases. The first phase involved a desktop audit of current First Nations engagement plans in relation to net zero transition and related policy in Australia and globally; and production of a report on the findings of these audits, together with a landscape map and forward calendar of existing engagement mechanisms and activities in the Australian context. The second phase involves consultations with First Nations communities and production of an engagement strategy, outlining the Authority's strategic priorities for First Nations engagement, an implementation road map and the Authority's framework and guiding principles.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Excelium Consulting Pty Ltd – Cyber Security Services

AusTender reference	**CN4118897, CN4118897-A1**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Excelium Consulting Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $425,920 (GST incl). Initial contract value: $205,920. The supplier has been engaged to deliver a range cyber security services including performing the role of Cyber Security Officer, undertaking penetration testing, undertaking activities to ensure the authority to operate is granted as well as ensuring compliance with the ISM and PSPF.

Cordelta Pty Ltd – Cyber Service Delivery Manager

AusTender reference	**CN4121433**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Cordelta Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $411,861 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to provide the services of a highly experienced and suitably quality ICT Service Delivery Manager to work with stakeholders and end users to ensure the design, build and installation of ICT tools and products achieves the required objectives.

Nous Group Pty Ltd – Strategic Advice and Review Services

AusTender reference	**CN4123041, CN4123041-A1**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Nous Group Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $380,480 (GST incl). Initial contract value: $105,480. The supplier has been engaged to support the Authority with reviewing and refining its existing mission and vision statements and deliverables and consideration of the operational impacts in terms of resourcing, capability and structure. These issues informed the Authority's strategic direction to be considered by the Board and support the development of the Authority's Corporate Plan.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

The Trustee for KM Unit Trust (Korda Mentha Pty Ltd) – Specialist Technical Advisor

AusTender reference	CN4138992
Consultancy	Yes
Supplier	The Trustee for KM Unit Trust (Korda Mentha Pty Ltd)
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $800,000 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged as a qualified and experienced service provider to undertake an independent review of financial documents provided to the Authority to help facilitate an investment in a large infrastructure (iron-ore processing facility) project. This independent review of the documents will assist the Authority to understand: • Credibility of the financial modelling; • Funding gap compared to international jurisdictions; • Methods used in the reports compared to best practice methods; • Economic impact in the region. The funding gap amount provided to the Authority by the entity represents a large sum of government spending and thus an independent service provider must determine the validity of the claims.

Solstice IT – SharePoint EDRMS

AusTender reference	CN4143313, CN4143313-A1
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Solstice IT
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $237,000 (GST incl). Initial contract value: $187,000. The supplier has been engaged to design, configure and implement an Authority SharePoint Online Electronic Documents and Records Management system that complies with the Australian Government and National Archives of Australia information management requirements. This system will support the Authority's information management lifecycle, ensuring secure, compliant and efficient document and records management within the Microsoft 365 environment.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Cordelta Pty Ltd – Business Analyst

AusTender reference	CN4146121
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Cordelta Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $205,920 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to provide ICT operations and end-user business analyst services, playing a key role in transitioning the Authority to its new ICT operating model, including collaborating with vendors and stakeholders to deliver efficient, secure, and user-focussed services.

Cordelta Pty Ltd – Business Analyst

AusTender reference	CN4146121
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Cordelta Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $205,920 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to provide ICT operations and end-user business analyst services, playing a key role in transitioning the Authority to its new ICT operating model, including collaborating with vendors and stakeholders to deliver efficient, secure, and user-focussed services.

Willyama Services Pty Ltd – ICT Software

AusTender reference	CN4148363
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Willyama Services Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $582,381 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to design, build and maintain an IT Service Management platform using ServiceNow. ServiceNow is a cloud-based platform that assists businesses automate and streamline workflows, particularly in IT service management, IT operations management and IT business management, offering solutions for incident management, change management and service requests. To utilise all of the required features, the Authority needed to procure specific licences providing services such as access control, hosting, maintenance support, upgrades, scalability and customisation.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Syfa Solutions Pty Ltd – Security Services

AusTender reference	CN4152270
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Syfa Solutions Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $227,590 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged as a Senior Security Advisor to develop and implement all security policies, procedures and guidance compliant with Home Affairs Protective Security Policy Framework 2024, including a Security Framework and Security Risk and Agency Security Plan. This ensures the Authority maintains a secure environment for personnel, property, assets and information by establishing best practice security governance, risk management strategies and compliance measures.

Urbis Ltd – Research Services

AusTender reference	CN4154866
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Urbis Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $350,650 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to undertake research into policy and legislation governing the planning, use and rehabilitation of mining lands, and coal and gas-fired power stations in Australia.

University of Technology Sydney – Research Services

AusTender reference	CN4154877
Consultancy	No
Supplier	University of Technology Sydney
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $399,768 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to develop a transition monitoring and reporting framework for the Authority and for the provision of an associated implementation plan and advice.

BIS Oxford Economics Pty Ltd – Regional Economic Transition

AusTender reference	CN4158509, CN4158509-A1
Consultancy	Yes
Supplier	BIS Oxford Economics Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $534,490 (GST incl). Initial contract value: $365,530.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

	Oxford Economics Australia (Oxford) was procured to look at labour market trends for the Hunter, Latrobe Valley and Central Queensland including: o potential career transition opportunities for workers in fossil fuel power stations and coal mines in these regions o opportunities to attract Net Zero aligned industries to invest in these regions. This analysis will help inform the Authority's regional engagement priorities and strategies and will be shared with regional stakeholders to help inform and refine regional priorities. The analysis will also help inform the Authority's decisions relating to the Energy Industry Job Plans (EIJP), as well as the design and deployment of related government supports. Oxford were procured through a competitive procurement process via the Australian Government's Management Advisory Services Panel. [If required] • This project does not look at the impact of the government's recently announced 2035 targets • The final report has not yet been accepted. • The Authority would be happy to provide further information on notice

Karuah Enterprises Pty Ltd – Review of Part 5 of the Act

AusTender reference	**CN4162890**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Karuah Enterprises Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $292,000(GST incl). The supplier, an eminent person (Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM), has been engaged to deliver on the CEO's statutory duty to undertake a review of Part 5 of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024* (the Act), as required under section 68 of the Act.

Randstad Pty Ltd – Temporary Personnel

AusTender reference	**CN4162891**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Randstad Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $348,000 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to fill a vacant temporary position in the Governance and Legal Team at the EL1 classification. The services include developing, implementing and maintaining key governance frameworks

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

	under Commonwealth legislation relating to risk management, audit, freedom of information, privacy, probity and confidentiality for t the Authority. These services were required as there is limited internal capacity for this work to be undertaken by existing resources.

Ian Andrew Kay (Optigen Solutions) – Specialist Technical Investment Adviser

AusTender reference	**CN4163590**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Ian Andrew Kay (Optigen Solutions)
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $362,340 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged as a specialist technical investment adviser to support the Authority's facilitation of key projects in its identified priority regions, working to drive investment in the net zero transformation. This advisor will provide subject matter expertise and advice on investments in large complex projects. This will assist the SES to strategise and plan the Authority's investment approach over a medium term period.

RenewMap Pty Ltd – Subscription – Online Mapping Service

AusTender reference	**CN4172387**
Consultancy	No
Supplier	RenewMap Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $714,038 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged as a uniquely positioned business to assist the Authority with the design, development and operations of the Net Zero Map application. The supplier currently tracks over 3,250 large scale energy projects in Australia and the existing database contains details on a range of different Commonwealth funding programmes relevant to net zero projects. This supplier has built and maintains an enterprise scale online mapping portal which will assist to inform the public, including workers, businesses and communities, on how the net zero transition is already being implemented across Australia.

ARTD Pty Ltd – EIJP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

AusTender reference	**CN4176553**
Consultancy	Yes
Supplier	ARTD Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $306,989 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to scope and deliver a robust program monitoring and evaluation framework for the Energy Industry Jobs Plan.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Data#3 Limited – Microsoft Azure, Visio and Teams Licence

AusTender reference	CN4176559
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Data#3 Limited
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $330,000 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to provide licenses that encompass Azure, Visio, Dynamics, Project and Microsoft Teams Rooms in order for the Authority to access the full functionality of the Microsoft environment on its new ICT platform.

Acendre Pty Ltd – Online Jobs Board

AusTender reference	CN4182491
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Acendre Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $306,510 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged to create a job search platform for the EIJP, the Online Jobs Board. It will support workers under the EIJP to create employment profiles, facilitate job advertisements for employers, and help these groups connect. It will also assist employers at closing power stations to support their workforce to find new employment following a closure.

Whereto Research Based Consulting Pty Ltd – Community Insights Research

AusTender reference	CN4183222
Consultancy	No
Supplier	Whereto Research Based Consulting Pty Ltd
Detailed description of services provided	Contract value reported on AusTender: $377,300 (GST incl). The supplier has been engaged as a research partner to support the design and implement community sentiment research (both qualitative and quantitative) to assist the Authority evaluate the extent to which community members in the priority regions understand the net zero transition.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Attachment C: Authority FOI Requests as at 18 September 2025

Date of Request	Applicant	Outcome
2 September 2025	[redacted] – *FOI/25-26/002* **Request**: Provide all documents created by the Net Zero Economy Authority regarding a complaint made by [redacted] on 24 January 2025; and all documents created by the Authority relating to the non-renewal of [redacted] offer of an ongoing role following a recruitment process in April/May 2024.	• New FOI request. • Sent to Legal Panel (Sparke Helmore) 2 September 2025. • Due date is 2 October 2025.
28 July 2025	[redacted] – *FOI/25-26/001* **Request**: Provide documents between 1 January 2025 to 28 July 2025 relating to appointment of Emeritus Professor Roy Green AM, to lead the statutory review of the Net Zero Economy Authority's Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP).	• New FOI request. • Sent to Legal Panel (Sparke Helmore) 28 July 2025. • Updated response due date is 26 September 2025, following an extension that was granted to complete third party consultation.
23 May 2025	[redacted] – *FOI/24-25/005* **Request**: Provide Access to the Style Guides/Brand Guides/Writing Guides currently used for the Net Zero Economy Authority.	• Sent to Legal Panel (Sparke Helmore) 23 May 2025. • Applicant withdrew FOI request on 12 June 2025 on the condition that the style guide is released via administrative release. • Administrative release occurred on 12 June 2025.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Date of Request	Applicant	Outcome
7 February 2025	s47F [redacted] – *FOI/2025/029 (NZEA FOI/24-25/004)* **Request**: Provide the invoice and a document that contains the scope of the project related to: Public Relations, Communications, Marketing - NZEA - Photographic and recording media: Schmitt, Kelli Jo – AusTender Contract Notice: CN4123044. If a document does not exist, please provide the final contract and any variations to the contract.	• As the request was initially made to PM&C, PM&C sought NZEA's agreement to transfer the request to NZEA, which was accepted on 12 February 2025. • In accordance with section 15AC of the FOI Act, the NZEA was deemed to have refused the request on 10 March 2025, as no decision was issued by the statutory deadline • On 26 March 2025, NZEA referred the matter to Sparke Helmore for assistance. • On 6 April 2025, Spark Helmore advised the applicant of the deemed refusal and their right to seek and their right to seek external review by the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) within 60 days. The applicant was also informed that NZEA had not yet responded but was still processing the FOI request. • On 22 April 2025, Sparke Helmore advised the applicant that refining the request to exclude non-relevant documents would assist in processing. The applicant was asked to respond by 24 April 2025, but no response was received. • On 30 April 2025, the applicant was contacted again by Sparke Helmore to refine the scope, with a deadline of 2 May 2025. On 30 April 2025, Sparke Helmore received a revised scope. • A draft response to the revised scope was sent to the applicant 9 May 2025 and 13 May 2025, the applicant did not respond. The FOI request was finalised and closed 29 May 2025 due to the applicant's failure to respond, in accordance with section 24AB(7) of the FOI Act.
2 October 2024	s47F [redacted] – *FOI/2024/326 (NZEA FOI/24-25/002)* **Request**: To PMC for the "invoice and a document that contains the scope of the project related to: *Public Relations, Communications, Marketing – Market research: Hall & Partners Pty Ltd - AusTender Contract Notice: CN4093284*. If a	• As the request was made to PM&C initially, PM&C sought NZEA's agreement to transfer the request to NZEA, which was accepted on 15 October 2024. • On 28 October 2024 the NZEA engaged with Hall & Partners for 3rd Party consultation regarding the material requested to determine whether any material was exempt for the purposes of s.47 of the FOI Act (business affairs). • On 19 November 2024 Hall & Partners requested exemption in full or at least for specific parts of the information requested.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Date of Request	Applicant	Outcome
	document does not exist, please provide the final contact and any variations to the contract"	• On 2 December 2024, the Applicant was provided with access to one document with some redactions, and one document was exempted from production to the Applicant.
29 August 2024	s47F [redacted] – *FOI/2024/294* (NZEA FOI/24-25/003) Request: Provide the invoice, contract and any documents (excluding drafts) relating to Creative, Design and Editorial Services - Graphic design: Folk Pty Limited - AusTender Contract Notice: CN4088548.	• This request was originally made to PM&C on 29 August 2024. • On 3 December 2024, applicant agreed with PM&C to limit the scope of the request to 'a signed work order document' • On 28 February 2025, PM&C sought NZEA's agreement to transfer the request to NZEA. • On 5 March 2025, the NZEA agreed to accept the transfer and on 5 March 2025, the matter was transferred from PM&C to NZEA • On 27 March 2025, the applicant was given access to part of the document, with some parts removed/redacted due to being irrelevant, having a substantially adverse impact on the NZEA or contained personal information.
1 August 2024	s47F [redacted] – *FOI/24-25/001* **Request**: Draft plans and correspondence relating to the NZEA's public information campaign outlined in the Budget Papers	• On 16 August 2024 a practical refusal consultation notice was sent inviting the applicant to narrow the scope of the request. • On 19 August 2024 the applicant revised the scope of their request. • On 29 August 2024 refusal decision was provided to the applicant refusing the request on the grounds of being exempt under s.34 of the FOI Act.
11 June 2024	s47F [redacted] *FOI/23-24/0010* *FOI/23-24/0011* **Requests**: The initial request was for all Board minutes involving a union representative and how that representative voted at Board meetings. The second request revised the first request to limit it to the timeframe between the first board meeting up to 11 June 2024 and all matters raised by the Board member union representative	• On 3 July 2024, the applicant withdrew both requests.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Date of Request	Applicant	Outcome
4 June 2024	s47F [redacted] *FOI/23-24/007* *FOI/23-24/008* *FOI/23-24/009* **Requests:** For travel, accommodation, invoices, attendee list and agenda for conferences between 1 January and 31 May 2024	• On 5 June 2024 the applicant refined their request to venue details, receipts and attendees for the same period. • On 2 July 2024, the applicant agreed to withdraw the requests on the understanding administrative access outside the FOI process was given to all documents within scope. • On 5 July 2024 the applicant was provided with all documents within the scope of the requests.
29 May 2024	s47F [redacted] - *FOI/23-24/006* **Request:** All correspondence between the Prime Minister's Office and the Department/NZEA relating to the NZEA's public information campaign outlined within the Budget Paper	• On 28 June 2024 a practical refusal consultation notice was sent inviting the applicant to narrow the scope of the request. • On 2 July 2024 the applicant revised the scope of their request. • On 12 July 2024 a practical refusal decision was provided to the applicant on the basis that processing the request would unreasonably divert the NZEA's resources.
24 January 2024	s47F [redacted] *FOI/23-24/005* **Request**: A new requesting regarding correspondence between the Authority and the potential and actual board members regarding their interest and suitability and any operational and/or policy documents related to the process to recruit board members.	• On 15 April 2024, the applicant was notified of the FOI decision. There were 13 documents identified as falling within scope of the FOI. Of those: • 10 documents were refused in full • One document was released but exempt in part • Two documents were released in part with irrelevant information deleted
14 December 2023	s47F [redacted] *FOI 23-24-004* **Request**: A new request regarding correspondence relating to Advisory Board appointment processes	• A request for extension and clarification to the request was sought. • s47F [redacted] responded clarifying and adding to their request on 12 January 2024. • On the basis of the number of documents identified, a practical refusal notice was provided to the applicant on 18 January 2024.
8 December 2023	s47F [redacted] - *FOI 23-24-003*	• An extension was requested, and approved by the applicant, due to the Agency shutdown over the holiday period.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Date of Request	Applicant	Outcome
	Request: Correspondence between NZEA and MEU (previously CFMEU) on HELE coal fired power stations, offshore wind farms, super batteries and renewable energy	• No documents were identified within the terms of the request and the applicant was notified on 22 January 2024.
31 October 2023	s47F - *FOI 23-24-002* **Request**: Board meeting agendas, papers and records of meetings	• On 31 October 2023, s47F sought access to NZEA Advisory Board meetings agendas, papers and records of meetings. • On 22 December 2023, the applicant was granted access to three documents in full and four documents in part. • On 23 December 2023, the applicant requested an internal review of the redacted elements in the released documents. An internal review was undertaken and additional information released, while deliberative in nature, was further assessed as being 'purely factual' and in the public interest to release. • On 22 January 2024, the applicant was provided additional access to parts of the previously released documents. • PMC disclosure logs: o The documents disclosed to the applicant on 22 December 2023 were published on the PM&C disclosure log on 9 January 2024. o The documents disclosed to the applicant on 22 January 2024 were published on the PM&C disclosure log on 23 January 2024. • The Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC): o On 9 February 2024 the OAIC advised the applicant had made an application for review by the Information Commissioner (IC). o On 12 April 2024 PM&C notified the OAIC that it had made a revised decision to grant the applicant access to additional documents within the scope of the applicant's request. o On 2 May 2024 OAIC wrote to the applicant seeking confirmation of whether the applicant wanted to withdraw the IC review or proceed. o On 5 May 2024, the applicant replied to OAIC confirming he wished to proceed with the IC review. o NZEA have no further records relating to the matter.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Date of Request	Applicant	Outcome
		○ As of 16 September 2025, NZEA wrote to OAIC for an update on the status of the review. ○ As of18 September 2025, NZEA was awaiting advice from OAIC.
11 October 2023	s47F [redacted] *FOI 23-24-001* **Request**: Access to all documents relating to the appointments process of NZEA Advisory Board members and their public interest disclosures.	• On the basis of the number of documents identified, a practical refusal notice was provided to the applicant on 9 November 2023, noting they could edit and re-submit their request by 23 November 2023. • An amended request was not received and this FOI was considered withdrawn. • s47F [redacted] then submitted a new request (see FOI/23-24/004 above).

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

SENATOR THE HON TIM AYRES
MINISTER FOR INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION
MINISTER FOR SCIENCE

MS25-001166

Senator the Hon Sue Lines
President of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

senator.lines@aph.gov.au

Dear President

Pursuant to Procedural Order 21, I submit a statement regarding unanswered Questions on Notice (QoNs) from the Budget Estimates hearings of 25 to 27 March 2025.

The one written QoN taken by the Industry, Science and Resources portfolio for these hearings pertains to the responsibilities of the Hon Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resources, Minister for Northern Australia.

Please refer to Minister King's statement for relevant details on that QoN.

Yours sincerely

TIM AYRES
18/09/2025

CC: The Hon Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resources, Minister for Northern Australia

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

THE HON MADELEINE KING MP
MINISTER FOR RESOURCES
MINISTER FOR NORTHERN AUSTRALIA

MS25-001165

Senator the Hon Sue Lines
President of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

senator.lines@aph.gov.au

Dear President

Pursuant to Senate Procedural Order 21, I submit a statement regarding unanswered Questions on Notice (QoN) from the Budget Estimates hearings of 25 to 27 March 2025.

The one written QoN taken by the Industry, Science and Resources Portfolio for these hearings was pertinent to my responsibilities and was due for tabling on 29 May 2025. It was provided to my office on 19 June 2025.

Yours sincerely

Madeleine King MP

18/9/2025

CC: Senator the Hon Tim Ayres, Minister for Industry and Innovation, Minister for Science

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Budget Estimates 2024-25

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
Outcome/Program Group: Prime Minister and Cabinet
Topic: Net Zero Economy 'Authority' Versus 'Agency' - CEFC and ARENA

Senator: the Hon James McGrath
Question reference number: 0138
Type of question: Written
Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 25 July 2024

Number of pages: 2

Question:

1. Noting that the funding allocation is to "promote orderly and positive economic transformation associated with decarbonisation to ensure its regions and workers realise the benefits of the net zero economy,"
   And by the same token the Clean Energy Finance Corporation's role is to, *"facilitate increased flows of finance into Australia's clean energy sector and facilitate the achievement of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, by investing in renewable energy (including finance to upgrade, expand and modernise Australia's electricity grid), low emissions and energy efficiency technologies, building industry capacity, and disseminating information to industry stakeholders."*
   Similarly, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency's (ARENA) role is "to support improvements in the competitiveness and supply of renewable energy and other low emissions technologies by providing financial assistance and sharing knowledge, to accelerate innovation that benefits all Australians."
   Can you explain how the role of the Net Zero Economy Authority is different from the roles performed by the CEFC and ARENA?
2. There is "$134.2 million over four years from 2024–25 and $377.8 million over the medium term (and $40.1 million per year ongoing from 2035–36) to provide workforce transition support for impacted workers and the broader communities affected by the net zero transition".
   Can you detail how the remaining funds will be spent differently from CEFC and ARENA?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Answer:

1. The Net Zero Economy Authority (the Authority) will support communities, regions, workers and industries that are, or will be, significantly affected by Australia's transition to a net zero emissions economy. It will work with local and state governments, and others, to facilitate positive and orderly economic change. To this end, the Authority will:
    a. identify job creating investment opportunities that can help with the orderly transformation of regions and industries, and work with government entities like the Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), other government facilities, other levels of government, and the private sector, to catalyse investment
    b. help workers retrain and reskill, and transition into new job opportunities
    c. build community understanding of and engagement with the net zero transition in their region

    This role is complementary to the CEFC and ARENA, as it is focused on coordinating supports from a range of public and private sources to help with the orderly economic transformation of particular regions and industries. The Agency/Authority's role also extends beyond investment in renewable energy, and includes supports for the transition of workers in emissions intensive industries to new opportunities.

2. The $134.2 million referenced in the question is to support workers in emissions intensive industries to transition into new opportunities. This includes employment and skills supports such as career advice and guidance, retraining, and financial and wellbeing support. The ARENA and CEFC do not provide supports of this nature.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Question on notice no. 36

Portfolio question number: 0036

2024-25 Additional estimates

Finance and Public Administration Committee, Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Senator the Hon. James McGrath: asked the Net Zero Economy Authority on 24 February 2025—

Senator McGRATH: Can you take this on notice? I'm assuming I won't get a response to this based on the track record. Can you ask from the contractor a breakdown of what the money was spent on? I ask because $527,000 is a lot of money to spend on four events that 300 people attend. I'm assuming that there is some heavy spend on other things. Is it correct to assume that there was some heavy spend on advertising?
Answer —
See attached.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Additional Estimates 2024-25

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Net Zero Economy Authority
Outcome: Facilitate the achievement of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions targets by empowering communities, regions and workers most affected by Australia's transition to a net zero emissions economy to anticipate and respond to the risks and opportunities of the transition, including through: facilitating investment, supporting workers, building community engagement and coordinating net zero related policies and programs.
Topic: Four events in Hunter and Gladstone - breakdown of $527,000 spend

Senator: the Hon James McGrath
Question reference number: 0036
Type of question: Spoken; Proof Hansard page 96, 24 February 2025
Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 24 March 2025

Number of pages: 1

Question:
Senator McGRATH: Can you take this on notice? I'm assuming I won't get a response to this based on the track record. Can you ask from the contractor a breakdown of what the money was spent on? I ask because $527,000 is a lot of money to spend on four events that 300 people attend. I'm assuming that there is some heavy spend on other things. Is it correct to assume that there was some heavy spend on advertising?

Answer:
Details of the contract for the events in Hunter and Gladstone are listed on AusTender.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Question on notice no. 434

Portfolio question number: 0434

2024-25 Additional estimates

Finance and Public Administration Committee, Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Senator Jane Hume: asked the Net Zero Economy Authority on 5 March 2025—

What was the Department's/agency's total expenditure on advertising and information campaigns in financial year 2024/25 to date?
Please provide an itemised list of the campaigns, their purpose, and their expected costs.
Answer —
See attached.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Additional Estimates 2024-25

Prime Minister and Cabinet Portfolio

Department/Agency: Net Zero Economy Authority
Outcome: Facilitate the achievement of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions targets by empowering communities, regions and workers most affected by Australia's transition to a net zero emissions economy to anticipate and respond to the risks and opportunities of the transition, including through: facilitating investment, supporting workers, building community engagement and coordinating net zero related policies and programs.
Topic: Agency expenditure - advertising and information campaigns

Senator: the Hon Jane Hume
Question reference number: 0434
Type of question: Written
Date set by the committee for the return of answer: 24 March 2025

Number of pages: 1

Question:
What was the Department's/agency's total expenditure on advertising and information campaigns in financial year 2024/25 to date?
Please provide an itemised list of the campaigns, their purpose, and their expected costs

Answer:
The Net Zero Economy Agency was provided $10.0 million over two years from 2023–24, to deliver public information on the net zero transition and ensure affected workers and communities are aware of the support available.

Expenditure incurred on this campaign prior to 11 December 2024 has been reported by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and can be found here https://www.pmc.gov.au/about-us/accountability-and-reporting/half-yearly-reporting

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

NET ZERO ECONOMY AUTHORITY

Headline Statement

- The Government established the Net Zero Economy Authority (the NZEA) in December 2024 to promote positive economic transition, facilitate emissions reduction and ensure regions, communities and workers are supported to manage the impacts, and share benefits of the transition.

Key Points

- One of the key functions of the NZEA is to administer the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP), which assists workers impacted by the closure of coal- and gas-fired power stations to access supports and help redeploy workers in the local labour market.
- To date, the NZEA has conducted public consultation under the EIJP for the impending Torrens Island and Eraring power station closures, with the insights collected helping inform the assessment process.
  - NZEA carefully assesses the possible impacts of closing power stations, including through analysis of the local labour market and an assessment of regional transition pathways for impacted workers.
- The NZEA will support the delivery of the Net Zero Plan and sector plans, just as it supported the development and design of regional content in these plans.
  - NZEA will maintain a strong focus on regional impacts, opportunities and challenges and work with workers, industries and communities across Australia.
- The NZEA is currently working with industry, communities and governments to identify pathways and plans that support regions such as Collie, the Hunter and Latrobe in responding to the transition and realising the benefits.
  - The New South Wales Government has agreed to work with the NZEA, the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, and other Commonwealth departments, to develop an approach to the Hunter.

Contact Officer:
Name: Michael Wilson
Division: Policy and Communications, Net Zero Economy Authority
Telephone: s47F
Last updated: 22/09/2025 1:41:00 PM

OFFICIAL

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- The NZEA also developed a Regional Identification Framework and Profiles to advise the Government on priority regions for support and investment, which helped inform NZEA's remit in priority regions.
- Alongside this, the NZEA delivered the Net Zero Economic Transformation campaign to increase awareness and understanding of the Government's plan for the transition, which demonstrated the importance of adopting a tailored, regions first approach for community engagement.

Background

- The Government has provided the funding needed for the Authority to do its job.
  - ~$53 million per year (indexed) to support Authority operations.
  - $37.3 million to 2027-28 under the EIJP program to support receiving employers' participation in pooled redeployment arrangements.
  - $10 million over 2023-24 and 2024-25 to support a public information campaign.
- Under the Net Zero Economy Authority Act (NZEA Act), the CEO of the NZEA is required to separately assess all power station closures at least two years ahead of time.
  - If reasonable, the CEO can apply to the Fair Work Commission for determinations requiring relevant employers to provide additional transition support to workers (e.g. paid training, career and financial advice).
  - Section 68 of the NZEA Act 2024 requires the Chief Executive Officer to conduct a review of Part 5 of the Act by 10 December 2025.
  - In May 2025, the CEO finalised the terms of reference for the review and appointed Professor Roy Green to conduct the process. The Minister was advised of these decisions in June 2025.
  - The Minister's role with respect to the review is to ensure the report is tabled in both Houses of Parliament within 15 sitting days.
- The NZEA is working with the New South Wales Government to develop master plans for post-mining land use for two coal mine sites in the Hunter. The Government has committed $5 million to this project.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

METALS PROCESSING SECTOR ISSUES

Headline Statement

- The Government is committed to working closely with relevant stakeholders to support a strong and competitive metals sector, which is crucial to a Future Made in Australia and the global energy transition.

Key Points

- A stable supply of critical minerals and strategic materials is increasingly important for Australia and its trading partners.
- Dynamic and market-driven considerations including energy price challenges and global market conditions remain at the forefront of difficulties being faced by metals processing facilities around Australia.
- The potential closure of these facilities poses a material loss of domestic capability and diversification opportunities in advanced manufacturing.
- We are actively engaging with companies and state governments to find solutions to the challenges facing the metals processing sector.
  - Requests for taxpayer support must undergo robust analysis to ensure solutions are targeted, sustainable and valuable to Australia.
  - Individual facility negotiations are commercially sensitive. Any support packages will be announced once agreed by all parties.
- Government intervention alone is not enough or always the answer; businesses need to drive efforts to overcome challenges and be a significant part of the solution in partnership with communities and governments.

Contact Officer:
Name: S47F Manager Heavy Industries Investment
Division: Industrial Transition Response Team
Telephone: S47F
Last updated: 29/09/2025 11:34:00 AM

OFFICIAL
This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Policy Commitments

- The Government is committed to supporting the next wave of Australia's mining and metals processing capabilities on the global stage, with measures such as:
  - The $15 billion National Reconstruction Fund (NRF), including the recently announced $5 billion Net Zero Fund to support heavy industry to decarbonise, and the Economic Resilience Program to provide $1 billion in zero-interest loans for new export opportunities (refer **SB25-000072** National Reconstruction Fund).
  - A strong commitment to green metals under Future Made in Australia including a $2 billion Green Aluminium Production Credit and a $500 million green iron investment fund (refer **SB25-000067** Green Metals).
  - A $7.0 billion Critical Minerals Production Tax Incentive to provide a refundable tax offset of 10 per cent for eligible Australian processing and refining costs for all 31 critical minerals listed on the Critical Minerals List.
  - Providing reliable, affordable energy supply to grow domestic manufacturing and transition to a lower emissions economy, including energy bill relief for eligible small businesses in 2025-26; investing in renewables and electrification infrastructure through the Capacity Investment Scheme and the Rewiring the Nation program; and securing domestic gas supplies under the Gas Market Code (refer questions to DCCEEW).
  - Working with the South Australian Government to stabilise the Whyalla Steelworks during the administration process and to support its transition to a sustainable future (refer **SB25-000064** Whyalla Steelworks).

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Background

Quotes attributable to Minister Ayres

- **Smelters:** Industry Minister Tim Ayres said while responsibility started with the very profitable firms who had done "very well" out of Australia, it was likely key smelters struggling to deal with soaring energy costs and trade distortions caused by oversupply from China, would need taxpayers' support to survive. "The truth is, if these facilities didn't exist, governments would be trying to build them." AFR, *Labor flags equity, loans in strategy to save metals smelters*

- **Glencore Mount Isa**: "The Australian Government is closely monitoring the situation at the Mount Isa copper smelter and we are committed to working with the Queensland Government on the best path forward."

- **Nyrstar**: On 5 August 2025, Minister Ayres announced a joint $135 million package with the South Australian and Tasmanian governments to transform Nyrstar's Port Pirie and Hobart smelters. The Commonwealth will invest $57.5 million, South Australia $55 million, and Tasmania $22.5 million.

- **Tomago**: "We have… been working very closely with Tomago Aluminium and delivered very early this year a $2 billion aluminium production credit, which is to support low emissions aluminium production here in Australia…"

- **Liberty Bell Bay**:

  – Minister Ayres on 19 May 2025: "The Australian Government – and the Tasmanian Government, local staff, unions and affected communities – need much more transparency about the state of the business and the decision to halt operations… I urge GFG Alliance to step up and deliver confidence and certainty in the ongoing operations of this facility… I have spoken with my Tasmanian counterpart… and we will continue to work closely."

  – Tas Gov Minister Ellis on 20 August 2025: "The Tasmanian Government has stepped in to support workers and the Northern Tasmania economy by approving a secured loan of up to $20 million to Liberty Bell Bay…This support is for Tasmanian workers and their families, not for the GFG Group. It is now time for GFG to step up and provide certainty for its workers by committing to do whatever it can to see the smelter continue to operate, including through investing in the operations."

Monthly average energy prices as of 31 August 2025: (noting September data not yet released)

- Gas – east coast: $12.91 per gigajoule (14% lower than December 2022, 132% higher than the 2018-19 financial year average).

- Electricity – National Electricity Market: $104.79 per megawatt-hour (38% higher than December 2022, 102% higher than the 2018-19 financial year average).

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

ALUMINIUM SECTOR

Lead: Tara Oliver, Head of Division, Heavy Industry Transition Division

- We recognise the important contributions aluminium production facilities including Tomago make at the national, state, regional and community level.
    - A strong, competitive modern metals sector is crucial to a Future Made in Australia and the global energy transition.
- Dynamic and market-driven considerations including energy prices and global market conditions are impacting aluminium production facilities around Australia.
- The Government is working closely with state governments around Australia to secure the best results for our smelting capabilities in the national interest.
- The Government remains committed to working collaboratively with industry, and continues to engage regularly to find a sensible and pragmatic pathway forward.
    - The department cannot provide further comment on current discussions with specific facilities, due to commercial-in-confidence considerations.
- The $2 billion Green Aluminium Production Credit, announced in January 2025, will help Australian aluminium smelters to decarbonise their operations while cost challenges are resolved.

Facts and Figures

- There are four aluminium smelters in regional Australia: Tomago, Boyne, Portland and Bell Bay, producing approximately 1.6 million tonnes of aluminium per year. Over 13,000 jobs are supported by the aluminium smelting sector nationally.[1]
- Australia is in the top five exporters of aluminium, accounting for 11 percent of global exports in 2024-25, valued at A$5.8 billion.[2]
- Australia's aluminium is largely exported to Asia, with the largest consumers being Japan (23.4%), South Korea (34.1%), Taiwan (5.9), and Thailand (6.6%) and the US (7.1%)[3].
- The direct impact of the tariffs introduced by the US on Australian aluminium are unlikely to be significant, as the US accounts for a relatively small proportion of Australia's exported aluminium.
- The indirect impacts of the tariffs are unclear. There is potential for global aluminium demand to slow and price to fall, impacting Australia's export earnings. More than 98 per cent of Australia's bauxite exports (the ore that aluminium is derived from) are used by China. Any reduction demand for China's alumina and aluminium are likely to have substantial adverse impacts on Australia's bauxite exports.[4]

[1] Australian Aluminium Council – Green Metals Consultation Submission 2024
[2] Resources and Energy Quarterly, June 2025
[3] Australian Aluminium Council – Trade Competitiveness Fact Sheet, April 2024
[4] Resources and Energy Quarterly, June 2025

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Smelter	Owner	Annual Production (t)
Tomago, Hunter Valley, NSW	Joint venture partnership. Rio Tinto (51.5%) majority owner.	590,000
Boyne, Gladstone, QLD	Joint venture partnership. - Majority owner Rio Tinto (73.5%), YKK Aluminium (9.50%), UACJ Australia (9.29%), Southern Cross Aluminium (7.71%).	500,000
Portland, South West VIC	100% owned by Alcoa	310,000
Bell Bay, North West TAS	100% owned by Rio Tinto	190,000

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Government | Net Zero Economy Authority

Economic Reform Roundtable Talking Points:

Question	Key message
The NZEA recently made a submission to the Economic Roundtable. What are some of the recommendations from that submission?	In July, the Authority made a submission to the Economic Reform Roundtable. We advised that current approaches are not fit for purpose in that Government financing vehicles do not focus specifically on regions impacted directly by the transition. Recommendations to optimise financing include: - Directing a portion of funding to priority areas and lowering the rate of return for projects in those areas. - Embed differentiation between SIVs to ensure that collectively they can respond to Government priorities and deploy suitable financing options that drive private investment. - Adjust their risk profile, required rate of return and the minimum and maximum transaction sizes. - Improve transparency and reporting by requiring more detailed project reporting through Annual Reports and quarterly reports to the Front Door.
What are some of the challenges that you identified as part of the Economic roundtable submission?	Broader matters raised in the Authority's Economic Reform Roundtable Submission include: **Building capacity for change** – current Government funding structures do not support the shift from a project-by-project approach to providing the necessary signals for the systems change. This is needed to build capacity in carbon intensive regional economies that are transitioning to net zero. Firms desire **certainty and clarity** around the scale and timing of future projects. Some aspects of the **regulatory settings** are inconsistent and duplicative of other processes conducted by other levels of government. There is a **shortage of skilled labour** – the transition requires a pool of skilled labour to support a new and emerging renewable energy sector. **Enabling infrastructure requirements** - the design of energy infrastructure networks and their intersection with transport infrastructure will also be a key determinant of Australia's ability to compete in the future global net zero economy.

by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Government
Net Zero Economy Authority

Charles Perkins House
16 Bowes Place Woden

The Hon Jim Chalmers
Treasurer
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher
Minister for Finance
PO Box 6100
Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Treasurer and Minister

I write in response to your request of 4 July 2025 to identify regulatory reform opportunities within the Net Zero Economy Authority (the Authority), and opportunities to support the Government's productivity agenda.

The Authority considers that transition to a net zero economy provides a one-time opportunity to transform Australia's economy and specific regions by building on existing capacity, and investing in new industries. As such, the Authority has lodged a submission with Treasury to help inform the discussion of the Economic Reform Roundtable (Roundtable). I have enclosed a copy of the submission.

Our submission highlights the key barriers to the transition that stakeholders have raised with the Authority. It then seeks to highlight how a rethink of government processes with respect to government investment, collaboration and regulatory settings will be required to realise the transition to a net zero.

The Authority has identified a number of tangible opportunities for consideration by the Roundtable, including:

- Revision the mandates of SIVs to enable maximum investment in the transition, with a weighting in the assessment criteria to encourage proposals in areas that are a priority for the transition.
- Clear differentiation of SIVs to ensure consistent funding throughout the project life cycle.
- Streamlining of the government funding system by standardising applicant requirements and using Artificial Intelligence (AI) were appropriate better assist stakeholders navigating the complex system
- Improved monitoring of the utilisation and effectiveness of Government programs in real time in transitioning regions to ensure they are delivering on the Government's policies.
- Development of an integrated national net zero infrastructure program incorporating known and proposed construction timelines across renewable sectors to allow better project sequencing reducing delay, overlaps and cost pressures.
- Facilitation of easier connections between suppliers and developers to accelerate projects and increase local content.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

- Introduction of changes and exemptions to current regulatory and other approval processes to ensure timely approvals of projects which will help meet greenhouse gas emissions and transition objectives.
- Examination of circumstances where Government may wish to proactively assume responsibility for regulatory approvals, to minimise the time and risks associated with tendering for priority net zero projects.

The Authority believes these opportunities will help support productivity by facilitating investment in new and transitioning industries, better targeting government assistance and removing unnecessary red tape to reduce project costs.

I look forward to following the discussions and continuing to work with you to progress the Government's efforts to boost productivity as part of Australia's transition to net zero.

Yours sincerely

[redacted]

Dr Iain Ross
Chair
Net Zero Economy Authority

1 August 2025

Enc.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Government

Net Zero Economy Authority



Submission to the Economic Reform Roundtable

July 2025

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



Context

The Australian Government is committed to net zero by 2050. The Government has also committed to a Future Made in Australia, an expanded and renewable energy grid to support electrification across the economy and a smooth and orderly transition with no-one left behind.

The net zero transformation is one of the most significant economic shifts and opportunities since the Industrial Revolution. The scale and significance of efforts to reduce emissions is transforming industries, and impacting communities and workers. It provides a one-time opportunity to transform Australia's economy and specific regions by building on existing capacity, and investing in new industries.

The Net Zero Economy Authority (Authority) has been created by to facilitate an orderly and positive transition.

The Authority seeks to identify, develop and connect potential projects in our priority regions to government financing vehicles. In particular, the Authority is focusing on investment where there is a strong case for government to be involved, with clear benefits for communities and regions. Transitioning communities want to know governments will be with them through the transition.

The Authority has embraced a collaborative model, working across our regions with state and local governments and importantly with industry, communities, and other stakeholder groups. The Authority is currently focusing on four regions, including Collie in Western Australia, Central Queensland, the Hunter in New South Wales, and the Latrobe Valley in Victoria. It is also taking a project-led approach to transformational projects in the Pilbara in Western Australia and the Upper Spencer Gulf in South Australia.

Work of the Authority

The Authority has responsibility for the establishment and operation of the Energy Industry Jobs Plan (EIJP). Under the EIJP the CEO of the Authority is responsible for initiating community of interest processes to support the making of an informed decision on whether to apply to the Fair Work Commission for a community of interest determination.

This process involves identifying closing and dependent employers and obtaining relevant information concerning their employees. The CEO of the Authority is currently consulting with unions, employers and communities to assess the impact of the closure of Torrens B and Eraring power stations, which are due to cease operations in July 2026 and August 2027 respectively.

The CEO is required to complete a review of the operation of the EIJP within 12 months of the commencement of the *Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024* (NZEA Act 2024). The Authority has engaged Emeritus Professor Roy Green to independently review the effectiveness of Part 5 of the *NZEA Act 2024* by the end of this year, including to ensure that it is operating as the Parliament intended. This review will also identify opportunities to ensure that the administration of Part 5 is as efficient as possible.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)



The Board has established a Stakeholder Panel to seek regular input and advice to shape the Authority's work. This partnership with representative bodies from industry, employers, civil society and First Nations organisations will be critical to sharing knowledge and identifying barriers to progress. Similarly, the Authority will join as an inaugural member of the Australian Climate Councils Network, which is being led by the Climate Change Authority to link state and territory agencies charged with climate change and transition advice.

The Authority is proactively engaging with a number of jurisdictions including Scotland, Germany and Spain to learn from their transition experiences. The Authority is working with its Scottish counterparts to set up a network of international net zero transition bodies to collaborate on issues of shared interest and to exchange information. Our early engagements with our counterparts confirm that transitioning communities are looking to national governments for leadership and long-term commitments, for the duration of the transition.

The Authority is also engaging across the Commonwealth, including directly with the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, the Regional Investment Corporation, the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation, Export Finance Australia, the Australian Renewable Energy Agency, and Housing Australia as required by the NZEA Act 2024. Once established, the Authority will also work in close collaboration with the Future Made in Australia Front Door that will facilitate national priority projects.

Barriers to Just Transition

The transition to net zero will need significant amounts of new capital, both public and private, to support adaption of existing businesses, and the establishment of new industries and supply chains in specified locations. In 2024, BloombergNEF estimated the need at approx. US$2.4 trillion for the energy sector alone.[1]

Current approaches are not fit for purpose in that Government financing vehicles do not focus specifically on the transition or regions impacted by the transition. Stakeholders have also identified issues around policy and regulatory uncertainty and a lack of government incentives. Government has previously acknowledged many of the challenges with its financing vehicles[2], as well as the broader role it will need to play to address barriers and challenges, including market failures, to support timely investments in the transition.[3] Key barriers and challenges include:

- **Building capacity for change** – current Government funding structures do not support the shift from a project-by-project approach to providing the necessary signals for the systems change that is needed to build the capacity to transition regional economies from carbon intensive to net zero.

---

1 BloombergNEF, Urgent Scale-Up of Clean Technologies Needed to Keep Australia on Net-Zero Trajectory | BloombergNEF [media release], 19 August 2024, accessed 25 July 2025.

2 The Government has provided $10.4 million over 4 years from 2023–24, and ongoing funding of $3 million, to the Department of Finance to enhance accountability and effectiveness in the Australian Government's use of specialist investment vehicles, by establishing a comprehensive oversight and governance function of the specialist investment vehicle portfolio. See Australian Government, Budget 2023-24, Budget Paper No. 2, Finance Portfolio – additional resourcing, p112.

3 Productivity Commission, Trade and Assistance Review 2023-24.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 222 of 375

- **Certainty and clarity** – firms desire certainty around the scale and timing of future projects (and ideally that their products will be used for those projects), and long-term policy settings to provide confidence for necessary capital investments.
- **Regulatory settings** – some aspects of the current regulatory settings are inconsistent and duplicative of other processes conducted by other levels of government.
- **Shortage of skilled labour** – the transition requires a pool of skilled labour for designing, fabricating, installing, maintaining or recycling renewable energy assets and their supporting infrastructure. Simultaneously, the transition demands skilled labour to decarbonise and retool existing facilities or maintain facilities until they are closed.
- **Enabling infrastructure** – location, transportation and connections are key considerations in determining the speed and cost effectiveness of the roll out of the energy transition. The design of energy infrastructure networks and their intersection with transport infrastructure will also be a key determinant of Australia's ability to compete in the future global net zero economy.

The Authority has chosen to limit comments to the first three issues to highlight how a rethink of government processes will be required to realise the transition to a net zero.

Driving Investment

Optimising financing

The Commonwealth operates eight Specialist Investment Vehicles (SIVs) (refer Attachment A), all of which were established prior to the Government's Future Made in Australia policy.[4] All take direction from the Government through a legislative instrument that outlines their investment mandate or a Statement of Expectations issued by Government.

Five SIVs are particularly active in the net zero space with significant overlap between their mandates (refer Attachment B). There is a lot of similarity between the current risk settings and rates of return.[5] Consequently certain project proposals are attractive to most SIVs, and other projects, such as very small, very large or higher-risk projects, are attractive to none.

A number of project proponents that have approached the Authority for investment facilitation support have done so after being rejected by different SIVs because their projects are not at a sufficient stage of maturity.

For example, First Nations projects continue to be constrained in accessing financing.[6] As recognised in the First Nations Clean Energy Strategy[7], the Government should ensure SIVs can incentivise investment into clean energy projects that are First Nations-led or that prioritise mutually beneficial partnerships with First Nations people.

While different SIVs are making commitments to engage with First Nations communities or to make funding available for projects, for example ARENA's $75 million for a Regional Microgrid Program, there is no readily available data to test how this is leading to outcomes for First Nations communities.[8]

The CEFC notes that CEFC investment proposals are screened for impact through the CEFC First Nations Screening Approach. While this is encouraging, it is unclear whether this results in financing flowing to First Nations projects. According to its 2023-24 Annual Report, the CEFC identified 2 First

---

4 The Authority notes the new Statement of Expectations issued to the Board of the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation that seeks to align the NRFC with the delivery of the Future Made in Australia objectives.

5 For example, the CEFC, NRFC and NAIF investment mandates set a target average return of the 5 year Australian Government bond rate plus 2-3% per annum over medium to long term (for CEFC General Fund and the target return for NAIF is 3%). Expectations on the rate of return have changed overtime. For example, the CEFC's original investment mandate direction in 2013 set out a return rate equivalent to the 5 year Australian Government bond rate. In 2015, a new instrument was issues, increasing this to the bond rate plus 4-5%. That was lowered in 2016 to 3-4% and not lowered to 2-3% until 2023.

6 Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation, *National Indigenous Land and Sea Strategy, Discussion Paper: Unlocking Investment Capital*, Australian Government, 2022. Available at: Investment-Capital-Discussion-Paper.pdf.

7 Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, *The First Nations Clean Energy Strategy 2024-2030*, Australian Government, 2024. First Nations Clean Energy Strategy.pdf, accessed 19 July 2025.

8 ARENA Annual Report 2023-24, Australian Government, 2024. Available at: Annual-Report-2024-FNL_Digital.pdf.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Nations opportunities both relating to the same investment involving a $1 million commitment from the project developer to facilitate benefit sharing and the transferred ownership of 1,000 hectares to pave the way for a new national park.[9]

Current and prospective onshore renewable energy infrastructure manufacturers have reported experiencing challenges accessing support from government financing vehicles due to the focus of available grant funding programs on innovation. This has impacted the domestic manufacture of some existing technologies at scale[10] and its incorporation into Australia's increasing pipeline of renewable energy projects. These outcomes have occurred even where clear strategic direction in support of sectors or economic outcomes are included in statements of expectation issued by Government to its SIVs.

SIVs take a project-by-project approach and most take a passive approach to matching up the Government's agenda with project proposals. Most invite project proposals and apply their thematic and financial criteria rather than actively finding proposals that contribute to the delivery of the Government's agenda. SIVs should be proactive in their approach and demonstrate that they have actively explored or sought to facilitate projects that support the transition to net zero in emissions-intensive regions.

The Authority expects that the proposed Front Door will play an important role in facilitating practical collaboration between SIVs and encourage efforts to combine or sequence support options to get projects of significance over the line. The Front Door should also monitor the success the SIVs have had in progressing the Government's nominated priorities on quarterly basis, including investment in transitioning regions. Expanding on the existing Government efforts, and incorporating insights from the Front Door, will enhance the robustness of ongoing advice to Government on the operation of the SIVs.

Finally, the SIVs all apply different and often limited social license criteria to projects. This creates unnecessary inconsistency and complexity.

Actions:

1. Government should revise the mandates of Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA), the Clean Energy Finance Corporation, Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility, and the National Reconstruction Fund Corporation, including to:
   - direct them to work pro-actively to maximise their investments to support the transition to net zero and require reporting on proposals received and investments made in transitioning regions;
   - direct a portion of funding to priority areas, giving additional weighting in assessment for projects from those areas and lowering the rate of return for projects in those areas;
   - embed differentiation between SIVs to ensure that collectively they can consider proposals that respond to Government priorities and deploy suitable financing options across the innovation and funding life-cycle that drive private investment;
   - adjust their risk profile, required rate of return and the minimum and maximum transaction sizes to ensure the SIVs are positioned to engage and effectively respond to the Government's intended purpose for each;
   - introduce time requirements for SIVs to respond to approaches or engagements with project proponents to ensure rapid closure and increased certainty for potential projects;
   - standardised social license criteria requirements for considering support, consistent with the Future Made in Australia Community Benefit Principles; and
   - improve transparency and reporting by requiring more detailed project reporting through Annual Reports and quarterly reports to the Front Door including identifying projects that were not provided funding by the SIVs for the relevant financial year.

[9] Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC), *Leading Australia's Energy Transition: Annual Report 2023-24*, Figure 69: Investment commitments 2023-24: ESG opportunities. Australian Government, 2024, p194. Available at: https://www.cefc.com.au/document?file=/media/d3dodzn3/cefc_annualreport2023-24.pdf.

[10] Weld Australia, *Weld Australia Demands Answers*, [media release], May 28 2024. Available at: https://weldaustralia.com.au/news-views/weld-australia-demands-answers/.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 224 of 375

Streamlining the funding system

In addition to timely access to appropriate public financing support, stakeholders continue to highlight the complexity of governments' responses to the transition. While reflecting a significant response from all levels of government, the sheer number and complexity of programs is a barrier for individuals, companies and others.

The Authority, in close collaboration with the Climate Change Authority, collects information to inform the Climate Policy Tracker. The 2024 Tracker identified 180 Commonwealth policies and programs in place, delivered by 19 different entities[11], which can be characterised as climate-related initiatives. Many provide crosscutting support with only a handful directly supporting the transition to net zero (refer Attachment C).

Most funding programs invite project proposals through dedicated, time-bound rounds. Similar to SIVs, funding programs almost exclusively focus on specific projects that they match to grant guidelines and do not support consideration of multi-staged projects or programs of work that are capable of delivering transformative change.

Equally while thematic programs such as investment allowances support the development of new industry and the deepening of priority sectors, there is no opportunity to guide the economic activity and job creation to parts of the country where this is needed. There are few programs that can be classified as place-based – while some are specifically for regions, there is no option to pursue an approach to deliver transformative change in a specific place.

Actions:

2. The Government should standardise requirements for applicants for Government programs and consider using Artificial Intelligence to better assist stakeholders to navigate the complex system of policies and programs.
3. The Government should include a weighting in the assessment criteria for programs to encourage proposals in areas that are a priority for the transition. This should include standard requirements around social license criteria to ensure consistency and simplicity.
4. The Government should monitor the utilisation and effectiveness of Government programs in real time in transitioning regions to ensure they are delivering the Government's policies and take action where programs underperform.

Collaboration

Different levels of government collaborate to support the energy transition, including through entities like the Authority. However, more needs to be done to improve coordination with the objective of achieving alignment between layers of government, and sustained collaboration with industry and communities.

Climate targets exist at all levels of government and in industry. While most have the same net zero by 2050 end-target, the interim objectives and pace of delivery differs.

The Authority for example notes the importance of strategic, well-considered and timed road, rail and port infrastructure as part of the restructuring of the economy and the roll out of renewable energy infrastructure. The shift to EVs and other transport electrification is necessary but not sufficient to decarbonise the sector – for example it also requires decarbonisation of the electricity network and an increase in electricity generation to handle increased demand as driven by the electricity and energy sector plan. The decarbonisation of transport will help other sectors to decarbonise (e.g. agriculture, resources, industry).

[11] Of the 380 policies and programs, 180 are Commonwealth policies and programs across 9 themes: agriculture and land, climate-related wellbeing and adaptation, cross-cutting, energy and electricity, industry and waste, international, other, resources, and transport.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 225 of 375

Stakeholders have observed a lack of clarity around the pathways to delivery noting that state governments are often in competition with each other to attract investment[12] or reach their specific emissions reduction targets. Clarifying these pathways would allow for the necessary sequencing of significant projects reducing competition for scarce skills and materials, and support local industries to better understand whether there is long-term demand for their products, giving them confidence to invest in manufacturing capability.[13] The Australian Electricity Workforce for the 2024 Integrated System Plan: Projects to 2050 Final Report for example highlights that almost 63,000 additional electricity sector workers will be needed by 2029, rising to almost 119,000 total workers by 2050.[14]

Increased certainty around the timing of projects would also assist at a project level avoiding proponents having to wait for inputs[15] or potentially for connection to the NEM, reducing costs and increasing the certainty and timing of cash flow.[16][17] The AEMO NEW connection scorecard for example highlights that the average time for approved applications is around 9.6 months, approved registrations is around 5.6 months and full output a further 4.7 months.[18]

The Authority hears repeated calls for a different way of operating, involving industry, workers and community groups in ongoing conversation with each other and government. Engagement should be sustained and dialled up and down as necessary.

The OECD has also highlighted the need for change noting that meeting net-zero objectives is still possible but that governments themselves will need to reform, for example through innovative institutional arrangements, aligning public budgets, backing place-based climate action, and developing agile regulatory environments to be able to implement the policies at the scale and pace needed.[19]

Collaboration within and across industries will be critical to Australia being able to meet its 2050 targets. Currently connections within industry and across industries remain fragmented and are based upon existing connections or referrals through business networks. Ensuring publicly available, no cost information on potential suppliers nationally to project proponents is a necessary step in better facilitating these connections, to increase economic activity and create local jobs.[20]

Actions:

5. Governments should develop an integrated national net zero infrastructure program incorporating the known and proposed construction timelines across renewable sectors. Building on existing government and private sector products this would allow for better sequencing of projects reducing potential delays and overlaps and on a sector wide basis would assist in reducing avoidable cost pressures for project inputs.[21]
6. Government should step up its role to support collaboration, by ensuring that the information held by the Industry Capability Network (ICN) is further expanded, and available free of charge, to deepen the role ICN can play in connecting developers and potential suppliers.

---

12 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), ACCI Submission, submission to Productivity Commission, 2025, p 23.

13 Net Zero Australia, *How to make net zero happen, Mobilisation Report July 2023*, p 65.

14 Rutovitz, J., Gerrard, E., Lara, H., and Briggs, C. (2024). The Australian Electricity Workforce for the 2024 Integrated System Plan: Projections to 2050. Prepared for RACE for 2030. Available at: nem-2024-workforce_final.pdf.

15 The Australian Electricity Workforce for the 2024 Integrated System Plan: Projections to 2050 Final Report highlights that skill shortages create the risks of delays, increased project costs, and increased cost of capital to reflect increased risk.

16 CBRE Intelligent Investment Australia's Renewable Energy Market, May 2025. Available at: Australia_s_Renewable_Energy_M.pdf

17 Australian National University, L Clapin and T Longden, *Waiting to generate: an analysis of wind and solar project development lead-times in Australia's National Electricity Market*, 2022, accessed 20 July 2025.

18 The 2025 NEM Connection Scorecard provides statistics on the timeframes for applications, registration and full output. See, AEMO, *NEM Connection Scorecard – Mar 2025*, Australian Government, 2025. Available at: march-2025.pdf

19 OECD (2025), Fast-tracking Net Zero by Building Climate and Economic Resilience: A Summary for Policymakers, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/f2c22c96-en. Accessed 21 July 2025.

20 Industry Capability Network, Who Are We and What do we do? - Industry Capability Network | ICN.

21 The program could build on the information already available through the National Renewable Energy Priority List which has a focus on transmission and generation and storage projects. See, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water National Renewable Energy Priority List - DCCEEW, accessed 18 July 2025.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

7. Regulatory Settings

Approval processes for renewable energy infrastructure are slow[22], cumbersome and unpredictable and as a result, approvals have introduced a risk that is hard for industry to manage.

According to the Clean Energy Investor Group, unpredictability arises because of poor guidance (in particular around cultural heritage and community engagement expectations), overlaps between different agencies, and changes to requirements mid-process with limited transitional arrangements.[23]

The impact of these delays is a lack of investment-ready opportunities with the right risk-return. This issue will be compounded as capital flows looking towards Australia as a potential destination for investment in renewable energy and related sectors increase over the short to medium term.

Various approaches and reforms are underway domestically to address some bottlenecks. For example, the National Renewable Energy Priority List may offer a pathway through planning and environmental approvals, but such initiatives should be monitored closely to ensure these meet their intended objectives.

The Major Project Facilitation Agency identified 39 legislative approvals at the Federal level that commonly apply to major projects in Australia.[24] But for clean energy and net zero projects, *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* approvals are often the final hurdle.[25] The time taken to complete a formal assessment and approval under the Act following a referral decision depends on the project's complexity.[26]

Stakeholders such as the Clean Energy Investor Group also note that as 70 per cent of the capital in the clean energy sector is from foreign sources the foreign investment screening processes are a challenge too – especially where renewable energy projects involve the purchase of agricultural land. For most foreign investors, the threshold for screening for the acquisition of agricultural land is $15 million (cumulative).[27]

Challenges with securing transmission access and grid connection in the NEM also persist and are likely to get worse if delays with the transmission build out persist.[28] The AEMO, in collaboration with industry, is continuing to progress a wide-ranging connection reform program aimed at streamlining the connection process and ensuring that technical requirements remain relevant for emerging technologies such as grid forming inverters and large inverter-based loads.[29]

Government could also explore approaches adopted in other countries to change the risk-reward structure for critically important pieces of energy infrastructure.

---

22 The Clean Energy Council 2025 report shows that the average project completion time from financial commitment to commissioning is 20 months for large scale solar, 26 months for large scale wind and 21 months for large scale battery storage.

23 Herbert Smith Freehills and Clean Energy Investor Group HSF-_-CEIG-Report-Delivering-major-clean-energy-projects-in-QLD-and-VIC.pdf; HSF x CEIG EPBC Act Report (v5 - Clean); 2025-Clean-Energy-Outlook_CEIG-Annual-Member-Survey-Results-2.pdf.

24 Australian Government, Major Projects Facilitation Agency Fact Sheets.

25 Under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), landowners, developers, companies, individuals and governments must seek Commonwealth approval for proposed actions that might have a significant impact on MNES. After receiving a valid referral, the minister or their delegate has 20 business days to decide whether the proposed action triggers the MNES protected by the EPBC Act. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, 2023-24 Annual Report outlines that 86% (referral and approval decisions) and 85% (assessment decisions) related to the EPBC Act met statutory timeframes. See Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), 2023-24 Annual Report, DCCEEW, Australian Government, 2024.

26 The Queensland Renewable Energy Council highlights in its EPBC assessment and approval fact sheet that depending on the environmental impact assessment process, referral, assessment and approval of an action under the EPBC Act can take between 18 months to 3 years. Available at: https://qrec.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/ProjectPathway_CommonwealthApprovalProcess.pdf.

27 The Treasury, Monetary thresholds | Foreign investment in Australia, accessed 21 July 2025.

28 The 2025 NEM Connection Scorecard provides statistics on the timeframes for applications, registration and full output. See AEMO, 2024-25 NEM Connection Scorecard – Mar 2025. Available at: march-2025.pdf

29 The Australian Energy Market Commission (AEMC) has finalised a comprehensive overhaul of the technical requirements for connecting to the national electricity grid. The finalised Package 1 reforms will commence on 21 August 2025, with transitional provisions to minimise disruptions to ongoing connection applications.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 227 of 375

Faced with a policy approach that failed to deliver on its offshore wind target, the Dutch Government struck an energy agreement with industry and the community in 2013. The Government has assumed responsibility for predevelopment work by pre-selecting sites, undertaking the geo-technical studies and obtaining certification as well as all permits prior to going to tender each year for a single large-scale site. The costs involved with the pre-development work are recouped from the successful tenderer. The Government has also assumed responsibility for the grid connection, significantly de-risking the project and managed to attract zero subsidy bids. In its latest tenders, the Government has shifted the assessment towards non-price criteria (85:15 per cent). Since the first tender in 2016, 10.2 GW of capacity has been secured.[30]

Actions:

8. Government should introduce the necessary exemptions and changes to current regulatory and other approval processes that acknowledge the urgency of meeting greenhouse gas emissions and transition objectives. Decision-making should be accelerated without compromising on social license criteria, that are key to ensuring broad support for the energy transition.
9. Governments should examine in what circumstances to proactively assume responsibility for regulatory approvals, to minimise the time and risks associated with tendering for priority net zero projects.

[30] Noordzeeloket, Preparatory Work for Windfarms, accessed 18 July 2025.



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

ATTACHMENT A

Current Commonwealth SIVs

Entity	Date of Establishment
Australian Infrastructure Financing Facility for the Pacific (AIFFP)'s objective is to advance Australia's national interest by contributing to a stable, secure and prosperous Pacific.	July 2019
The Australian Renewable Energy Agency was established to increase the supply of renewable energy in Australia.	1 July 2012
The Clean Energy Finance Corporation was established to facilitate increased flows of finance into the clean energy sector and to achieve Australia's greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.	3 August 2012
Export Finance Australia (EFA) is the Australian Government's export credit agency. EFA's purpose is to support Australian export trade and overseas infrastructure development that benefits Australia.	1 November 1991
Housing Australia (formerly National Housing Finance and Investment Corporation) was established to make loans and grants to, directly or indirectly, improve housing outcomes.	30 June 2018
The National Reconstruction Fund Corporation (NRFC) was established to diversify and transform Australia's industry and economy to secure future prosperity and drive sustainable economic growth.	18 September 2023
The Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility (NAIF) was established to stimulate economic growth by attracting private investment, fostering infrastructure development and supporting various industries in Northern Australia.	1 July 2016
The Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) was established to support the growth, resilience and sustainability of Australia's agricultural economy on behalf of the Australian Government.	1 July 2018

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 229 of 375

ATTACHMENT B

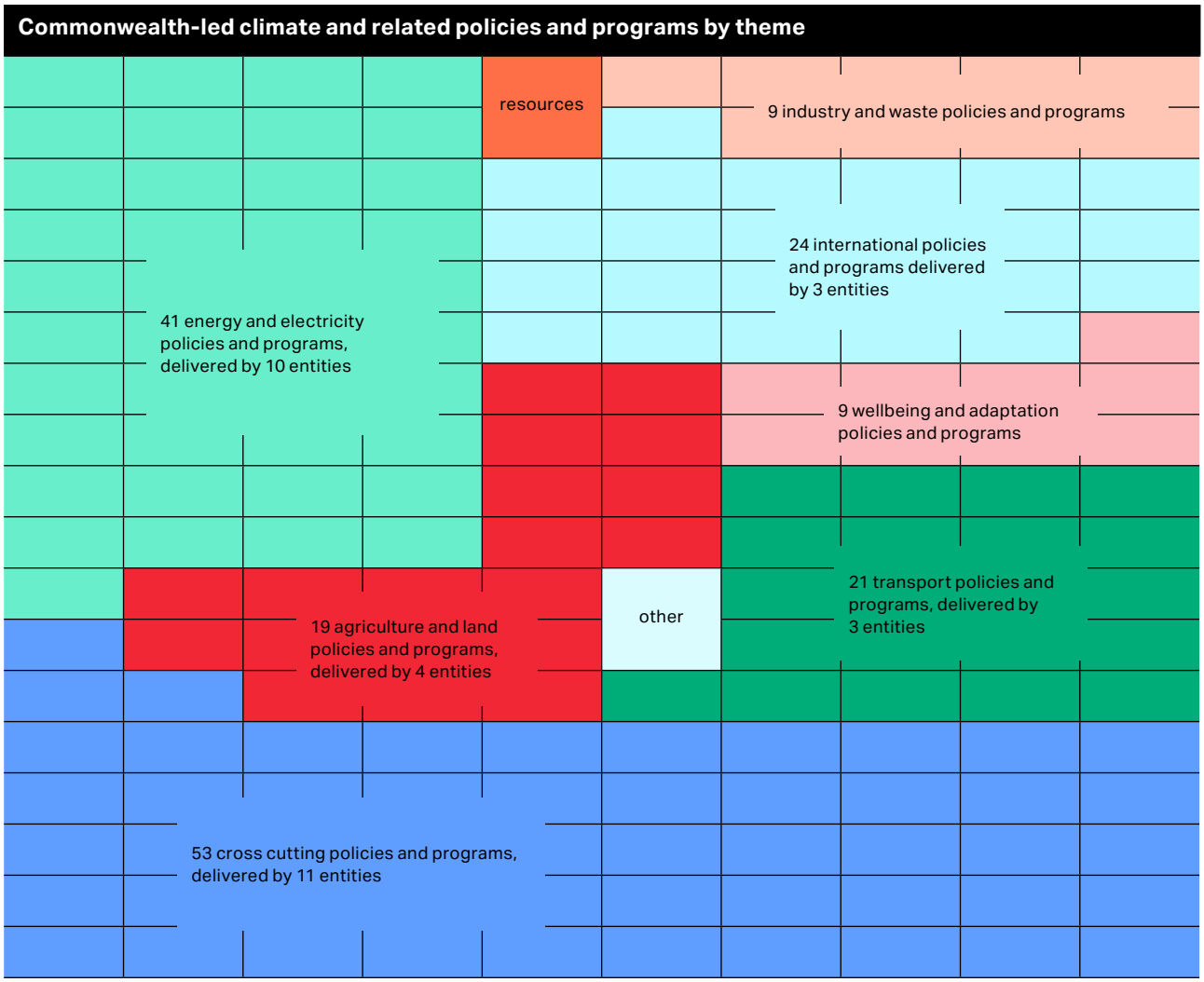
Current SIV mandates

The table below is a high-level and approximate overview of the coverage of current SIV investment mandates. It is important to note that these mandates were established for specific policy objectives.

	ARENA	CEFC	EFA	NAIF	NRF
Sector					
Clean energy	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Circular economy	✓	✓			✓
Manufacturing	✓		✓		✓
Green metals	✓		✓		✓
Critical minerals			✓	✓	✓
Agriculture	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Defence			✓		✓
Infrastructure		✓	✓	✓	
Other		✓	✓	✓	✓
Funding lifecycle					
Pre-seed	✓				
Seed	✓				
Growth	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mature		✓	✓	✓	✓
Innovation lifecycle					
R&D	✓				
Demonstration	✓	✓			
Deployment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Market accumulation		✓	✓	✓	✓
Diffusion		✓	✓	✓	✓
Risk appetite					
Low		✓	✓	✓	
Medium	✓				✓
High					
Expected return					
Nil or low (e.g. grants)	✓				
Medium (e.g. debt)		✓	✓	✓	
High (e.g. equity)			✓	✓	✓
Quantum of capital provided					
Very low (<$1m)	✓				
Low (<$10m)	✓				
Medium (<$100m)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
High (<$1b)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Very high (>$1b)		✓			

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 230 of 375

ATTACHMENT C



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Australian Government

Net Zero Economy Authority

netzero.gov.au



This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Inquiry into Information Integrity on Climate Change and Energy

Net Zero Economy Authority submission

Our interest in the inquiry

The Net Zero Economy Authority (the Authority) is a non-corporate Commonwealth entity established by the Net Zero Economy Authority Act 2024 (the Act). Our purpose is to support the communities impacted by Australia's transition to a net zero economy. Our vision is for a better future for industrial regions, communities and workers in the net zero economy. To deliver on our purpose and vision, we have defined the following missions that guide our efforts:

- Help workers in coal and gas facilities affected by the transition to prepare for and secure well-paid, safe and lasting jobs.
- Support communities significantly affected by the transition to net zero to prosper, including through economic development and investment.
- Be a trusted and influential voice to build understanding of, and shape policy on, the regional net zero transition.

The Authority coordinates policies and actions to support the transition, provides advice to the Minister and develops and delivers initiatives to enable participation in the transition.

A key function of the Authority is supporting and delivering educational and promotional initiatives to promote an understanding of, and encourage participation in, Australia's transition to a net zero emissions economy.

With the legislated function to promote an understanding of the net zero transition, the Authority has a particular interest in the impact that misinformation and disinformation may have on community understanding of the transition. The Authority's submission is largely focused on the first two terms of reference:

> *(a) the prevalence of, motivations behind and impacts of misinformation and disinformation related to climate change and energy;*
> *(b) how misinformation and disinformation related to climate change and energy is financed, produced and disseminated, including, but not limited to, understanding its impact on:*
> *(i) Australian politics,*
> *(ii) domestic and international media narratives, and*
> *(iii) Australian public policy debate and outcomes.*

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Impacts of misinformation and disinformation on the net zero transition

In Australia, misinformation and disinformation around the net zero transition persist with worrying prevalence, particularly through social media and targeted campaigns. Heavy reliance on these platforms for news accelerates the spread of misleading claims, shaping public perception and undermining confidence in renewable energy.

Common myths about wind energy persist, such as false narratives targeted at coastal communities alleging offshore wind projects harm whales and marine ecosystems. Solar energy is also a target of misinformation and disinformation, with claims that solar farms create significant weather-altering 'heat islands' as well as negative messaging around rooftop solar that diminishes recognition of its proven benefits (such as the claim that solar panels do not produce electricity on cold or cloudy days). Gas and carbon-credit schemes also feature prominently in disinformation narratives.

The combined impact of these issues erodes public understanding and trust, hampers informed decision-making, and can slow the transition to sustainable energy. It fuels scepticism around wind, solar, and offshore developments, distorts perceptions of the pace and scale of renewable progress, and negatively impacts judgment about viable alternatives like gas or carbon offsets.

Misinformation is difficult to overcome

In 2023, the Authority undertook research to inform its approach to building an understanding of the net zero transition. Around 2,500 Australians across regional and metropolitan areas participated in the research to understand sentiment towards, and knowledge of, the net zero transition.

The research found that without an authoritative narrative on the net zero transition, confusion, misinformation and negative voices risk dominating the conversation. Respondents recognised the transition's complexity, and wanted to know how the transition would impact them locally. Place-based and tailored stakeholder communication and engagement was identified as a key requirement for effective communication. The research found that it was important to ensure that factual information is communicated before misinformation could influence individual perceptions.

The Authority undertook further research in 2024. The research found that misinformation and disinformation is highly believable and widespread in impacted regional communities and investigated how misinformation could be addressed. The research found that proof points that were designed to address existing misinformation were seen as less credible when participants had already been exposed to misinformation.

Specifically, the research presented respondents with the following two factual statements relevant to existing misinformation narratives:

- **Research has found no evidence** of wind turbines causing harm to whales or other animals. By reducing Australia's reliance on fossil fuels, wind farms help protect ocean habitats from the impacts of rising temperatures and ocean acidification.

- The National Health and Medical Research Centre's statement on the impacts of wind farms on human health has found **there is no direct evidence** that exposure to wind farm noise affects physical or mental health.

The research found that proof points aimed at dismissing misinformation have little impact on those who support the transition and aggravate those who oppose it. Messages that included

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

the phrase ‘no evidence’ come across as vague and further embed a sense of mistrust. The research found that factual messages with a strong local focus proved most effective. This includes messages that practically demonstrate how the transition is impacting local communities – for example, showcasing local businesses that are making the most of new manufacturing opportunities or workers that have transitioned into new jobs.

Further research underway

The Authority is in the early stages of undertaking further research on community understanding of the net zero transition. The research will also assess the extent to which misinformation about the transition continues to shape community perceptions. There may be an opportunity in the coming months to share some insights from this research with the Committee.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

Official Committee Hansard

SENATE

FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Estimates

Public

MONDAY, 24 FEBRUARY 2025

CANBERRA

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

FINANCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION LEGISLATION COMMITTEE

Monday, 24 February 2025

Members in attendance: Senators Cash, Colbeck, Duniam, Hume, Liddle, McGrath, O'Sullivan, Barbara Pocock, David Pocock, Pratt, Sheldon, Shoebridge, Stewart and Waters

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

PARLIAMENTARY DEPARTMENTS

In Attendance

Senator Lines, President of the Senate

Parliament

Dr Gordon de Brouwer, Parliamentary Service Commissioner

Department of Parliamentary Services

Ms Jaala Hinchcliffe, Acting Secretary
Ms Nicola Hinder PSM, Acting Deputy Secretary
Mr Steven Fox, Parliamentary Librarian
Dr Andrew Banfield, Acting Assistant Secretary, Research
Ms Heather Walsh, Assistant Secretary, Library Collections and Systems
Dr Dianne Heriot, Head of Design Integrity and Collections
Mr Jason Lucas, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Corporate Services
Ms Nicole Short, Assistant Secretary, Commercial Operations
Ms Kate Cook, Acting Assistant Secretary, Corporate Operations
Ms Denise Catt, Acting Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary Engagement
Mr Vance Khan, First Assistant Secretary, Security Division
Mr James O'Brien, Assistant Secretary, Security Operations
Mr James Lawson, Chief Information Officer
Mr Nathan Sutton, Acting Assistant Secretary, Digital Customer Services
Mr Rohan Whitmore, Acting Assistant Secretary, Chief Information Security Officer
Ms Thao Le, First Assistant Secretary, Finance and Property Services and Chief Financial Officer
Mr Paul Pak-Poy, Acting Assistant Secretary, Property Services
Ms Lauren MacInnes, Assistant Secretary, Planning and Quality
Mr Sam Hatherly, Acting Assistant Secretary, Finance
Ms Rachel Lloyd, Assistant Secretary Procurement and Contract Management Taskforce

Department of the Senate

Mr Richard Pye, Clerk of the Senate
Ms Jackie Morris, Deputy Clerk
Mr John Begley, Usher of the Black Rod
Ms Toni Matulick, Clerk Assistant (Procedure)
Ms Rachel Callinan, Clerk Assistant (Committees)
Mr Tim Bryant, Clerk Assistant (Table)
Ms Fiona O'Loughlin, Chief Financial Officer

Parliamentary Budget Office

Ms Sam Reinhardt, Parliamentary Budget Officer
Ms Karen Whitham, First Assistant Parliamentary Budget Officer
Mr Gareth Tunks, Chief Operating Officer
Dr John Clark, Assistant Parliamentary Budget Officer
Mr Lewis Conn, Assistant Parliamentary Budget Officer

Committee met at 09:00

CHAIR (Senator Pratt): I declare open this hearing of the Senate Finance and Public Administration Legislation Committee into the 2024-25 additional estimates. We begin today by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet and pay respects to their elders past and present. That respect is extended to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 238 of 375

The committee has set 6 March as the date by which senators are to submit written questions on notice and 24 March as the date for the return of answers to questions taken on notice. The proceedings today will begin with parliamentary departments, followed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet as listed on today's program. Under standing order 26, we must take all evidence in public, which includes answers to questions on notice. I remind witnesses that in giving evidence to the committee you're protected by parliamentary privilege and that it is unlawful for anyone to threaten or disadvantage a witness on account of evidence given to a committee. Such action may be treated by the Senate as a contempt. It is also a contempt to give false or misleading evidence.

The Senate has endorsed the following test of relevance for questions at estimates hearings: any questions going to the operations or financial positions of departments and agencies which are seeking funds in estimates are relevant questions for the purpose of estimates hearings. I remind officers that the Senate has resolved that there are no areas in connection with the expenditure of public funds where any person has discretion to withhold details or explanations from parliament or its committees unless the parliament has expressly provided otherwise.

The Senate has resolved that an officer of a department of the Commonwealth shall not be asked to give opinions on matters of policy and shall be given reasonable opportunity to refer questions asked of the officer to superior officers or to a minister. This resolution does not preclude questions asking for explanations of policies or factual questions about how and when policies were adopted. Witnesses are reminded of the Senate order specifying the process by which a claim of public interest immunity should be raised, and I incorporate that order into *Hansard*.

The extract read as follows—

Public interest immunity claims

That the Senate—

(a) notes that ministers and officers have continued to refuse to provide information to Senate committees without properly raising claims of public interest immunity as required by past resolutions of the Senate;

(b) reaffirms the principles of past resolutions of the Senate by this order, to provide ministers and officers with guidance as to the proper process for raising public interest immunity claims and to consolidate those past resolutions of the Senate;

(c) orders that the following operate as an order of continuing effect:

(1) If:

(a) a Senate committee, or a senator in the course of proceedings of a committee, requests information or a document from a Commonwealth department or agency; and

(b) an officer of the department or agency to whom the request is directed believes that it may not be in the public interest to disclose the information or document to the committee, the officer shall state to the committee the ground on which the officer believes that it may not be in the public interest to disclose the information or document to the committee, and specify the harm to the public interest that could result from the disclosure of the information or document.

(2) If, after receiving the officer's statement under paragraph (1), the committee or the senator requests the officer to refer the question of the disclosure of the information or document to a responsible minister, the officer shall refer that question to the minister.

(3) If a minister, on a reference by an officer under paragraph (2), concludes that it would not be in the public interest to disclose the information or document to the committee, the minister shall provide to the committee a statement of the ground for that conclusion, specifying the harm to the public interest that could result from the disclosure of the information or document.

(4) A minister, in a statement under paragraph (3), shall indicate whether the harm to the public interest that could result from the disclosure of the information or document to the committee could result only from the publication of the information or document by the committee, or could result, equally or in part, from the disclosure of the information or document to the committee as in camera evidence.

(5) If, after considering a statement by a minister provided under paragraph (3), the committee concludes that the statement does not sufficiently justify the withholding of the information or document from the committee, the committee shall report the matter to the Senate.

(6) A decision by a committee not to report a matter to the Senate under paragraph (5) does not prevent a senator from raising the matter in the Senate in accordance with other procedures of the Senate.

(7) A statement that information or a document is not published, or is confidential, or consists of advice to, or internal deliberations of, government, in the absence of specification of the harm to the public interest that could result from the disclosure of the information or document, is not a statement that meets the requirements of paragraph (1) or (4).

(8) If a minister concludes that a statement under paragraph (3) should more appropriately be made by the head of an agency, by reason of the independence of that agency from ministerial direction or control, the minister shall inform the

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 239 of 375

committee of that conclusion and the reason for that conclusion, and shall refer the matter to the head of the agency, who shall then be required to provide a statement in accordance with paragraph (3).

(d) requires the Procedure Committee to review the operation of this order and report to the Senate by 20 August 2009.

(13 May 2009 J.1941)

(Extract, Senate Standing Orders)

CHAIR: Senators are reminded of their obligations under the Behaviour Code for Australian Parliamentarians to treat witnesses with dignity, courtesy, fairness and respect.

Department of the Senate

[09:03]

CHAIR: I now welcome Senator the Hon. Sue Lines, President of the Senate; Mr Richard Pye, Clerk of the Senate; and other officers of the Department of the Senate. I specifically also welcome Mr John Begley, Usher of the Black Rod, at the table. President or Mr Pye, does either of you have an opening statement this morning?

The President: No, thanks, Chair.

CHAIR: Okay. We'll go straight to questions.

Senator HUME: Clerk, my first question is to you, and it's in relation to a question at estimates and answers to questions on notice that you provided to the committee at the last estimates, giving some clarification around how witnesses should treat questions. For the benefit of proceedings, I'm hoping that you would once again confirm, first of all, that senators are not limited by any standing order in the number of questions that they can ask, either during a hearing or on notice.

Mr Pye: I can confirm that there's no standing order that restricts the number of questions that senators can place on notice or ask at estimates.

Senator HUME: Thank you. Can you also confirm that Senate estimates hearings can only release witnesses by agreement or, failing agreement, where there is no senator present who has further questions for the witnesses?

Mr Pye: That's with the additional option available to committees that they can set a new meeting time for any further questions.

Senator HUME: Is that for a spillover hearing?

Mr Pye: It's for a spillover hearing or any sort of hearing.

Senator HUME: Thank you. Can you confirm that questions answered by witnesses at the table or taken on notice for response later are to be treated the same.

Mr Pye: Yes.

Senator HUME: Thank you. Can you also confirm that witnesses should not prevent information that they know to be true from being provided to the Senate or its committees.

Mr Pye: That's right, Senator. I agree with that.

Senator HUME: Finally, can you confirm that preventing information being provided or dissuading the provision of information from a witness that is being sought and is available to provide may be considered a contempt of the Senate?

Mr Pye: The Senate has made it clear in its privilege resolutions that someone seeking improperly to prevent material being put before the Senate can be treated as a contempt. I should add the rider, which is mentioned in the chair's opening statement, about the making of public interest immunity claims when witnesses who consider there's information that would not be in the public interest to put before a committee should make a properly formed public interest immunity claim which is for the committee, in the first instance, and, subsequently, the Senate to determine.

Senator HUME: Thank you, Clerk. I always think it's helpful to do a reminder of this at the beginning of an estimates process, so I appreciate your cooperation. I want to finish this by commending your department, and the Department of the Senate generally, for the continued timely and fulsome way that it has always responded to questions on notice—at least to mine; I don't know about anyone else's. Thank you very much for your assistance there.

Mr Pye: Thank you, Senator.

Senator HUME: I have some questions around maintenance, in particular, that has been conducted by the Department of the Senate. I think that these will probably go to Black Rod. In response to question on notice No. 1 you provided a timeline in relation to the longest-running maintenance matter at that time. It shows that the

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 240 of 375

matter was reported back in September 2023, but it wasn't resolved until October 2024. Do you know the reason for that?

Mr Begley: I think the reason was it was a little bit hard at times to work out what the problem was. I think there were a few attempts to try and fix the problem, being a noise in the ceiling. Then it took a while for them to get that solution in place.

Senator HUME: So it just took a long time to resolve what the issue was?

Mr Begley: Yes—to work it out and then find a time suitable to replace it.

Senator HUME: In your timeline, it was in April 2024 that it was identified that a new part was required to fix that issue. Is that correct?

Mr Begley: Yes.

Senator HUME: Thank you. Who was responsible for requisitioning the new part? Was that the Department of the Senate or was that the Department of Parliamentary Services?

Mr Begley: Department of Parliamentary Services. We acted as a concierge to make it all happen and liaise with DPS so that your office wouldn't have to. It's up to DPS to do the actual work involved.

Senator HUME: Thank you. What was the date that the new part was requested from the supplier? Is there a written record of that?

Mr Begley: I think you'd have to talk to DPS about that one.

Senator HUME: In the timeline that you've provided, Mr Begley, you state that from April '23 to October '24 you requested follow-up from the Department of Parliamentary Services to resolve it. When you say you requested follow-up, what do you mean by that? Was it emails? Was it phone calls? What was it?

Mr Begley: I believe it was emails. We logged those in our system to say we chased it approximately once a month to see where the progress was up to.

Senator HUME: Can you provide copies, on notice, of those emails.

Mr Begley: I'll see if they were emails or phone calls. I can give you something, I'm sure.

Senator HUME: Good. Thank you. My concern for this matter is not that it might relate to my office—that's irrelevant—but the fact that it took the better part of a parliamentary term for the department to address it. It's rare in the Public Service for departments to have their own in-house maintenance teams. Where we do have them, I think you'd expect that the taxpayer, who provides them, would think that they were more efficient. This doesn't seem to have been particularly efficient. I'm wondering if you've conducted a review of the processes of how maintenance is conducted and whether it can be done more efficiently.

Mr Begley: We've conducted a broader review. This one seems to be a bit of an outlier in how long it took to get resolved. I think, from what the team has said, it relates to the age of the system because the air conditioning system is 35 years old now. It is coming due for a broader review and replacement. I think that's probably what led a little bit to this, along with, as I said, timing issues around making sure we get access to the space and trying to work out what the problem was in the first instance. But I agree it did take a very long time for this one to get resolved, which is unusual.

Senator HUME: Do you have any requests for maintenance in the Senate chamber at the moment?

Mr Begley: At the moment we're looking at the condition of the benches in the Senate chamber. Some of them are quite worn, as you might have noticed, particularly the high-use ones, where the whips and the ministers are, and also the adviser booths. So at the moment we're working on a program to get those refurbished. That's the only thing, really.

Senator HUME: I've asked this question several times over a number of estimates now. There is an outstanding matter. I'm reliably informed that there is a drawer in the advisers box on the opposition side that is routinely broken and is unable to close and that a number of staff have actually been injured by this. Now, I've asked you here whether it can be resolved, and it continues to still not have a permanent resolution. Yet we have staff in place to do exactly this. I'm wondering whether it can be fixed within a reasonable time or whether you think I will have to ask this question again at the next estimates.

Mr Begley: I hope note. I am aware of that issue and I thought it had been resolved, so I'll have to go and check and see what the current status of it is. But, yes, it was sticking and it wasn't closing properly, and we did log that job when we were aware of it, and I thought it was fixed. I'll follow that up.

Senator HUME: I have some questions around furniture purchases, which, again, I'm following up from previous estimates. At the last estimates, in answer to previous questions on notice, the department confirmed that

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 241 of 375

since 2015 the department has spent around $3.8 million on bespoke design furniture for the Senate. In response to question on notice No. 4, you stated that that included $69,946 for furniture for the new Table Office and $18,650 for the new sub-table office. I just want to confirm those numbers. Is that correct?

Mr Begley: Yes, Senator, that's what we put in our response.

Senator HUME: Thank you. In your response, you noted that $70,000 for the Table Office was for 'workstations, storage units, meeting tables and filing units to accommodate new fit-out to consolidate accommodation footprint'. That's right?

Mr Begley: That's correct.

Senator HUME: This work is a consolidation?

Mr Begley: We were trying to identify a way to free up some space for other projects in the building and other accommodation, so we moved our Parliamentary Education Office into another space, which meant we had to move another office out of that one and find a home for them. We refurbished the Table Office to be able to fit two areas into one so we can make more efficient use of the space, essentially.

Senator HUME: So it's a reduction in size? That's what consolidation means?

Mr Begley: No, it's two groups going into a place where one used to be. We've doubled the number of staff in that area by refurbishing the area. The other part of that puzzle was that above that is where three new Senate suites were required to be built at the beginning of this parliament. Part of that involved drilling holes straight through the concrete slab above, so we needed to also pull apart the Table Office. So we took advantage of that work being done to then do a broader refit and make more efficient use of that space.

Senator HUME: There must have been a surplus of old furniture, then, once this was done?

Mr Begley: We have some furniture in storage. I wouldn't say we have a lot. It came down to finding furniture that would fit that new space. It's consistent with the furniture that's used in senators' office suites. It's the same sort of furniture. It's nothing out of the ordinary. It's really just the usual filing cabinets, sit-stand desks and those sorts of things.

Senator HUME: What do we do with old furniture?

Mr Begley: With things that we can't use any more, we look at whether we can either dispose of it or sell it, but usually it's hard to get rid of.

Senator HUME: When you say 'dispose of it', what does that mean?

Mr Begley: It can just be, in the end, thrown out if it needs to be. Usually we try and find ways to get rid of it, but there's not much of a market for second-hand furniture that's getting on 30 years old.

Senator McGRATH: Even from Parliament House? You'd think it might have some intrinsic value.

CHAIR: I'd like this chair, for sentimental value!

Mr Begley: If you have a look at some of the old furniture, I don't think there's much. It was at the end of its life.

Senator McGRATH: I have a reputation for hoarding—

Mr Begley: If you'd like some, Senator, I've got plenty!

Senator McGRATH: I'm sure some other senators—

CHAIR: What if we were to certify that you'd sat in a particular chair, Senator McGrath? Would that increase its value?

Senator McGRATH: People might like to buy some of the furniture. I'm not saying put an ad on Gumtree, but there might be some demand out there.

Mr Begley: In the way that Commonwealth disposals have to work, we would need to do a public auction for those things. But generally, when we speak to the auction houses, they're not that interested because it's—

Senator McGRATH: Otherwise it goes to what we in Warwick call the tip.

Mr Begley: Yes.

CHAIR: Can you let the public know when it's all off to the tip! Senator Hume, I'll give you a couple more minutes and then I'll rotate the call to Senator Pocock.

Senator HUME: Obviously, $70,000 for the Table Office is a considerable amount of money. I understand that we're playing Tetris in this building, but it still sounds like a considerable investment. When we speak to DPS, I want to continue on the issue around the use of taxpayers' money for furniture in parliamentary

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 242 of 375

departments. Can you confirm if the Department of the Senate is considering adding any more pieces to the furniture collection in the next financial year?

Mr Begley: At this stage the only thing we are looking at are some additional desks for senators' offices. There seems to be a large appetite for additional staff to fit into offices, and we don't have any spares left at the moment, so we may need to purchase a few additional units.

Senator HUME: Are they off the shelf?

Mr Begley: They're exactly the same as the Table Office ones. They're custom with the right colour legs and the right colour tabletop to, as you can imagine, fit into the aesthetic and design integrity of the building.

Senator HUME: I have some more questions, but I'm happy to cede to Senator Pocock.

CHAIR: Senator Pocock.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Thank you very much for your time this morning. On 20 November last year Senator Lambie moved a motion in the Senate, on behalf of the Senate crossbench, that there was a real lack of drafting resources, and calling for more legislative drafters to be provided to the Department of the Senate. The Senate agreed to that motion. I'm interested in what additional drafting resources have been provided to the Senate crossbench.

The President: Is that to me?

Senator DAVID POCOCK: To anyone who's got some information.

The President: We acted on the order, and additional resources were given to the Department of the Senate.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: How long was that for?

Mr Pye: The government arranged for OPC to provide us with a second full-time drafter for that last sitting period last year. At exactly the same time, a new position of legislative drafter in the Procedure Office was being filled, so we've got that additional resource. We'll be having a look at whether we can swing more people into that office, assuming the demand continues. I always think that it's worth thinking about the fact that it doesn't matter how many resources we brought to bear in relation to that work, when the Senate makes decisions of the nature of suddenly deciding to rearrange its program and require that 20 or 30 bills, that people might not have been expecting would be dealt with, are suddenly going to be dealt with, no amount of legislative drafting resources provided to us, or to anyone, is going to be able to square that circle.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I understand that, but, as an Independent senator, a private senator's bill was not drafted for over six months, when it was a relatively simple bill, because of the lack of drafting resources. Were those resources just for that last sitting period and not ongoing?

Mr Pye: The additional OPC drafter was for that last sitting period.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: The Senate says, 'This is an issue; more drafters for the crossbench,' and you give us resources for two weeks, and then that's problem solved. What's going to happen in the future?

The President: My role is to act on the order. I acted on it immediately. Those questions should really go to the government.

Mr Pye: Within the funding that the department has, it's our intention to continue to do what we've been doing for the last six years, which is to continue to bring as many more people into that work as we can. We used to have about five people operating in that space, then we had seven and now we have nine. We'll continue to do that as we can, but you can't instantly produce legislative drafters. They're a bit thin on the ground. When we train our staff up to work in this environment in those roles, it takes a little bit of time, but we're building a larger pool of people who can do that work, and we'll continue to do that.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Where can I put these questions to government?

The President: I guess to the Minister for Finance. I don't really know, but that's where I'd start.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I'm just concerned that they'll probably send me back here, but I'll try that.

The President: I don't have a budget as the President. My role is to act on orders of the Senate, and I acted on it immediately that day.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: My point is that it's only for two weeks and then we're back to the status quo. The 67th report from the Senate Appropriations, Staffing and Security Committee notes:

The Committee endorsed measures for additional funding in relation to the department's workforce capacity for legislative drafting, parliamentary education outreach and membership costs for an international parliamentary organisation. The Government considered these proposals, but they were not funded in the Budget.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 243 of 375

I'm interested in what the proposal put forward by the Department of the Senate for additional drafters that the committee endorsed was?

Mr Pye: It was to provide for two additional full-time drafting positions.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: What reason did the government provide for not funding these additional drafters?

Mr Pye: I think there's a comment in that same report about the government's stance.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: It says:

The Committee acknowledges the Government's expenditure and staffing policies and agreed to the budget outcomes.

I'm interested in what the actual reason was. That doesn't really tell me.

Mr Pye: I'd have to go back and look at that on notice.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Okay. Thank you. That would be great. This is an issue that's come up again and again in this parliament. Has any analysis been done about what is needed in terms of drafting capability and capacity for a growing crossbench?

Mr Pye: I think it's something that I've talked about in annual reports going back through the entire time that I've been Clerk. A growing crossbench does tend to have the effect of increasing the demand for legislative drafting, which makes sense. There are more disparate voices on the crossbench, each seeking to have their viewpoint put forward, particularly in relation to legislative work. But it's a bit of a movable feast. We've got 21 senators on the crossbench, which is equal to the largest number of senators that we've ever had on the crossbench. The demand for legislative drafting in this parliament has continued in a way that it didn't the last time that we had that number of people on the crossbench. It's a difficult thing to say, 'Oh, yes, we'll need this many drafters for these weeks doing this sort of work.' We rely, as everyone across the rest of the public sector relies, on trying to find ways to prioritise work so that we can do the best work that we can within the resources available.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: With that being the case, are you concerned that when you ask for an additional two drafters the government says no?

Mr Pye: That's a matter you'd have to raise with the government. All departments and agencies have to operate within the budget that they end up having.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Were those two additional drafters that were requested to take into account not only the growing crossbench but also the clearly growing need for drafting for the crossbench to move amendments on behalf of their states or territories?

Mr Pye: The proposition was put forward and endorsed by the appropriations and staffing committee in recognition of the demonstrated increase in demand for drafting, particularly of legislative amendments, with the government having a reasonably ambitious legislative program at the time. That level of demand has continued at a very elevated level. We will do what we can to bring more people into that picture, but we also have to try to work within our budget.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: President, did you back the Clerk's request for an extra two drafters to add to the capacity?

The President: Yes, I took the submission to the appropriations committee. The appropriations committee endorsed it, and it went through.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Thank you. On behalf of crossbenchers, we see how hard all the staff—in particular, the drafters—work. I'm not having a crack at them at all. I really want to thank them for the work, and I hope that the Senate will actually solve this issue because it seems fundamental to our democracy, with a growing crossbench, to actually allow them to move amendments and have private senator's bills drafted.

Senator HUME: Chair, can I take the call back?

CHAIR: I will now rotate the call. Have you concluded your questions, Senator Pocock?

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Yes.

CHAIR: Senator Hume and Senator Colbeck, you've got the call for the next 10 minutes, and then we'll go to Senator Barbara Pocock.

Senator HUME: I want to ask some questions regarding question on notice No. 66. It was relating to expenditure on external professional development providers. You stated that the department had spent $40,764 over the course of four months on external professional development providers. That's correct?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 244 of 375

Mr Begley: Yes. That's what we've got in our answer.

Senator HUME: Can you explain to me exactly what that money was spent on—what training it was.

Mr Begley: I'd have to take that on notice. I don't have a breakdown in front of me on that one.

Senator HUME: You don't remember?

Mr Begley: We do a variety of professional development. I don't know exactly what would make up the bulk of that off the top of my head.

Senator HUME: Right. Okay. So it's only for select staff, not all staff?

Mr Begley: I can give you an example. We will do training for the committee office, who might take distressing phone calls, counsel like Lifeline counselling, suicide prevention and all those sorts of things. It's mostly things that are offered to the whole department in general, or there may be certain conferences where a small number of people attend.

Senator HUME: On notice could you provide a list of the providers that the department has engaged with for professional development?

Mr Begley: Certainly.

Senator HUME: I just want to follow up on some issues that I know I've raised before regarding access to senator's suites. Mr Begley, I know you and I have had this conversation before. My suite was accessed improperly at some stage last year. I asked some questions about this. On notice, particularly questions on notice 105, 106 and 107, the department reiterated the policy that is available, and you provided a copy of the security circular around access to suites. Could you tell me the date of that circular that you provided?

Mr Begley: I'd have to take that on notice.

Senator HUME: I can tell you—it's 2003. So it's kind of an old circular. I know the protocols are probably the same, but the security system has changed quite dramatically since that time. Could you let me know whether anybody still issues keys to officers.

Mr Begley: The only keys to Senate suites that are issued are the internal keys. If you wanted to lock your senator's office off from the rest of the office, then we would issue a key for that. But I don't think we have any on issue at the moment or very few—

Senator HUME: They're the only keys that work?

Mr Begley: There are keys that would work, like master keys, to open the suites, but they're strictly controlled.

Senator HUME: Master keys obviously aren't issued.

Mr Begley: That's correct.

Senator HUME: How long ago was it that we had the suites updated with the electronic passes?

Mr Begley: I'd have to take that on notice. It was a few years ago now, though.

Senator HUME: I'm concerned that the security circular that's over 20 years old is probably inappropriate and does need to be updated. Is that something that has been considered?

Mr Begley: Certainly. We're working on it.

Senator HUME: Your answer to question on notice 106 states that you're in the process of updating those protocols. After what date did you start working on updating the protocols?

Mr Begley: I'll take that on notice.

Senator HUME: Was there a catalyst to that update? Obviously it's very old. We've had security passes for a long time now. What was it that made somebody go, 'Hang on; 2003 is probably a little bit outdated'?

Mr Begley: It was the new EAC System, the card readers and things. That process has been going for a little while now. We obviously have to work with the other part of the house as well, with the House of Reps, and also with DPS. I think in some ways it's probably been overtaken a little bit by other policies that are now more global around access to the building, but, yes; it's still relevant in lots of the principles in that document as well. We will update it.

Senator HUME: You can understand that we work in a place where potentially time is a relative concept, but a year to fix a maintenance problem and 20 years to update a security circular, even after we've had security cards for a considerable number of years doesn't feel good enough to me. I'm interested in your perspective, though.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 245 of 375

Mr Begley: I understand your concern, Senator, and it is something that we are working on. I think there are a lot of other policies in place, though, that'll add protections as well. This is one that's really about the houses and how they want to manage the suite access. As I said, the broad principles are still current.

Senator HUME: In question on notice 105, you provided the code of practice for your Electronic Access Control System. However, it didn't state in that question on notice whether I, as a parliamentarian, can access the data of who comes into my office. I wonder—and I'd expect that many of my colleagues do too—that they would be surprised to know that we can't access that information.

Mr Begley: You can request that access, Senator.

Senator HUME: So I can request it. If I sought the information on who'd accessed my office, I can get that?

Mr Begley: Yes. You can ask for it, and if it meets the code of practice then you'd be entitled to have it.

Senator HUME: Right. First of all, who do I request it from?

Mr Begley: You request it from DPS—from the security operations, I think, or security systems. Then requests of that nature may end up going to the President if it's outside of the usual requests.

Senator HUME: How long do you think I would have to wait to access that information?

Mr Begley: It would probably take a few weeks, I'd say, to get it through the process.

Senator HUME: A few weeks?

Mr Begley: These are really questions probably better placed with DPS, who might be able to give you some better ideas.

Senator HUME: Okay. Do you know how the information would be provided? Do I get a table?

Mr Begley: I think it would come in a spreadsheet, but again it would probably be better to ask DPS.

Senator HUME: Has it been done before?

Mr Begley: Access to data? Yes, certainly. Reports are given to the appropriations, staffing and security committee on all access requests.

Senator HUME: Has a report been requested by parliamentarians before?

Mr Begley: I'm sure it would have been, yes.

Mr Pye: Yes.

The President: Parliamentarians regularly request data about accessing their suites. It's on the EACS report, which goes to the appropriations committee.

Senator HUME: Thank you for that, President. Mr Begley said it would potentially have to go through to you to be authorised.

The President: No, only if it's outside of the guidelines.

Senator HUME: How often does that happen?

The President: Rarely. Once or twice.

Senator HUME: Once or twice a year? Once or twice a term?

The President: I can recall that I've had, I think, one request in the last 12 months. If that's not correct, I'll come back to you.

Senator HUME: That's alright. What would be considered outside the guidelines? What's within the guidelines, as opposed to outside the guidelines?

Mr Pye: Something like the request that you're talking about would be well within the guidelines. It's pretty commonly done for senators, members or ministers wanting to do an audit of who has access to their suite when they have changes in staffing and that sort of thing. That happens pretty frequently. It is a matter for DPS, but I understand it's a pretty straightforward process. But, with other requests for data from the EACS system and the CCTV system, you can imagine that there's a range of complicated circumstances in which people might be looking for that information, and that would have to go through either higher levels in DPS or the President if it went outside of the usual things that are covered in the policy.

Senator HUME: Okay. The reason I ask this question is that information on swipe access to the building for staff outside of certain hours is meant to be provided to the relevant employer as a recommendation of the Foster review, so I'm wondering if that's being done.

The President: Yes, it is.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 246 of 375

Senator HUME: Thank you. How long is that data stored for?

Mr Pye: These are really questions for DPS.

Senator HUME: Okay.

The President: It's covered in the EACS code. I think it's 90 days, and then it's destroyed—I think. But it is a question for DPS.

Senator HUME: Alright.

Senator COLBECK: I have just a couple of quick questions. President, in the circumstances of parliament being recalled for extraordinary sittings, what is your role?

The President: I'm advised by the Leader of the Government in the Senate, and I would consult with the Clerk and make a decision.

Senator COLBECK: So there's a decision-making process for you? Just run us quickly through the process. You would receive a request from the leader of the government, or is it from the leaders?

The President: No, because the Senate is a separate chamber.

Senator COLBECK: No, leaders in the Senate. I should have been more specific.

Mr Pye: There are two different mechanisms that can be used. One, which is in standing order 55, says the President will set a new time and day for a sitting of the Senate at the request of an absolute majority of senators. That's the one that we have most frequently seen in play in recent years. There's theoretically another power, which is in a motion that's moved at the end of sitting periods before there's a reasonable break. That is a motion that says that the President, or the Deputy President in her absence, can fix another time. That can be done at the request of the government, so the government can say, 'We need to come back to do X, Y and Z,' but that really has fallen into abeyance. Every time, I think, the Senate has come back for an unusual sitting in the past 30 years, it's been done by way of some sort of a request from an absolute majority of senators—the two leaders writing to the President saying, 'Please can you arrange for the Senate to sit on Friday?' and the President then writing to all senators to advise them of the time and date. The detail of that is in that standing order I mentioned.

Senator COLBECK: So the effect of determining a majority of senators would be a letter from the two leaders to the President saying, 'Can you please recall the parliament?'

Mr Pye: Yes.

Senator COLBECK: And you've not received any such requests, President?

The President: I don't believe so, no.

Mr Pye: Not recently.

Senator COLBECK: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you to the Department of the Senate for your evidence this morning. I do believe that exhausts questions.

Parliamentary Budget Office

[09:36]

CHAIR: Good morning. Welcome to your first estimates. I now welcome Ms Reinhardt, Parliamentary Budget Officer, and other officers of the Parliamentary Budget Office. Do you have an opening statement?

Ms Reinhardt: I do. I'm happy to table it or to talk through it.

CHAIR: It really depends on senators.

Senator HUME: I don't have any questions.

CHAIR: You don't have any questions. Senator Pocock has questions. How long is it?

Ms Reinhardt: It's pretty short.

CHAIR: Okay. Please go ahead.

Ms Reinhardt: Thank you, Chair. I'd like to commence my opening statement by thanking my predecessor, Stein Helgeby, for the work he put into the PBO and the great organisation he helped to build. I'd also like to thank the presiding officers and the JCPAA for my appointment to the role of Parliamentary Budget Officer. I see the PBO as an important institution in our democracy, having established itself by delivering high-quality costings and budget analysis, helpful and important fiscal tools and the election commitments report, which we'll be producing this year.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 247 of 375

I wanted to acknowledge some of the foundations of the work of the PBO, the most important being that we serve all members of parliament and that we do our work with independence, integrity and confidentiality. These are essential to the success and reputation of the PBO. I'd also like to note the importance of the high-quality and dedicated staff. My experience since joining the organisation is of a team that is engaged and working hard to deliver high-quality, independent fiscal and budgetary advice and analysis for members of parliament. These foundations are what make the organisation valued and respected, and I see my role as supporting and leading with those foundations front of mind.

In terms of the PBO's work program, our immediate focus is on election preparation. This means ensuring we have the most up-to-date data and models available across a vast range of policy areas so as to be able to cost proposals and commitments leading up to and through the election period and ensuring that in the lead-up to the election we continue to process requests for costings and budget analysis quickly and to a high quality to assist parliamentarians and parties with their preparations and ensure we are ready for such costings in the election commitments report. Providing guidance to policy departments on what might be expected during the election is also important for their prompt responses on data and models, as is preparing to be able to produce the election commitments report and then considering the post-election arrangements for assisting a new parliament.

Beyond the election, we will also continue to focus on building the fiscal tools and research that we have available through our website. These products have been very well received and do a number of things. They make it possible for parliamentarians, the media, interested groups and the general public to understand what drives budget outcomes. 'Build your own budget' is the main project that delivers this. They inform public debate and understanding of complex tax or expenditures that impact on the fiscal position. Our papers on the tax mix and on imputation credits have been well received as publications that are accessible and that simplify complex parts of the revenue base. Our products also build on and add to information in the public domain. Our historical fiscal data series is an example of this. Post-election, we will continue to work to build on this self-initiated work, as required under our guiding legislation. I'm happy to leave it there because I know you have a lot to cover. I'll table the rest of the document.

CHAIR: Thank you for that indulgence and thank you for your opening statement. Senator Barbara Pocock has the call.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: Thank you for being here, and welcome to your role and to estimates. Thanks to your staff for the very intense work that many of them are conducting at present. I've got a couple of lines of questioning. I want to better understand an aspect of the way that you work. Your rules around the basis for preparation of PBO costings say:

When an individual parliamentarian or a political party chooses to publicly release a PBO costing that has been prepared on a confidential basis for them, it is inappropriate to claim that the PBO has costed the policy of any other parliamentarian or political party.

Can you explain expand on that and explain the background to that provision?

Ms Reinhardt: As I said in my opening statement, a really important part of our work is our independence, and we do not take on political work. We cost on the basis that a costing that's given to us is a costing of the parliamentarian who is providing the costing. As many of you will know, many things that we look at are quite complicated. We work very hard to understand exactly what the costing request entails. That often involves going back and forth with parliamentarians to understand the detail. Our costings are provided for the parliamentarian who requested them. We do not cost the policies of other parliamentarians or parties, and we're very clear about that when we provide costings.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: If someone submits a proposal to you which you recognise as the policy of someone other than the person submitting the request, what's your response to that?

Ms Reinhardt: We would always engage with the parliamentarian and say, 'This has to be your costing that you wish us to provide as your costing,' and we request the details and specifications of that policy on the basis that it is their costing. That is the way we would deal with it. We don't refuse to cost a request. We are clear that that entails their request and that the specifications are theirs.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: In 2013, I understand that such an event did happen. How did you respond, in 2013, to this event?

Ms Reinhardt: Luckily, I have a long-lived person on my team, which is excellent. The Parliamentary Budget Officer at the time did respond to that.

Mr Tunks: I'll just have a quick look back to our media releases at the time, but I think the incident you are talking about was around about August 2013. The then parliamentary budget officer, Mr Phil Bowen, released a

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 248 of 375

media release on 29 August 2013. The title was *Basis for preparation of PBO costings*, and the statement that was made was:

All PBO costings are prepared on the basis of the policy specifications provided by the parliamentary party or individual parliamentarian requesting the policy costing.

… … …

PBO guidance issued on 9 May 2013—

a copy of that guidance is available on our website—

makes it clear that the PBO will not prepare costings of policies attributed to an individual parliamentarian or political party without the knowledge and active participation of that parliamentarian or political party in the costing process.

When the PBO undertakes a confidential policy costing for an individual parliamentarian or political party, it relies solely on the policy details specified by that parliamentarian or political party.

When an individual parliamentarian or a political party chooses to publicly release a PBO costing that has been prepared on a confidential basis for them, it is inappropriate to claim that the PBO has costed the policy of any other parliamentarian or political party.

Unless all of the policy specifications were identical, the financial implications of the policy could vary markedly …

That was a statement made back in August 2013. From memory, there have been a couple of others released since then but it's quite rare.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: Taking that on board, and your comments, Ms Reinhardt, it seems you now go back and forth and look for some documentation of policy to validate and back up the requests that the individual political party has made. You are looking for a connection from that party to the policy.

Ms Reinhardt: The comment I'd add is that we are used by parliamentarians in the formation of their policies as well as, in some cases, subsequent to announcements. We wouldn't necessarily expect there would be documentation in the public domain for every costing we're doing. We're working with parliamentarians on a costing they're requesting at the time with the specifications they're requiring.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: Thanks for that elaboration. I want to go to your pre-budget submission to the government. I'm aware that you have made a submission to the government pre-budget. What engagement have you had from the government on the funding request made by the PBO?

Ms Reinhardt: As with many agencies, prior to budgets we work with Finance on how our fiscal outlook is looking, the pressures on our agency and the work we're doing. The JCPAA has taken a lot of interest in our work. In my opening statement I talked to the fact we have had a significant growth in demand for the work of the PBO, which is a fantastic outcome for us and the parliament. We've worked with government on understanding what those pressures are, and it's for government as to whether there are any changes in our budget allocation.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: The expansion of the crossbench and the Greens in particular has led to the expansion in the demand that you face, and that's what you've been putting to government. Is that part of what you've been talking about?

Ms Reinhardt: I would say, coming into the organisation, there's been a greater engagement with the PBO across the parliament. During the 2024 calendar year we completed 1,209 requests from parliamentarians, which is just under three times the previous annual average—so there is a substantial expansion.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: A massive increase. The original $6 million financial buffer investment given to the PBO in addition to normal ongoing funds when it was established in 2012 has now, I understand, almost exhausted. Can you tell me why this fallback fund is important, and what would be the implications for the PBO's capacity if it were to run out?

Ms Reinhardt: The fallback fund is $1.8 million. It was established initially as a fund because there was uncertainty over the requirements of the ongoing PBO. I think it is for government to determine how they want to fund the PBO, whether it's ongoing or whether it's with buffers. It will always be the case that we will have to prioritise within the resources we're given.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: Of course, and that prioritisation is a really important part of, I imagine, your management tasks. You've just described a threefold increase in the work in the most recent full year relative to the year before, if I heard you correct. That buffer was originally put in place to deal with uncertainty about the level of demand that would be there. There's no uncertainty about what's unfolded; it's a threefold increase. That would, I would suggest, be the foundation for a strong case for replacement of that buffer. I'm not asking you to say what the government should do, but what would be the implications if that buffer was not replenished?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 249 of 375

Ms Reinhardt: I think there is a reasonable question about whether it's better to fund the PBO at the level it's at or at a higher level, or to replenish that buffer. As an organisation we would love to see both those things but we recognise there are choices across government that every government makes.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: If it were not provided in ongoing funding or in the form of a buffer—I'm not worried about which tool is used; I want to make sure the resources are there for a very important function for democracy. Setting aside the instrument, what would happen to your work if you didn't have that level of funding through the buffer or ongoing?

Ms Reinhardt: We would just continue to do the prioritisation process that we work through now. As you know, Senator, we work very closely with parliamentarians and parties. When they submit a large number of costings, we look to work to prioritise their priorities. We go back, I think, at the moment, at least on a weekly basis, to check in and say: 'Which of these are the most important for you? Which should we progress most quickly?' We aim to work through all of our SOCs. We have a 15-day turnaround for those that are active, but we have a longer period for those costings that we put on hold. So we would just continue that prioritisation process.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: But its terms would change, would they not? We're very familiar with that prioritisation and are admiring of the ongoing negotiation to get what we really think is important to us at the top of the list. If you're prioritising in the current resource environment, you will be prioritising a lot more vigorously and won't be able to, I imagine, do 1,209 requests. There are implications for how much work you'll be able to do. That's what I draw.

Ms Reinhardt: There are always implications.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: Thank you for your answers.

CHAIR: Thank you very much to the Parliamentary Budget Office. I'll place on record my own gratitude for the work that you've done for me. We will now move to the Department of Parliamentary Services. We'll note that the Parliamentary Service Commissioner will also appear where there are relevant intersecting questions.

Department of Parliamentary Services

[09:51]

CHAIR: I welcome Acting Secretary Ms Jaala Hinchcliffe and other officers of the Department of Parliamentary Services. I welcome Parliamentary Service Commissioner Dr Gordon de Brouwer. Ms Hinchcliffe, do you have an opening statement?

The President: I have an opening statement.

CHAIR: Please go ahead.

The President: Before the Department of Parliamentary Services officials answer your questions today, I would like to provide the committee with the following information relating to the former Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services. On 17 December 2024, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and I, in our roles as presiding officers, concluded the appointment of the former secretary, under section 61 of the Parliamentary Service Act 1999, due to a loss of trust and confidence. This decision was made after a report was considered by the Parliamentary Service Commissioner and after procedural fairness had been afforded. It was a decision that was not taken lightly. The former secretary was eligible for compensation, for early loss of office, in accordance with the relevant determination. Staff of DPS were informed via an all-staff email on 18 December 2024. I'll provide a copy of this opening statement and that email for tabling and for reference of the committee. Thank you.

CHAIR: Please go ahead, Ms Hinchcliffe. Do you, Dr de Brouwer, also have an opening statement?

Dr de Brouwer: No, I don't.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee and provide an opening statement relating to ongoing matters at the Department of Parliamentary Services. I will provide a copy of this statement for tabling and for the reference of the committee. My DPS colleagues and I welcome the opportunity to answer your questions today.

Before taking questions I'd like to provide the committee with the following information. As the committee was advised in the President's opening statement, Mr Stefanic's appointment as Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services concluded on 17 December 2024. Paragraph 12 of the Secretary, Department of Parliamentary Services, Remuneration and other Conditions for Appointment Determination provides for compensation for early loss of office for the DPS secretary. Mr Stefanic was eligible for compensation for early loss of office in accordance with that determination. This amounted to a payment of $141,220.29, gross. Mr

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 250 of 375

Stefanic was also entitled to the payment of his accrued leave, which amounted to $148,701.75, gross. The total net payment received was $153,660.04. This payment will be reported in the department's 2024-25 annual report.

The Presiding Officers have asked that I continue as acting secretary while a merit based selection process is undertaken to appoint a substantive secretary. Recruitment for the position has been advertised and is being conducted by the Parliamentary Service Commissioner, Dr Gordon de Brouwer PSM. It is appropriate for the committee to direct to the commissioner any questions in relation to that recruitment process.

At the November estimates hearing I advised that I had commissioned an independent fact-finding investigation by Dr Fiona Roughley SC to review the department's actions into the incentive-to-retire payment to a previous DPS deputy secretary. Dr Roughley's fact-finding investigation has not yet concluded. I'm unable to advise of next steps in relation to the report until Dr Roughley's findings have been provided to me and considered.

In my opening statement at the November estimates hearing I also confirmed that the National Anti-Corruption Commission had attended DPS's offices. As I stated at the hearing in November, any questions about any investigation that the NACC may be undertaking should be referred to the NACC, as I'm conscious that discussing the matters may inadvertently identify persons of interest, prematurely damage reputations and/or compromise an individual's right to impartial adjudication.

I'm pleased to announce that the Magna Carta was returned to public display on 4 December 2024 on level 1 of the Members Hall. The Magna Carta will remain on display in 2025 but will require periods of rest during future years to ensure its long-term preservation. Returning this piece to public display is a testament to the efforts of DPS staff across many areas of the department.

Finally, I'd like to confirm to the committee my commitment to serve as acting secretary. I'm supported by dedicated staff who continue to demonstrate commitment to our purpose, display the parliamentary values in all aspects of our work and work diligently to maintain Australian Parliament House as a centre of Australian democracy. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Hinchcliffe. Senator Hume.

Senator HUME: Thank you to both the President and the acting secretary for those statements that clarify a number of questions I had for you. Just for the sake of completeness, Ms Hinchcliffe, I think you said at the last estimates that the Roughley report was due by end of the year, but you're saying it's not complete now?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: That's right. It hasn't been provided to me yet. There were some additional witnesses that Dr Roughley needed to speak to, and she's been speaking to them. I believe there's one more witness to be spoken to.

Senator HUME: Right.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I expect to receive that in the near future, but she is still conducting her investigation.

Senator HUME: Okay. Specifically, the Roughley report was around the matters surrounding conflicts of interest, particularly the arrangements that were made for the former deputy secretary's incentive to retire. Is that right?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: It was particularly in relation to the department's actions in relation to the payment of the incentive to retire.

Senator HUME: Right.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I can take you through the terms of reference, if you—

Senator HUME: No, no. That's alright. I'm pretty sure we did that—

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I think we did that at the last estimates hearing.

Senator HUME: Okay. Thank you. You also said at the time that you were hoping to provide a copy of that report to the committee.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I'm still hopeful that there are parts of it that I'll be able to release. It will of course depend on what's in the report and what recommendations Dr Roughley makes. For example, if she makes recommendations that I refer things to other agencies for investigation, then I will need to consider any considerations around that as well. So it will really depend on what's in that report as to what I'm able to do with it. But the fact that I was very transparent about us doing it and what that meant was part of my consideration that this was something I would need to share through the future with this committee. That goes to the way that we have used taxpayers' money.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Senator HUME: Yes. I might direct questions to the APSC about the selection process for a replacement for the secretary. What's the process and how is that proceeding?

Dr de Brouwer: As requested by the Presiding Officers, I'm running an open merit-based selection process to inform my report to the Presiding Officers on the vacancy in the role of Secretary of the Department of Parliamentary Services, as required under section 59 of the act. As for what we've done so far, I've put together a panel, and the panel comprises me; the Clerk of the House, Ms Clarissa Surtees; the Clerk of the Senate, Mr Richard Pye; and the New South Wales Public Service Commissioner, Ms Kathrina Lo, as an external representative. We shortlisted a number of candidates, we interviewed them last week, we're in the process of preparing our report for the Presiding Officers this week and we'll present that to them. As part of that—maybe I should stop there, Senator. Does that give you enough?

Senator HUME: That's good. So, from that shortlist, you will then present a list to the Presiding Officers?

Dr de Brouwer: That's right. It's very similar to the Parliamentary Budget Office, where the Presiding Officers asked me as Parliamentary Service Commissioner to run a process for them to interview and select some candidates. We provided a shortlist to the Presiding Officers, they met with some of the candidates and they made their decision on that basis. Our intention is that we'll do the same for the Secretary of DPS.

Senator HUME: How soon do you think you'll get that shortlist to the Presiding Officers?

Dr de Brouwer: I'm expecting it to be this week. We're intending to complete our report this week and we'll provide it to the Presiding Officers.

Senator HUME: What's the process once the shortlist gets to the Presiding Officers?

The President: We'll talk together about the candidates. As the Parliamentary Service Commissioner said, we interviewed the two recommended people for the PBO. It may be that we talk to the shortlisted candidates and then—

Senator HUME: You'll interview the candidates?

The President: Yes, we may do so.

Senator HUME: You and the Speaker?

The President: Yes.

Senator HUME: You do as a matter of course?

The President: No. We may, depending on—

Senator HUME: But you might.

The President: Yes. With the PBO, there were two very strong candidates, so we chose to meet with them and speak to them to make a decision.

Senator HUME: How many are on the shortlist?

Dr de Brouwer: Four.

Senator HUME: Was the position advertised publicly?

Dr de Brouwer: Yes, it was. It was advertised in the press. It was online and also in print in the *Australian* and the *AFR*.

Senator HUME: How long has that process been underway?

Dr de Brouwer: It started in early January, after the previous secretary left his role. We consulted and then put out a job ad and prepared that material from early January.

Senator HUME: Did you use a recruiting firm?

Dr de Brouwer: We've been using our senior talent management team within the commission to do that, in the same way that we've been doing for secretaries of Public Service departments and for the PBO. And then we use a firm for the interviews themselves—for the conduct of the interviews. We use their premises so people can come in and out.

Senator HUME: But not for the advertising?

Dr de Brouwer: No, we did that ourselves.

Senator HUME: You do the advertising and the first-cut process?

Dr de Brouwer: We do that ourselves.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 252 of 375

Senator HUME: Considering that we're about to face an election and there may well be a change of Presiding Officers—I wouldn't be so presumptuous—has the department put any consideration into delaying the appointment?

The President: I've asked the Parliamentary Service Commissioner to keep the Deputy President informed, so I believe that will happen. I've kept the Deputy President informed of both the termination and the process for the appointment of a new DPS secretary. I don't think it's in DPS's interests to continue with acting staff.

Senator HUME: Although the acting staff are very high quality.

The President: They are very competent, but it's not in the interests of the department to continue this way.

Senator HUME: Can I ask just a couple of questions to clarify some of the things that were raised earlier. I think you mentioned there was $140,000 or so in accrued leave. Was it $148,000? Is that right?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: That's right. There was $148,000 gross in relation to accrued leave.

Senator HUME: When the secretary was on leave, what type of leave was he on when it was unpaid? He wasn't required to use any of that leave when he was away?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: He was on miscellaneous paid leave for the period that he was away.

Senator HUME: So he was on paid leave when he was away, and that came off his accrued leave entitlements?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: No.

Senator HUME: Acting Secretary, at the last estimates we discussed the record-keeping matter and that it had been inadequate and potentially had prevented the presiding officers from undertaking their duties appropriately. In particular, there seemed to be a lack of records kept by the former secretary of actions he took to manage his own conflict. Presiding Officers obviously have a role in managing conflicts of the secretary, but, if there are inadequate records, it's very difficult for them to do so. The President noted it was impossible for her to do that because it hadn't been disclosed, and that's fair enough too. We discussed at the last estimates whether the department would be reviewing governance arrangements. I'm wondering whether you have done any of that and what steps have been taken.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: We've reviewed all of our information management policies, and I believe they are just about to go out. They're our record-keeping policies. We're in the process of reviewing our conflicts-of-interest policy as well. You'll remember from our conflicts-of-interest policy that we have a February reporting for the annual declaration. We're just going through that process at the moment for people to do their annual declarations. I've already done my declaration to the Presiding Officers, and a number of the SES have already done theirs as well. We will look through that process, particularly for the way that I can manage the SES conflicts—about me seeing all of those conflicts-of-interest declarations at the one time—and make sure that we have strong management plans in place and then that we have a process to be able to look at those throughout the year to make sure that the management plans are being complied with and to see whether any changes need to happen. Of course, when people change jobs within the department, they should look at their conflicts afresh, and, again, when there's any change of circumstance, people should be looking at their conflicts of interest and declaring them.

Senator HUME: When will that new policy be completed?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I am hopeful that it will be completed before the end of this financial year. It's being worked on at the moment.

Senator HUME: Is that policy document something you can share with this committee?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: Of course.

Senator HUME: Thank you. Chair, I have more questions but I'm wondering whether you want to rotate the call.

CHAIR: Senator Shoebridge.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I think Senator Pocock has one follow-up question.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: I have a follow-up on the miscellaneous leave. What's the definition of miscellaneous leave, and how many weeks did Mr Stefanic have on miscellaneous leave?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I might need to take that on notice for you.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: Thank you. Could you also let us know who else has taken such miscellaneous leave—

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 253 of 375

Ms J Hinchcliffe: Of course.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: within the service in recent times, who authorises it and what reasons were given for this particular case?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: Sure. I'll take that on notice.

Senator BARBARA POCOCK: Thank you.

CHAIR: Senator Shoebridge.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I have some questions that perhaps Mr Fox might be best placed to answer. In 2021 DPS was sued by journalist Marcus Reubenstein. It was a vicarious liability claim in relation to a series of publications that were made by a senior researcher, Dr Geoffrey Wade, while he was working and on the company dime. Do you remember that legal action against DPS?

Mr Fox: I was not in the role in that period. I have been in that role for about 18 months, so it precedes my time as Parliamentary Librarian.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Do you remember the litigation against DPS?

Mr Fox: No, I do not.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Does anyone have any institutional memory of the proceedings?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I suspect that there's no-one here that was here at the time, but we can answer the questions that we can answer and take others on notice.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: In answers to an earlier round of estimates, it was clear that the then departmental secretary, Mr Stefanic, attended the mediation for those proceedings, and either he or another senior officer was a signatory to a final deed of settlement which saw the Commonwealth make a significant payment as a result of the actions of Dr Wade. Would you produce to this committee the deed of settlement that was entered into?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I'll take that on notice and consider whether we're able to, under the terms of the deed.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I'm not asking about the terms of the deed.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I'll take the matter on notice.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Ms Hinchcliffe, you would know that the terms of the deed could not override parliamentary privilege. You'd know that, wouldn't you?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I appreciate that and I know that you also wouldn't want me to do something that was not legally possible for me to do, so I'll take it on notice, see what the terms are and then I'll come back to you.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I'm pushing back on your suggestion that if there's something in the deed that says 'confidentiality' that obviously wouldn't answer the enquiry—to be clear that we're on the same page.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I take your point.

CHAIR: Ms Hinchcliffe understands the powers of this committee but also that she has the ability to make a public interest immunity claim, should it be in the public interest.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I understand that. So that we can be clear, was the amount paid in settlement by the Commonwealth to Mr Reubenstein $110,000 or some other amount? If it was another amount, can you please identify that amount?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I'll take all of that on notice for you.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: If the amount paid under the deed was a set figure and you can provide us with that, were there any other payments made by the Commonwealth, including to their legal costs and what, if any, legal costs were incurred?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I'll take all of that on notice for you.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Were there any restrictions, or was there any action taken, against Dr Wade for costing the Commonwealth more than $100,000 because of the actions he undertook while he was working for the Commonwealth? Was any action taken against Dr Wade?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I'll have to take that on notice.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: When did you say you commenced, Mr Fox?

Mr Fox: On 18 September 2023.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: In November 2023, a series of questions were put to DPS by an independent media outlet asking if they were aware that Dr Wade was engaging in further social media commentary during work

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 254 of 375

hours on X under the pseudonym Matsalleh Merah? You were the Parliamentary Librarian at the time. Do you remember those enquiries being directed?

Mr Fox: I recall the enquiries, but they were made to the secretary at the time, Mr Stefanic.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Was any investigation done as to whether or not Dr Wade was, during work hours, using that X account?

Mr Fox: I'll need to take that on notice because that was handled by the office of the secretary at the time. Mr Stefanic was the officer who had the questions directed at him.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Can you clarify whether or not, between Mr Stefanic and Dr Wade, you as a Parliamentary Librarian—are you in the intermediate management chain?

Mr Fox: Yes, I am.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Are you saying you weren't in any way involved in that?

Mr Fox: I was not.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: That would seem peculiar, wouldn't it, that the secretary engages directly with somebody in your employ in the Parliamentary Library, and you're totally unaware of it?

Mr Fox: That was the arrangement that was—I'm speculating here—possible because of the previous issues that were around that you've been asking questions about.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Why are you speculating its relation to previous issues? Did you have some knowledge?

Mr Fox: Because I can't speak for Mr Stefanic's reason for handling that matter, apart from the fact that questions were directed at him.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: That X account did engage in quite aggressive political commentary, aggressive political attacks, and it was happening during work hours. Was any action taken against Dr Wade in relation to, again, doing that?

Ms Hinder: I'm the acting deputy secretary and the chief operating officer, so I have the HR portfolio within my remit. I'm very happy to take that question on notice. I understand that there was some consideration. I'm not aware what that consideration was or what it actually found, but I'm very willing to take that on notice and come back to you.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Was there an investigation following that questioning in November of 2023?

Ms Hinder: To be absolutely confident about my response, I'd like to take that on notice. I am aware that HR has had some involvement, but what that involvement was, and what that constituted, I'd like to be able to confirm.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: We're left in a somewhat uncomfortable situation where we have the whole of the senior management team of the department here and nobody can even answer whether or not an HR investigation was undertaken in relation to a senior researcher for questions that were asked in November of 2023. Given the number of people we have here—and I could name them all—no-one can shed any light on this?

The President: That's a little unfair because the officers have indicated to you they were not the officers at the time. They are doing their best to assist and they have taken it on notice.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: That's not true. Mr Fox was the Parliamentary Librarian at the time.

The President: And he's indicated to you that the matter was handled by the former secretary. Ms Hinchcliffe has taken the matter on notice, as has Ms Hinder. It is unfair to make that accusation—that somehow they have knowledge of this event.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I didn't make that accusation. You're making that accusation.

The President: I think that's what you're implying.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: If you wish to make that accusation, you're entitled to.

The President: They have indicated they were not the officers at the time.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I didn't make that accusation, and you mischaracterised their evidence.

The President: You mischaracterised it.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: You've put words in my mouth and you've mischaracterised my evidence. It's unhelpful when you do that.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 255 of 375

The President: And you're being unhelpful by making the sweeping generalisation that somehow these officers should know something that happened before they were there.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: To be clear, I don't know if you heard Mr Fox's evidence. Did you hear Mr Fox's evidence that he was the Parliamentary Librarian—

The President: I did indeed, and he said it was handled by the former secretary—

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Would you let me finish my question. Did you hear Mr Fox's evidence that he was the Parliamentary Librarian and had managerial oversight of Dr Wade at the time the questions were directed?

The President: I heard the whole of his evidence, which was that the former secretary dealt with this matter.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Was any disciplinary action taken against Dr Wade as a result of, again, his inappropriate use of X?

Ms Hinder: I'm very happy to include that as part of my response when I come back to you.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Has Dr Wade informed the department that he's commenced his own litigation against a series of media outlets? Has he informed you of that fact?

Ms Hinder: We are aware that private proceedings have been launched.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Has Dr Wade informed you that it's likely to involve significant engagement about his work and his activities at work, which may well involve yet more Commonwealth resources? Has he informed you of that?

Ms Hinder: At the moment, my understanding is that the private legal matter has just commenced. We have not yet had an understanding as to what, if any, departmental involvement or information might be required, but we are very aware that there is a private matter that has been launched.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: There's an obligation, isn't there, on people working for the DPS to be mindful of potential conflicts of interest and to advise their employer of potential conflicts of interest. Has Dr Wade advised the DPS that these proceedings may amount to a conflict of interest as they will inevitably traverse his work as a parliamentary librarian?

Ms Hinder: As the acting secretary has indicated, we are paying very close attention to conflicts of interest across the department at the moment. I personally have not sighted Dr Wade's conflict, but I'll do so and then come back to the committee.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: You say 'his conflict', so has he—

Ms Hinder: If there is a potential conflict that has been identified by Dr Wade.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: So you're not aware if he has—just to be clear. Is that true?

Ms Hinder: What I'm saying is I have not sighted his conflict. I'm not saying whether or not he has or has not declared one.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Alright. There is an obligation though, isn't there, to notify your employer of it as soon as you're aware of a potential conflict.

Ms Hinder: There's an obligation on all DPS staff to be mindful of their personal and work interactions and to declare possible or potential conflicts as they arise.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: On notice, can you provide any such notice of conflict to the committee, if one has been made, and indicate on what date any such conflict was made.

Ms Hinder: I'm happy to take that on notice.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Just so it is absolutely unambiguous, can whoever is in a position in DPS to answer this advise if there was an investigation of the X account Matsalleh Merah matter and whether or not Dr Wade confirmed he was the author of or the owner of such an account.

Ms Hinder: Again, I'm happy to take that on notice.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: If there was an investigation of the Twitter account, what conclusions, if any, were made in relation to that investigation?

Ms Hinder: Again, I'm happy to take that on notice.

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: I understand it was deleted a few days after the queries were made to DPS. If the investigation hit a blank wall because it was deleted, were any actions taken against Dr Wade for deleting an obviously necessary source of information for an investigation by HR?

Ms Hinder: Again, I'll take that on notice.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 256 of 375

Senator SHOEBRIDGE: Thank you.

CHAIR: Senator Hume.

Senator HUME: I have some questions regarding some questions on notice from the last Senate estimates. Acting Secretary, you said something that was very dear to my heart. You said:

… in my career as a public servant I have constantly thought about the fact that every single dollar that I spend is taxpayers' money …

I entirely agree with you. I just want to ask a question about question on notice No. 114. In response to that question the department confirmed that under the former deputy secretary, Ms Saunders, the department commissioned some bespoke furniture for her office to the value of $56,702.80. Is that correct?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: Senator, I've still got the QON without the figures all added up, but if you have added those figures and it makes the amount that you've just said—

Senator HUME: Yes.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: then that's correct. I just can't do that maths in my head anymore.

Senator HUME: That's okay; neither can I before a cup of coffee. The cost was $8,680 for a table, $24,260.14 for a wall unit, $19,200 for a desk and $4,562.80 for a fridge.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: That's right, Senator.

Senator HUME: Thank you. In response to the question, the department has justified the expense, calling it:

an opportunity for department staff to utilise and expand on their skills base and increase the department's capacity to undertake complex furniture manufacturing and restoration work internally.

That's not a serious response, surely.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: The furniture is beautiful and was manufactured in-house by our staff. They have done amazing work on it. I don't know the reason—I wasn't here—why it was decided that this furniture would be manufactured or that it would be manufactured in-house or that it would be manufactured to this quality. However, I can tell you that this is what the furniture was, and this is what it cost.

Senator HUME: It concerns me that somehow this has been turned into a professional development exercise. You are saying that you can't tell me who made the request for the furniture to be commissioned or the date that it was requested or who approved that expenditure.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I can take those questions on notice for you. I suspect that someone will be able to tell me the answer to that. I don't have that knowledge with me at the moment, so I'll take that on notice.

Senator HUME: Were the Presiding Officers told of this expenditure at the time?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I don't know. I can take that on notice.

The President: No, we weren't.

Senator HUME: I wouldn't have imagined so. The response from the department states that the furniture is now in use in your office. Is that correct?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: Since this response was written, I have moved one office up, into the secretary's office, so it's now, in fact, in the acting deputy's office.

Senator HUME: I understand. If your predecessors have commissioned this extraordinary furniture, I'm glad that at least some of it is being used. But I want to ask about the desk that cost nearly $20,000. Where is that?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: It's in storage. I have to admit to you that I didn't realise there was a desk for that office until the answer to the QON came to me. So it's in DPS storage. I suspect it is somewhere in Parliament House, but I can get that answer for you.

Senator HUME: A $20,000 desk is in storage, which is just extraordinary. Is there anybody who can explain why this desk isn't usable?

Ms Hinder: I don't think that it's a question as to whether or not the desk is usable. The desk is simply not in the office. I understand that the desk is usable and workable and it's currently in storage. Now, whether or not it's in storage because the then deputy secretary decided that she would prefer to not have a sit-stand desk—I can't answer that. What I can say is that the desk that's in the deputy's office at the moment is a standard office desk.

Senator HUME: Sorry—so the one that is in storage is usable?

Ms Hinder: I understand it is usable and it's workable.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 257 of 375

Senator HUME: In response to question on notice 145, I note that the department is building multiple sit-stand desks for parliamentarians, and they are doing that at a cost of $35,359, and this is what is known as 'class A furniture'. Is that correct?

Ms Hinder: As to DPS's responsibilities, in terms of the provision of furniture and support for all parliamentarians, there is a range of office equipment that is being sourced at all times.

Senator HUME: In relation to question on notice 145, though, there are multiple sit-stand desks for parliamentarians and they are costing $35,359?

Ms Hinder: I have 145 with a different response. Could you tell me if that was a question that we took in November, or was it February of last year?

Senator HUME: That is a very good question. Let me see if I can find the actual QON; did I bring it with me or did I just bring my summary? So what was the number that you had?

Ms Hinder: Question 145 from the November estimates—

Senator HUME: Yes?

Ms Hinder: That refers to just the general facility upgrades happening at the agency's premises.

Senator HUME: So there is no detail about what it costs—what is being spent on parliamentarians' desks?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I've got a version here. So this is in relation to the table that's on the next page of the QON—is that right?—and then it has the sit-stand desks for parliamentarians. Yes, there's a year-to-date expenditure—

Senator HUME: Right. There is—

Ms J Hinchcliffe: there, of $35,359. I'm not aware of how many desks that relates to. I can find that out for you on notice.

Senator HUME: Well, if it's anything like the desk that's in storage, it relates to 1.85 desks.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I will take on notice to find out how many desks that relates to.

Senator HUME: Okay. I note that, from time to time, some furniture is made specifically for occupants in this place, and, nominally, it is usually parliamentarians, for which we are very much held accountable, and you have to disclose, as part of that process, contracts of various sizes in your annual report. Unless I had been given knowledge of this expenditure by someone who thought it was inappropriate, how would I have known? How would the department have to report or where would the department report this? Where could I have found it to scrutinise it if I had not asked for it?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: In relation to the deputy secretary's furniture—

Senator HUME: Yes.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I think that's a really good question and a question in relation to some thinking that we are doing about, broadly, the transparency and accountability of our work as a department on our capital works program and our maintenance work within the building, which would include work that we do for ourselves as a department, but work that we do across the building as well, and I think that what you've raised shows us that our thinking is right—that there's a gap and that we need to look at ways that we can be more transparent about that expenditure. As I said before, we're spending that money on taxpayers' behalf, and we do that because taxpayers, the people of Australia, say that you are their representatives, and we serve you because we are serving them. So we need to be accountable for all of that money that we spend. So I will take on board your comment and feed it into the way that we think about that transparency and accountability about the money that we are spending.

Senator HUME: On the $20,000 desk that is currently sitting in storage, is there anybody special enough in Parliament House to get a $20,000 desk? Are we going to leave it in storage until we find somebody special enough? Is it going to go to a prime minister? What's it going to do?

Senator McGRATH: Could we sell it?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: As I said, I didn't even realise that the desk was in storage until I read the answer to the QON.

Senator HUME: Maybe we could put it next to the Magna Carta.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: We will do some investigation about the desk and what good use it could be put to.

Senator HUME: Thank you. I have some more questions about some changes in leadership within the department. I had a question on notice, 122, in response to which the department provided an outline that there'd been some further changes to the executive team between May and November 2024. I think you said that there

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 258 of 375

were 22 departures and 11 hires, and you provided a table that shows a net gain of seven, but there are still four vacancies. Is that correct?

Ms Hinder: At the SES level, there are a number of vacancies. Obviously, the Parliamentary Service Commissioner is undertaking the recruitment process for the new secretary. We also have an active round at the moment for our assistant secretary of the finance operations branch. Interviews for that will be occurring in the first week of March. The remainder of the vacant positions have actually been advertised. Interviews were held last week. A report is expected this week, and we expect to settle the SES cohort shortly thereafter. It's a key priority for the acting secretary to be able to settle the SES cohort, noting that we've had long-term acting arrangements in place.

Senator HUME: Thank you. The position of chief information security officer was vacant. Is that one still vacant?

Ms Hinder: That one is vacant, as well as our CISO, our information security officer. Interviews for those two positions were held in December, and that process, I understand, is fairly close to being finalised.

Senator HUME: Terrific. I again put on notice the question that I put on notice last time, question 122, so that we can get an update next time around. That would be helpful.

Ms Hinder: I can actually give you numbers now, Senator.

Senator HUME: Terrific. Yes, please.

Ms Hinder: In our PEL 1 level, we've had 28 departures and 30 onboards. For our PEL 2 level, we've had 10 departures and 11 onboards. At the SES level, we have had two departures and we have eight onboards, but I do note that, of those eight, a number of us are counted twice, so, in reality, it's six. I take up two of those positions because I've permanently transferred and I'm acting.

Senator HUME: That's terrific. Thank you.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: Those figures are from 1 July through to February so that you can see that across the financial—

Senator HUME: To the beginning of February?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: You can see it across the financial year.

Senator HUME: Fantastic. Thank you very much. I appreciate that. But, just for the sake of making sure I wrote it down correctly, could you also provide the table on notice.

Ms Hinder: Absolutely.

Senator HUME: Thank you. That would be great. I have some questions regarding the Magna Carta—nothing to do with the desk that's going to be on display next to it, I promise.

CHAIR: Senator Hume, I'm due to rotate the call. I will ask you how many questions you have left before I do so, just in case you—

Senator HUME: I can cover off the Magna Carta, but I do have some more questions after that, so probably at least 10 minutes.

CHAIR: Okay. That being the case, I will rotate the call, unless, of course, Senator O'Sullivan wants to cede his time.

Senator HUME: No, Senator O'Sullivan can—

CHAIR: I know Senator Hume will be here anyway, so Senator O'Sullivan can take the call.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Okay. I need about 10 minutes.

CHAIR: And then I'll come to Senator Pocock.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Thank you. I have some questions about cybersecurity and our devices.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I'll ask our Chief Information Officer, Mr Lawson, to come to the table.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Thanks, Mr Lawson. Are parliamentarians briefed on their responsibilities regarding cybersecurity and misinformation?

Mr Lawson: The short answer to that is yes. We have a range of different humancentric cyberdefence activities that we undertake, including regular briefs to parliamentarians, especially—

Senator O'SULLIVAN: How regular are they?

Mr Lawson: It really depends on what a parliamentarian is doing. For example, a parliamentarian that's travelling will be subjected to a brief as part of the requirements to travel and take work issued devices. We also

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 259 of 375

run periodic programs where we'll meet with parliamentarians and frontline staff and talk about good cyber practices within offices.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: In terms of those good cyber practices, what advice has been given to parliamentarians in relation to them believing their phone has been hacked? What should they do?

Mr Lawson: Quite simply, Senator, the thing that they should do first and foremost is contact us and seek assistance from DPS. Parliamentarians travel and are in a range of different situations where devices can be more exposed to being compromised. The actions that we may take depend on the behaviour that a parliamentarian may observe on a device. So contacting the DPS cybersecurity section is first thing that they should do.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Okay. What processes does DPS have in place to verify whether a parliamentarian's ICT assets have been compromised?

Mr Lawson: It depends on the asset itself. For devices like laptops, we will have some greater telemetry and different cybersecurity capabilities that we can look at. Then there are devices like smartphones and tablets, Senator, which are a bit more of a closed shop, and that's the way that Apple as a vendor, for example, designs them. In those situations, it may be difficult for us to determine.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: If there's been a public record that a parliamentarian's phone or their computer has been hacked or it's claimed that it's been hacked, does DPS proactively investigate that?

Mr Lawson: Typically, we would. We would reach out to a parliamentarian and offer assistance.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Has DPS issued any advice in relation to the use of WhatsApp?

Mr Lawson: We haven't issued any advice in relation to WhatsApp. I probably should just point out that DPS run what we refer to as a more permissive network—I think that's the best way to describe it—because parliamentarians require a range of different software to undertake their tasks. So we implement government policy and advice around blocks. If there's a piece of software with a particular threat profile, we may make a decision to block it, but otherwise, no—not in regard to WhatsApp.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Okay. I'm just going to table a couple of documents. Firstly, there's a media report of an MP claiming their phone was hacked. There's also a letter that I've sent to the AFP in relation to this, which was copied to the secretary, and also a response that I've had from the secretary in relation to this matter.

On 13 December I wrote to the AFP, and copied in the department, about my concerns regarding the media reporting of an incident with the member for Tangney's phone and WhatsApp account where a hurtful and damaging message was sent via WhatsApp to a group of community members and leaders. To make matters worse, the message purported to quote the Prime Minister. Are you familiar with this?

Mr Lawson: I am familiar with this matter, yes.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Just so we understand the seriousness of this incident as reported across multiple national media outlets, the message from Mr Lim read:

When PM was confronted by the Murdoch mercenaries, and others: he said

"… Mr Netanyahu should consider that the bombing of a synagogue in Australia is likely the manifestation of a few despondent radicals who had had enough of the continued aerial bombing of thousands of innocent children and women in Gaza by his single-minded troops. Australia is a robust democracy. We do not encourage violence to those whom we do not warm to. If he continues to blame me and other world leaders, he might well be remembered in history as another hegemon who blamed everyone else for his crime against innocent civilians."

As I'm sure you'd expect, the response from community leaders to the reporting of this deeply hurtful and dangerous message was swift and strong, calling for answers and accountability, yet we've not seen that from Mr Lim. You've said that it's incumbent upon a member of parliament, if they believe that their phone has been hacked, to report that. Mr Lim, as you'll see in the media article that I've tabled here, claims that his phone was compromised and that it was hacked. Firstly, has this issue been reported to you?

Mr Lawson: Firstly, I'll just caveat my remarks with the following, recognising there's media interest around this: we typically don't talk about interactions that we would have with individual parliamentarians. There are obviously services that we provide holistically to the parliament, but, with discretion and the nature of DPS as a service provider, we don't talk about the details of individual interactions. I will say that, as per my previous testimony to you, when the media reports were brought to our attention, we contacted Mr Lim's office.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Have you investigated this matter?

Mr Lawson: We've worked closely with Mr Lim's office and we have undertaken a range of different actions, including recovery of the device and also we've run some human-centric cyber information sessions.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 260 of 375

Senator O'SULLIVAN: What can you tell us? Was the phone compromised?

Mr Lawson: As I said, we don't talk to the specific details of interactions with parliamentarians. As I also mentioned earlier, there are some devices where it's quite difficult for us to determine whether a compromise has occurred or not. The reports of situations like this are relatively rare. When they do come through, out of an abundance of caution, we often offer to parliamentarians to change the device out.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: In the letter that I received back from the secretary, DPS mentioned that there are layered security protocols. Can you explain, in layman's terms, what that actually means?

Mr Lawson: Yes. There are lots of different controls that we have in the environment. We use what's referred to in the industry as a swiss-cheese model. Essentially, the premise of this is that no layer of protection is perfect. We have multiple layers in line, which means that, if a threat were to penetrate one particular layer, it would be caught by another. This is fairly common in cybersecurity as an industry writ large. There's a range of nuance to the different layers that we have.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Given the security protocols that are in place, it would seem to me, from what you're saying, that members of parliament should be confident about their phones that have been issued by DPS and that there are protocols in place that would prevent the incident of a phone being hacked and compromised. Is that right? Should we be confident here?

Mr Lawson: You should be confident, Senator, but nothing is perfect. It's important to understand that the cybersecurity threat environment is pervasive and parliamentarians and their staff are high-value targets. We do have very modern capabilities in place with our cybersecurity, and we work closely with the security and intelligence agencies.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Mr Lim has claimed that his phone was hacked. Is this true?

Mr Lawson: I can't answer that question. I don't know the answer to that question, sorry.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Has Mr Lim requested any advice or assistance from DPS in securing his devices since making this claim?

Mr Lawson: As I said, we proactively reached out to Mr Lim and we engaged in a range of activities there to support his needs and also to support the broader parliament security, which is one of our key responsibilities.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: If a parliamentarian falsely claims that their device was hacked, does DPS have a responsibility to correct the record to maintain trust in parliament cyber protections?

Mr Lawson: That's not a matter for me. We would engage with the parliamentarian to undertake our duties, and that is to provide support around device security and other IT needs that a parliamentarian has.

CHAIR: I am sure Mr Lim is grateful for DPS's advice on these matters. Do you have many more questions?

Senator O'SULLIVAN: I do have more questions. My question is: if someone falsely claims that their phone was hacked—a DPS issued phone and a DPS account—is the department obliged to correct the record for the confidence that other MPs and, in fact, the nation at large can have in our IT systems?

Mr Lawson: I think that, if there's an interaction directly with a parliamentarian and we have advice contrary to their view, then we would provide that advice openly and transparently back to the requester.

Ms Hinder: The DPS obligations are absolute in terms of providing high-quality, secure ICT systems available for parliamentarian use. In terms of us providing that confidence, we do that every day, in terms of the provision of equipment and in terms of the high-quality support that we provide. I would find it unusual for the department to go out and indicate, for any parliamentarian, specifics relating to their personal use of an ICT asset. What the department will do, though, is continue to provide the confidence that we have multiple levels of systems in place to be able to counter cybersecurity risks. There is also an obligation that is clearly explained to every provider that we give an ICT asset to that they be able to make sure that they are using their equipment in such a manner that prevents covert use.

CHAIR: Senator O'Sullivan, I'm just going to pause you there. It was remiss of me to not reflect on the fact that it does not appear that we have any further questions for Dr de Brouwer. Is that correct? May I ask, Senator Hume: do you have questions for Dr de Brouwer separate to his appearance with DPS?

Senator HUME: Potentially, but potentially not, so why don't we just keep Dr de Brouwer here for a little longer.

CHAIR: Okay. I flag that once Senator O'Sullivan has finished his questions, depending on how long we have, we are going to need to take a break, because we have moved past the morning tea break. People need to be able to get up from the table. Senator O'Sullivan.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 261 of 375

Senator O'SULLIVAN: I've only got a few more. Have you seen reporting where Mr Lim was asked to clarify what was meant by 'Murdoch mercenaries'—whether it was someone from Murdoch University—and Mr Lim clarified nearly six hours later from sending the original message that it was the mainstream media?

Ms Hinder: I don't believe that that's something that DPS can answer.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: President?

CHAIR: Senator O'Sullivan—

The President: It's nothing to do with me, Senator O'Sullivan; it's a media report. I'm not commenting on that. I haven't seen it.

CHAIR: Senator O'Sullivan, you should reflect on the fact that these are not the kinds of questions that DPS is going to know the answer to. I appreciate that you might have a political motive in asking them and seeking to get them on the *Hansard*—and that you are able to ask any question you wish. But I do want it to be acknowledged that answers to these questions would be outside the purview of what would be considered reasonable for DPS to be able to answer.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: The curiosity that I've got is that a message was sent in the morning and then six hours later another message was sent. At no time was there any claim that the phone was hacked until there was media reporting on this. I'm trying to get to the point as to whether or not Mr Lim's phone was, in fact, hacked, or whether he is conveniently claiming it was hacked when he had just simply misquoted the Prime Minister?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I think that's a question for the member rather than a question for us.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: But is there any evidence in relation to his phone being hacked?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: We've given you evidence about what we've done in this matter. That's the evidence that we can give. Any other questions about what the member did are questions for the member.

CHAIR: And I think, Senator O'Sullivan—

Senator McGRATH: So how many phones of parliamentarians have been hacked in the last 12 months?

Mr Lawson: I'll have to take that on notice. I want to make sure that I provide the correct information.

Senator McGRATH: Have there been phones hacked?

Mr Lawson: I'll need to take that on notice. As I mentioned previously, phones and tablets can be difficult to determine if there's a successful compromise due to the closed-shop nature of Apple's operating system on them. Often we will have indications that there are issues with the device, but it is very difficult for us to tell. So, in those particular circumstances, out of an abundance of caution, we usually recycle, refresh the device for a parliamentarian.

Senator McGRATH: Without referring to the case that my colleague is talking about, how many parliamentarians have come forward—I'm not asking for names obviously—to say that their devices, in whatever form, have been hacked?

Mr Lawson: I'll take that on notice. We should be able to get that for you—

Senator McGRATH: Could we get that today if that's possible? We're not talking about thousands of cases here; there are only 226 or 227 of us—76 senators, to be precise. That would be good. If we could get that—

Mr Lawson: I imagine my teams will be looking it up right now.

Senator McGRATH: Thank you, team.

CHAIR: Senator Pocock, you have the call.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I want a quick update on sponsored passes. Could we get an updated number of how many passes are currently active.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: On 10 February, the updated number of sponsored passes was 2,179.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Thank you. Is the highest number of passes sponsored by an individual still 44? Do we have a new winner?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: On 10 February, the highest number was 43.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: At the last estimates, we spoke about the sponsored passes that were personally issued by Mr Stefanic. At the time, you confirmed that he was sponsoring four passes and that you hadn't had the opportunity to look at whether those pass arrangements were still appropriate. I'm interested in whether you reviewed those passes and whether they're still active.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 262 of 375

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I then provided you with an answer to your QON, saying that there were then two sponsored passes. We discussed, at the last estimates, the process that is gone through when a person who sponsors passes—whether it be a member, a senator or, in this case, the secretary—leaves their employment in the building. We went through that process, which was where those two remaining sponsored passholders were written to and it was indicated that the sponsorship would be ending, and for them to consider whether they needed to seek someone else to sponsor their passes. As I understand it, they definitely have ceased being sponsored by the secretary. I can't comment on whether they've sought sponsorship from somewhere else. They haven't sought sponsorship from me.

To be perfectly clear, when we're talking about sponsored passes, in this case we're talking about the orange sponsored passes. There is also a teal or aqua coloured pass—it depends on how you print the policy—which is for local recognised elders and custodians. There are five of those passes. They can only be sponsored by the Presiding Officers or by the Secretary of DPS, so I have taken on the sponsoring of those five passes. They're not the orange passes—

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I understand.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: they're a different sort. So I have none of the orange passes, but I've taken on the sponsorship of those—is it aqua, do we think? I think they're aqua passes.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Thank you very much. So those passes are no longer valid, but they may have sought sponsored passes from someone else?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: Yes.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: When you reviewed them, did you think that they were appropriate?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I saw that they had met the conditions of the pass policy, and that's what I answered in the QON.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: It's a low bar, though; it seems like a very low bar. And it seems like Mr Stefanic was one of the only secretaries to sponsor passes. Given that he's no longer with us, did you think that they were not the—

Ms J Hinchcliffe: As I answered in the QON, I looked at them against the policy and they met the requirements of the policy.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Okay. How many sponsored passes have been cancelled in the last, say, 12 months and this term of parliament for breaches of conditions?

Mr Khan: We don't keep specific records, but I know that, within the last 12 months, we've not cancelled a sponsored pass. We deactivate various passes if they're not being used. We can deactivate for them for other measures as well.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Okay. I'm interested in how many have been suspended for breaching terms of entry, essentially.

Mr Khan: As we replied to your question on notice, we don't keep records, but we have—

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Why not?

Mr Khan: since January this year, and we know there has been one pass suspended.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Since January?

Mr Khan: Since January 2024.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: What's the process if someone is reported filming in the corridors? Do they get a warning? Is it an immediate suspension?

Mr Khan: We'll look at each circumstance individually. We'll weigh that up against the requirements of the media rules or the private area access policy. My job as the chief security officer is to exercise an abundance of care and caution in ensuring the security and safety of the parliament and the private areas. In the first instance, if we notice there has been a significant breach or otherwise we will take action.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: How many occasions are you aware of where there's been filming in the building that's prohibited under the passholder's—

Mr Khan: I'd have to take that one on notice.

The President: It is a question that should be put to the Black Rod. He also has a responsibility to ensure that privilege is upheld and that senators are not inadvertently filmed. In the Black Rod's case, it is often the media who have to be spoken to about filming—or sometimes other senators.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 263 of 375

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I'm interested in the process, because I know that one sponsored passholder, Punter's Politics, had his pass suspended immediately for filming in the corridors. If you go on social media, there's a lot of filming in corridors.

The President: If the Black Rod is aware of that, he contacts whoever has put that up and asks that it be withdrawn. I have to say, 99.9 per cent of the time the footage is taken down. That goes to part of the Black Rod's role as well.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I'm just interested in the—

The President: Sure, but it's not just a question for Security; it's also a role the Black Rod undertakes very seriously. I can tell you, as the Presiding Officers we take filming in prohibited areas very, very seriously because it goes to privilege.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: In that case, would it take the Black Rod reaching out to you? In how many of these instances has the Black Rod instigated some sort of—

The President: Security wouldn't necessarily know, because the Black Rod has the responsibility to manage the Senate. If filming occurs by a media outlet or a senator—

Senator DAVID POCOCK: What about a sponsored passholder?

The President: That would then be the security—

Senator DAVID POCOCK: That's why I'm asking questions.

The President: You're asking open-ended questions—that it can either be the Black Rod's responsibility or Security's.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: The Black Rod's not here. I'm interested in security.

The President: Sure, but the Black Rod might also see a sponsored passholder filming.

Mr Khan: If you can clarify exactly what you're asking, if that's possible.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Let's forget about this. I've got one more thing I want to ask a question about, on the progress on responding to and implementing the recommendations of the Jenkins review in relation to alcohol consumption in Parliament House.

Ms Hinder: If you ask the question, we can attempt to answer. It depends on the question you're asking.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I'm interested in how many incident reports have been filed by Parliament House Security or others that relate to consumption of alcohol in Parliament House in the last six months.

Ms Hinder: I don't have those numbers with me, unfortunately. I am very happy to take it on notice.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Would it be possible to get them today?

Ms Hinder: We can try to. We will try to respond as fast as we can. If we can't today, it will be very shortly.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Maybe for the last six months and then this term of parliament. On top of that, how many of those were in senators' offices or spaces in the Senate wing?

The President: That's not the purview of DPS; the policy covers events that DPS undertakes. If a parliamentarian has alcohol in their office, we don't have oversight of that.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: My question is about how many incident reports were filed to do with senators' offices or the Senate wing.

The President: In relation to what?

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I'm asking Security.

The President: I'm just trying to clarify the question: in relation to what?

Senator DAVID POCOCK: That was the question. I don't understand why you keep jumping in, trying to run interference, when I'm asking questions of the department.

The President: I'm not jumping in. I'm happy for you to ask DPS any questions you like. That is your absolute right, and I respect that. But, when you're asking questions which don't go to DPS solely, I think my responsibility is to explain to you that it's broader than DPS. The alcohol policy we have—

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I'm not asking about the alcohol policy. I'm asking about incident reporting, which is clearly DPS and security, I would assume?

The President: There's very little that DPS can do if alcohol is consumed in a parliamentarian's office.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 264 of 375

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I totally understand that. But what they would get is an incident report, if someone reports something.

The President: Yes.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: All I'm asking for is the number of reports that have to do with senators' offices or the Senate wing in the last six months in this term of parliament.

Ms Hinder: I think that will also take consultation with the Department of the Senate. We're very happy to take that on notice.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Sure. I didn't expect you to have it today.

Ms Hinder: In terms of that consultation, though, whether or not that will happen today or very shortly, we will get back to you as fast as we can.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Thank you.

CHAIR: We'll now break for 15 minutes.

Proceedings suspended from 11:00 to 11:16

CHAIR: We will resume. The coalition has the call.

Senator HUME: I want to ask some questions about the Magna Carta. I think they're probably best directed to Dr Heriot. The Magna Carta was installed with a new display case in December last year—was it December?

Dr Heriot: Yes.

Senator HUME: In response to previous questions, the department stated that you're expected to spend $352,999.10 on the construction of the display case for the Magna Carta. I'm wondering what the final amount was in the end.

Dr Heriot: We're expecting to spend in the order of $580,000 on the project overall. That includes the ongoing conservation monitoring work. Goppion effectively constructed the carcass, and then there were some systems, fit-outs and underlying engineering once it was installed at Parliament House to make sure it was—

Senator HUME: When you say that's the ongoing conservation work—

Dr Heriot: We're monitoring the environmental conditions for a period to finalise the conservation management plan for it to go forward. That's included in that amount. I'm happy to give you a breakdown on notice, if that's sufficient?

Senator HUME: That would be terrific, Dr Heriot. That's close to a doubling of the amount that was estimated not that long ago, or was that just for the display case?

Dr Heriot: I'm not sure it was an estimate. We gave you contract values and that was for the Grimwade centre at the University of Melbourne and for Goppion. We then had to import the case and install it. As I said, we had to install monitoring systems in it. There were some engineering works and then the carcass, for want of a better word, had to have fading in display. There are elements we could only do once we had the carcass installed. Carcass isn't an elegant word, I'm sorry.

Senator HUME: It's a terrible word, but what a lovely word picture you paint there.

Dr Heriot: I apologise for that.

Senator HUME: That's fine. At the 2023-24 additional estimates you provided a response on notice in relation to previous purchases of art for the parliamentary collection. It was question on notice 109. That was very helpful. It was a table that had a full list of pieces, when they were purchased, who approved them, the artists, the source gallery and all of that information. Can you provide an update to that table on notice?

Dr Heriot: On notice is fine.

Senator HUME: Thank you. I wouldn't ask you to do it on the spot; that's probably a bit much. Dr Heriot, I'm assuming you have knowledge of the recent media reporting regarding the Australian representative to the Venice Biennale, Khaled Sabsabi.

Dr Heriot: I have seen some of the press. I can't say I've been following it closely.

Senator HUME: I want to confirm for the benefit of doubt that you haven't personally participated in any actions that have called for the artist's reinstatement. Is that correct?

Dr Heriot: No, Senator. I've had no involvement in anything like that.

Senator HUME: I would assume that that would be the case. It would obviously be entirely inappropriate for someone in your position, under the Parliamentary Service Act. Yes?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 265 of 375

Dr Heriot: Yes.

Senator HUME: Yes. I have in front of me a list of individuals in the Australian artistic community that have petitioned the government to reinstate Mr Sabsabi who have also previously petitioned to have an Israeli artist removed from the Venice Biennale, which is quite ironic because the first open letter was protesting artistic censorship; the second open letter, which occurred two years earlier, was in fact to boycott this Israeli artist, Ruth Patir, from the 2024 Venice Biennale, and was under the heading Art Not Genocide Alliance. There are 211 names that appear on both those open letters—one saying that art censorship is unacceptable and one calling for art censorship. I am wondering whether I can table the names of those 211 people for you. Chair, if you're comfortable with that, I have made copies.

CHAIR: To double-check, are these names all on the public record already?

Senator HUME: They are all on the public record. They are in open letters. These 211 names that appear on both lists, one calling for the—

CHAIR: Senator Hume, you've made some statements around the biennale and censorship. I'm yet to see what the relevance to this committee is, but I'm sure you'll come to that.

Senator HUME: Yes. Can I get onto it?

CHAIR: Yes.

Senator HUME: Thank you. On notice, Dr Heriot, I'm wondering if you could confirm if any staff within your team have signed these petitions—these open letters—and, if so, whether there has been any action taken to counsel them.

Dr Heriot: I can take that on notice. I haven't seen the list, I'm sorry.

Senator HUME: Of course. It's just a list of names.

CHAIR: Senator Hume, I'm not sure that an open letter necessarily equates to a public letter that's been published somewhere.

Senator HUME: Well, it was an open letter to the government.

Senator CASH: It was an open letter. It's actually meant to be published.

Senator HUME: That's the whole point of an open letter.

CHAIR: This is just a list of names.

Senator HUME: Yes.

CHAIR: There's nothing here that can demonstrate to me—that I can confirm—that it was an open letter and that sources where it has been previously published.

Senator HUME: I could—

CHAIR: You've given me the list of names—

Senator HUME: Yes.

CHAIR: but I have not received any evidence in what is attached here that shows—

Senator HUME: I'm happy to—

CHAIR: when and how it was published as an open letter, to demonstrate that these names are already on the public record.

Senator HUME: There were two open letters. One of them, which was protesting the withdrawal of Australia's 2026 Venice Biennale representation, had 3,626 names on it. I can provide you with that letter because that is also publicly available. There was another one in 2024 that was calling for a boycott of Israeli artist Ruth Patir at the 2024 Venice Biennale, under the heading Art Not Genocide Alliance. There were 24,676 names on that letter. Now, what I provided to you is the crossover of names on both of those letters. There are 211 of them. They are from the Australian artistic community. All I'm asking Dr Heriot to do is to run an eye over that list and see if there are any names of people that work for the Public Service that have been petitioning the government to, in one breath, boycott an Israeli artist from the Venice Biennale and, in the other breath, reinstate the 2026 Australian representative on the basis of artistic censorship.

CHAIR: Senator Hume, you've asked about the whole of the Public Service. Are you asking about DPS specifically?

Senator HUME: I'm after Dr Heriot's department. I'm asking it on notice. She doesn't need to do it on the spot, but you can't do it without the list.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 266 of 375

CHAIR: These questions need to be asked in public, and—

Senator HUME: That's what we're doing.

CHAIR: I am uncomfortable with the fact you haven't provided me any evidence that demonstrates this is on the public record.

Senator HUME: I'll send you a link to the article. If I do that, is that adequate?

CHAIR: It may or may not be adequate, depending on the review of that information, but please feel free to do so. Assuming it is public, then you can assume that you'll be able to ask Dr Heriot that question on notice.

Senator HUME: In the meantime, are you denying me the ability to table this document?

CHAIR: Yes, Senator Hume. I don't believe that it is in the public interest to list all of these names publicly, without verification that they're already on the public record.

Senator HUME: They have signed two open letters that are publicly available. I'll send you the link if you like. All I'm asking is if the department will take on notice any works in the collection of the parliamentary art collection that are by the artists that are listed here or any staff that work within Dr Heriot's department that may have also put their names to these letters. I think that's pretty fair and reasonable.

CHAIR: Sorry, Senator Hume. I was taking advice. Is that a question to me or to the witnesses?

Senator HUME: It's very hard for the witnesses to answer if I can't table the document.

CHAIR: I think Dr Heriot indicated that it is something that she would need to go back and check and take on notice in any case.

Senator HUME: So I'll put those two questions on notice.

CHAIR: We can, during the course of the hearing today, have a look at the extent to which it may or may not be appropriate to table this document.

Senator COLBECK: Chair?

CHAIR: Senator Colbeck?

Senator COLBECK: We have, in the past, provided documents to the witnesses without tabling the document so that they can understand what the question's about. Can I propose that we provide the document to the witnesses so that they can see the document? The process of confirming whether or not they're public can proceed, and the committee can make a decision about publication later, but at least the witnesses have the advantage of being provided with the documents so they can answer the questions and know what they're answering questions about. Can I propose that the committee provide the document to the witnesses so that they can at least answer the questions?

CHAIR: I'm happy for that to occur—

Senator COLBECK: They don't need to name anybody.

CHAIR: however, Senator Colbeck, the context in which Dr Heriot would be answering this question is just an attachment that says 'open letter protesting the withdrawal of Australia's 2026 Venice Biennale representatives' and the open letter calling for the boycotting of Israel. There is no context for either document or any subsequent public debate that you are asking her to comment on.

Senator McGRATH: In terms of the context, I think it would be fair to the witness and fair for the process of the committee for the witness to be supplied with the list of names. The witness is fully aware of the context, and I think this would help us move along so we can continue to question other elements of the department.

Senator HUME: And, Chair, I've just directly sent you the copies of two of the open letters—one is for the withdrawal of Australia's 2026 Venice Biennale representatives, and the other is from the Art Not Genocide Alliance from 2024—and a copy of the 211 names, which you have in front of you, that have their names on both of those two open letters. I've now texted those through to you directly.

CHAIR: You're still asking me to verify, on the spot, information where you have collated the documentation and whose sources I cannot verify in order to table it. It looks to me like an online source has published the crossover of the two names. That is not something I can verify. Nor can I verify the consequences for those people who have had their names published in that way on the broader public record. Here you are seeking to table those names and that is something I would always be reluctant to see.

Senator McGRATH: That's not correct. With respect, the deputy chair has said that a means to bridge this process is for the list of names to be provided to the witness. No-one is asking you to verify them, for the time being, while you assess the other information that Senator Hume has provided to you. I would suggest that we

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 267 of 375

agree to Senator Colbeck's proposal that the list of names be handed to the witness, who is fully aware of the context of this discussion because the witness has been sitting here listening to this. So why don't we just hand the list of names over to the witness so they are aware of that?

CHAIR: Will you be asking the witness to identify the names of people on that list?

Senator HUME: Not on the spot—of course not. But on notice I think it's fair and reasonable for us to ask whether there are any staff whose names appear on those lists and whether there are any artists that appear in the parliamentary collection that also appear on that list.

CHAIR: Here we come to a loop. A question on notice needs to be asked on the public record, so I am somewhat uncomfortable with asking Dr Heriot to review this list and then answer a question about what was within her purview where she does not have the document in writing.

Senator McGRATH: Dr Heriot is an experienced servant of this parliament and an experienced staffer who has appeared before this committee many times. I am sure Dr Heriot will comply with the standing orders and the convention of this place in relation to the questions that are put to her on notice or otherwise in relation to this list of names. May I suggest that, to move on, we do hand this list of names over to Dr Heriot so she has that list of names, which are publicly available because it is an open letter, and then we can move on with the questioning on the many other topics that we wish to discuss over the remaining hours of this committee.

CHAIR: What's the resolution you put before the chair, Senator McGrath?

Senator McGRATH: Senator Colbeck just moved that we handle this—

Senator COLBECK: Chair, the proposal is that we just provide the information to the witnesses so that they can see it, but without tabling it. We're not tabling the document. We're providing information to a witness so that they can answer the questions. The questions can, of course, be asked in the context of public documents.

CHAIR: Dr Heriot has listened to us for quite some time debating this matter among ourselves.

Senator COLBECK: It's also within Dr Heriot's purview to say that this isn't verified.

CHAIR: Dr Heriot, you might be able to assist the committee in advising us of your view of the appropriateness of this question.

Senator McGRATH: No, I don't think—it's kind of irrelevant to do that.

CHAIR: I do understand. I call myself to order in that regard. It is a question of the public interest and Dr Heriot's ability, quite rightly, to make a public interest immunity claim. That is the only context in which the merit of the question can or can't be rejected in terms of being answered. Dr Heriot, if you may.

Dr Heriot: I have no problem with taking a committee's question on notice. Because, I must confess, my knowledge of the standing orders is not as intricate as my colleagues in the Senate, I'm not sure if I can take an untabled document as the basis for answering a question. That's just a technical issue. I don't know. I'm really not trying to be unhelpful; I just don't know the answer to that. One solution—

Senator HUME: Perhaps I can assist, Dr Heriot, and perhaps I can assist the chair. The source of this information came from a newspaper article, and we table newspaper articles in this place all the time. I have a copy of that article, if you would like me to table the original article. I have already sent through to you the attachments to that original article. Would you like me to table the original article? Would that help?

CHAIR: Does have it a list of names attached, Senator Hume?

Senator HUME: It has an attachment, with a list of names, that I have sent you.

CHAIR: Okay. I understand that, but I am always reluctant to put names of people on the public record. We've been through this in many committees, in many iterations. Their whole day is upended because of something that happens in this place—or even their whole life is upended—in a way that is not in the public interest because their name has been put on the record as a complete aside for something they weren't even being questioned about at the time.

Senator HUME: Chair, all I'm—

CHAIR: So I am reluctant to put this long list of names on the public record in this place in this way.

Senator HUME: President, this is nonsense. I'll be writing to you about this—

The President: That's fine, Senator Hume.

Senator HUME: because this is the chair blocking the process of asking witnesses questions.

CHAIR: I am very happy to take advice from—for you to seek advice so that—

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 268 of 375

Senator McGRATH: We've given you a compromise, Chair, with respect—if you had accepted it 15 minutes ago, we could have moved on—and the compromise was to hand over the list of names to Dr Heriot. Dr Heriot could answer the questions on notice in the manner which she thought best. Dr Heriot did explain that. I think, if we'd accepted that, we could have all moved on now and be on to the next tranche of questions. Quite frankly, time is being wasted now.

The President: Senator Hume, I do understand Senator Pratt's reluctance. She is ensuring due process is followed. That is what we expect of our chairs, and that's what you expect of me. She is trying to ensure that due process is followed.

CHAIR: I'm not seeking to politicise this. I have no specific instructions. It has certainly come up that I am concerned about how we meet the public interest test myself.

Senator McGRATH: Chair, what I might suggest is that we get advice from the Clerk in relation to the particular issue. Can we please move on?

Senator HUME: Do you know what? We don't actually need advice from the Clerk. I'll just direct the question directly to the President as the relevant minister sitting at the desk. I'll direct this question directly to you, President.

The President: And I'll take it on notice.

Senator HUME: I have a list of names here. I would like to know whether any of the people on that list either work for the department or are artists that are represented in the parliamentary collection. I don't think it's that complicated, Chair.

The President: I'm happy to take it on notice, Senator Hume.

Senator HUME: Thank you, President.

CHAIR: Thank you, senators—

Senator HUME: I have some more questions.

CHAIR: Please continue your questions. You still have the call, Senator Hume.

Senator HUME: They are follow-up questions to questions on notice. In response to question on notice No. 49 at additional estimates, you provided a table in response to a request for the total number of FTEs by APS classification. Could you please provide, on notice, an update of this table with the change in the number for each row since the 2012-13 budget.

Ms Hinder: I'm happy to take that on notice.

Senator HUME: Thank you. In response to question on notice No. 145, you have outlined some works that that will be undertaken inside Parliament House this financial year. If I add all these totals in that QON together, it amounts to about $5 million—in fact, just over $5 million. Does that sound correct?

Ms Hinder: That sounds broadly in scope with what we're working on for capital works.

Senator HUME: In that response, there were quite a number of refurbishments to spaces. Some of those are modest; some of those are not so modest. I want to ask some questions about refurbishments. Are they conducted by external contractors, or are they done by internal teams?

Ms Hinder: There is a mix. It depends upon the work that's required in terms of that refurbishment. Obviously, there are things like painting et cetera that occur in house, but, if there are matters that are much more complicated, such as to do with air conditioning units or other types of equipment of that nature, contractors may be brought in to be able to complete that work.

Senator HUME: There's a refurbishment of the AFP office, and that comes to $211,284. What's involved in the AFP office's refurb?

Ms Hinder: I don't have that level of detail available, but I'm happy to take that on notice and provide a full breakdown.

Senator HUME: Thank you. There's also refurbishment of the room NG61. I couldn't picture NG61, and it looks like we're refurbishing it at a cost of about $65,869. What's that office space used for?

Ms Hinder: I'll take that one on notice and come back to you.

Senator HUME: The department is building, interestingly, a fourth party room at a cost of $102,827. Where will that fourth party room be located?

Ms Hinder: Construction of the fourth party room is underway. We're expecting it to be completed mid this year.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 269 of 375

Senator HUME: Where is it?

Ms Hinder: Underneath the Parliamentary Budget Office, over on the Senate side, at the bottom.

CHAIR: Which party is it for?

The President: It's for the Greens' party room.

Senator HUME: Okay, it's for the Greens.

Ms Hinder: In relation to NG61, I'll just tell you it's a small area that's at the back of the current ICT space, where our current offices are for our Information and Communication Technology people.

Senator HUME: Who commissioned the work on the fourth party room?

Ms Hinder: As I understand it, the fourth party room has been part of the planning for the entirety of the APH footprint for some time. We are proceeding with the construction of that, as I've said, at the moment. We're expecting it to be done halfway through this year.

Senator HUME: Was it an initiative of the department, or was it under the instructions of Presiding Officers?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: We'll take that on notice.

Senator HUME: We've got a Presiding Officer here. Was it an instruction of the Presiding Officers to create a fourth party room?

The President: As Ms Hinder has said, it has been in the parliamentary design for quite some time, but the detail of that I'd have to take on notice.

Senator HUME: So no-one knows who instructed the creation of a Greens party room?

The President: The Greens currently have a party room, as do the Nationals, and it's too small—so it's simply being enlarged. The difficulty with the design is, as you've heard in response to some of your other questions today, Senator Hume, this building is old and so we have significant in-ceiling works, that have hindered the finalisation of that room, that have to be dealt with first before we can proceed. That is going to continue to hinder us on any kind of redevelopment we do here. The in-ceiling works have to be dealt with.

Senator HUME: What happens to the existing Greens party room?

The President: It will go back into general use. One of the things I'm very conscious of—and have been on the Black Rod and DPS's backs about—is meeting spaces. If there are opportunities for us to utilise rooms in a way to make them meeting spaces for senators, then that's my first priority.

Senator HUME: Did the Greens request an upgrade to their party room?

The President: I don't know that detail. I'll have to take that on notice.

Senator HUME: If you could take that on notice.

The President: Sure.

Senator McGRATH: When you said before about being part of the actual footprint for some time—there's no precise date—is that from 1988, for the original design, that there was to be a fourth party room or something that started in the last couple of years? You didn't give a specific date. If you could take that on notice as to the precise date, please.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: We'll take that on notice.

Senator HUME: I want to ask some questions about the gates for the slip roads to the Senate and House of Representatives. When were they originally installed?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I don't have the date of when they were installed. I think they're about 10 years old now. I think they were installed in terms of—

Senator HUME: They can't be 10 years old, because I haven't been here for 10 years and I remember when they were being installed.

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I'll take on notice when they were installed.

Senator HUME: They're now being replaced.

Ms Hinder: Yes. The replacement of the gates on the slip road is on our agenda. I think it's also fair to say, though, that the way the gates are currently working is not optimal. They slip off the 'guard rails', for want of a better term. They are often left in a position where it takes maintenance to be able to get them back and closing in an operational manner. Obviously, that has impacts for the senators and members that use those slip gates but also for DPS staff and the AFP in terms of having to monitor those gates when they're left in an open position. They

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 270 of 375

are very heavy and, frankly, they do need to be looked at in terms of making sure that we are continuing to safeguard the safety and security of APH.

Senator HUME: The replacement cost you've estimated is $57,998?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: These amounts here are year-to-date expenditure, not the cost of the project.

Senator HUME: There was another item in that QON, which was a refurbishing of the pastry kitchen. I didn't realise we had a pastry kitchen, but we've got a pastry kitchen. The refurbishing is costing $151,565. What's wrong with the current pastry kitchen?

Ms Hinder: As I understand it, the pastry kitchen is quite small. It doesn't actually have the space that's needed to be able to do the huge range of—as my waistline is saying!—quality products that get pumped out of the pastry kitchen. But it's not only the replacement of the pastry kitchen itself. There's also equipment that needs to be replaced within the kitchen, and there's also fire compliance elements that need to occur in terms of the in-ceiling work. It's a package of goods that needs to happen in terms of that refurbishment.

Senator HUME: In response to question on notice 157, the department provided the number of staff who have work-from-home arrangements. In response to one part of the question, which was to list the number of employees by the number of days that they work from home, you stated that it was 'too difficult to calculate', which I find extraordinary. However, you then provided the number of staff when asked for the number who work from home three or more days a week. Why was that?

Ms Hinder: I will be the first one to admit that the department's HR systems require enhancement to be able to pick up that type of data. To be able to do an accurate calculation, we would actually need to sit down and manually calculate. That's why we indicated that there are challenges. However, we have been able to determine that there are a number of staff who are taking one day a week in terms of their arrangements, and there are a number of staff taking two days a week in terms of their arrangements.

Senator HUME: Can you provide that on notice?

Ms Hinder: I'm more than happy to go have a look at what we've done and also have a look at updating the table.

Senator HUME: Yes, that would be very helpful, thank you. Of the staff who work from home three or more days a week, half of them are at PEL 1? That's correct?

Ms Hinder: Yes, that's right.

Senator HUME: Do you think it's appropriate for more senior staff to spend most of their time outside of the office?

Ms Hinder: My reflection on that is that there are a range of considerations that go into whether or not an officer is or isn't allowed to undertake flexible work. Flexible work is an entitlement that is in place across the Public Service and Parliamentary Service. We require our senior staff to do an assessment as to whether or not it is actually feasible and practical for these officers to work from home and for how long they work from home. In a personal reflection, on occasion I work from home, and I think I'm much more productive than I am in the office.

Senator HUME: On occasion, I think that that is absolutely, entirely fair. I suppose it's more if you're responsible for managing teams—if you have those higher responsibilities—I think there's probably an expectation that you would spend most of the time doing that with your team around you in the office.

Ms Hinder: There are lots of very talented folk—and I will say that DPS officers are amongst the most talented that I think I've worked with, for 20-odd years—who manage their staff really, really well, regardless of whether or not they have a footprint in the office or whether or not they're undertaking part of their duties from home.

Senator HUME: I don't doubt their talent; I do doubt their presence. I think that the taxpayer has an expectation, for those whose salaries they pay, as to exactly what it is they are doing and where they're doing it. But I will allow you to take that one on notice. That's fine. In response to question on notice 163, the department stated that it is unable to provide a list of vacancies by level due to the data management, is that right?

Ms Hinder: As I said, I'll be the first person to admit that the HR systems in the department require enhancement. That is something that we're looking at. At the moment, in terms of having the systems, there is a lot of historical data that is still captured in that system. So if I have a look at encapsulating all of that historical data, it returns positions that are vacant, where there is perhaps no intention for the positions to be filled or where they've been overtaken by events and time.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 271 of 375

Senator HUME: Do you use the same data management system as the Department of the Senate?

Ms Hinder: To be honest with you, I'm not certain.

Senator HUME: Could I perhaps encourage you to speak with your colleagues in the Department of the Senate to obtain that data? They have be an able to provide me with a full list by program, by section, by position title and by classification. They've done the lot. And it seems extraordinary that one department should be able to do it so easily and one department with such difficulty. Is it normal for the department to have over 10 per cent of your workforce under acting arrangements for more than 90 days?

Ms Hinder: I think it's fair to say that there have been a number of longstanding acting positions in terms of both the SES cohort and the parliamentary services levels. As I indicated earlier today, it has been a key priority of the acting secretary to get those sorted, and I think from the data that we provided to you earlier on today our onboarding at the moment is actually over what our off-boarding is, getting the department back to a stable state.

Senator HUME: Okay. In response to question on notice No. 175, I note that you engaged a speaker for the Parliamentary Service Indigenous Employee Network's interagency event. Your response said that you engaged a senior member of the ABC to perform that duty, at a cost of $8,700. Is that correct?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: Yes, Senator, that's right.

Senator HUME: How was that engagement entered into?

Ms Hinder: I'll have to take that on notice, unfortunately. I'll need to double-check how that occurred.

Senator HUME: Okay. It was Dan Bourchier, somebody I admire greatly, but $8,700 seems like an awfully large amount of money for a Parliamentary Service Indigenous Employee Network's interagency event. What did he do?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: We'll take that on notice. My understanding is that it was an event that he was speaking at, but I will take that on notice for you.

Senator HUME: Just one event?

Ms J Hinchcliffe: I think it was one event, but, again, I'll take it on notice for you.

Senator HUME: That's a nice side hustle. Thank you.

CHAIR: Are there any further questions for the Department of Parliamentary Services?

Senator McGRATH: [inaudible] to you, Mr Lawson—about the ones you were going to take on notice for close of play today. Thank you.

CHAIR: The department along with the commissioner are released from Senate estimates. Thank you, President, and thank you very much to all the staff and officers of the parliament for the wonderful work you do for us.

Proceedings suspended from 11:52 to 11:59

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

PRIME MINISTER AND CABINET PORTFOLIO

In Attendance

Senator McAllister, Minister for Emergency Management

Senator Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Governance and Corporate Group

Mr Martin Hehir PSM, Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer

Mr Justin Keefe, First Assistant Secretary, Information Services Division

Mr Andrew Walter, First Assistant Secretary, Government Division

Mr Arthur Spyrou, First Assistant Secretary, Ministerial Support Division

Ms Pauline Sullivan, First Assistant Secretary, Cabinet Division

Ms Callie Zorzi, First Assistant Secretary, Corporate Division

Ms Katy Lin, Assistant Secretary, Legal Policy Branch

Mr David Belgrove, Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary and Government Branch

Ms Leonie Kolmar, Acting Assistant Secretary, Communications Branch

Mr Ben Keily, Assistant Secretary, Ministerial and Parliamentary Support Branch

Ms Alison Green, Assistant Secretary, Protocol and International Visits Branch

Ms Bridie Costigan, Acting Assistant Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat Branch

Mr Branko Ananijevski, Assistant Secretary, Cabinet Information and Governance Branch

Ms Nina Pregellio, Assistant Secretary, National Security and Cabinet Systems Branch

Ms Liz Caelli, Acting Assistant Secretary, Governance Performance and Audit Branch

Ms Karyn Cooper, Assistant Secretary and Chief Financial Officer, Finance Branch

Ms Cristy England, Assistant Secretary and Chief People Officer, People Branch

Ms Melissa Radford, Acting Assistant Secretary, Shared Services Branch

Ms Samantha Portelli, Assistant Secretary, Business Services Branch

Social Policy Group

Mr Blair Exell, Deputy Secretary

Ms Lee Steel, First Assistant Secretary, Intergovernmental Relations and Reform Division

Ms Greta Doherty, First Assistant Secretary, Social Policy Division

Mr Tim Johnson, Assistant Secretary, Care and Support and Aged Care Branch

Ms Caitlin Delaney, Assistant Secretary, Immigration and Education Branch

Ms Erin Rule, Assistant Secretary, Human Services Branch

Economy, Industry and Resilience Group

Ms Nadine Williams, Deputy Secretary

Ms Lisa Elliston, First Assistant Secretary, Strategy, Projects and Priorities Division

Ms Janet Quigley, First Assistant Secretary, Resilience and Crisis Management Division

Ms Jo Evans, First Assistant Secretary, Economic Division

Ms Narelle Luchetti, First Assistant Secretary, Industry, Infrastructure and Environment Division

Ms Susan Calvert, Assistant Secretary, Policy Projects and Taskforce Office

Ms Shibani Iyer, Assistant Secretary, Financial Services, Taxation and Workplace Relations Branch

Ms Joanna Abhayaratna, Assistant Secretary, Office of Impact Analysis

Mr Jason Dymowski, Assistant Secretary, Resilience, Recovery and Response Branch

Mr Roland Trease, Assistant Secretary, Climate Change Branch

Mr Matthew Strapp, Assistant Secretary, Environment, Resources and Agriculture Branch

Mr Peter Good, Assistant Secretary, Industry and Communications Branch

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Ms Christina Garbin, Assistant Secretary, Infrastructure, Energy and Regional Branch

International and Security Group

Mr Graham Fletcher, Deputy Secretary

Mr Pablo Kang, First Assistant Secretary, International Division

Ms Kendra Morony, First Assistant Secretary, National Security Division

Mr Richard Sadleir, First Assistant Secretary, Quad, AUKUS and Naval Shipbuilding Division

Dr Angelia Grant, First Assistant Secretary, Multilateral Economic Engagement Division and G20 Sherpa

Australian National Audit Office

Dr Caralee McLiesh PSM, Auditor-General

Ms Rona Mellor PSM, Deputy Auditor-General

Ms Carla Jago, Acting Deputy Auditor-General

Dr Tom Ioannou, Adviser to the Auditor-General

Ms Jacquie Walton, Chief Operating Officer, Corporate and Management Group

Ms Lesa Craswell, Acting Group Executive Director, Financial Statements Audit Services Group

Mr George Sotiropoulos, Group Executive Director, Performance Statements Audit Services Group

Mr Sean Benfield, Acting Group Executive Director, Systems Assurance and Data Analytics

Ms Jane Meade, Group Executive Director, Professional Services Group

Mr Michael White, Acting Group Executive Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Ms Michelle Page, Acting Group Executive Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Ms Susan Drennan, Acting Senior Executive Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Mr David Tellis, Executive Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Mr Brian Boyd, Executive Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Ms Corinne Horton, Executive Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Ms Christine Chalmers, Executive Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Ms Amy Willmott, Executive Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Mr Nathan Callaway, Acting Executive Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Ms Anne Rainger, Acting Executive Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Ms Jacqueline Hedditch, Acting Executive Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Mr Daniel Whyte, Senior Director, Performance Audit Services Group

Office of National Intelligence

Mr Andrew Shearer, Director-General of National Intelligence

Dr Duncan Grove, Deputy Director-General, Digital and Technology

Ms Tracey Carroll, Chief Operating Officer

Ms Susan Littlehales, Assistant Director-General Executive

National Australia Day Council

Mr Mark Fraser AO CVO, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Matthew Andrews, Director Business Operations

Net Zero Economy Authority

Mr David Shankey, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Travis Bover, First Assistant Secretary, Policy, Communications and Corporate Division

Ms Felicity Ryan, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Industry and Investment Division

Ms Rachel Livingston, First Assistant Secretary, Policy, Regions and Workers Division

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

CHAIR: We will now resume. We welcome to the table the Hon. Senator Penny Wong, Minister for Foreign Affairs, representing the Prime Minister, and Mr Martin Hehir, Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer,

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 274 of 375

and other officers from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Welcome, everybody. Minister, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Senator Wong: Yes, I do.

CHAIR: Please go ahead.

Senator Wong: Thank you very much, Chair. Can I start by acknowledging that today is the third anniversary of Russia's illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine, and, if the committee would permit me, I'll just make some brief statements. Australia has been steadfast in our support of Ukraine's right to defend itself against Russian aggression, consistent with international law. That support has totalled over $1.5 billion to date, including $1.3 billion in military assistance, such as the provision of equipment and training of Ukrainian forces. Australia continues to make clear that Russia, and those enabling its illegal invasion, will face consequences.

Today the government has imposed further sanctions against 149 individuals and entities involved in enabling Russia's war of aggression. This is the largest sanctions package Australia has put in place since February 2022. We have also tightened further trade bans on Russia by prohibiting the supply of commercial drones and components.

Australia supports all meaningful progress towards a just and enduring peace for Ukraine and for security and stability in Europe. For any peace deal to be successful, Ukraine must be part of those negotiations. I had the opportunity today to meet with Ukraine's Ambassador to Australia this morning, and I reaffirmed Australia's resolute support for Ukraine.

The impacts of the war in Ukraine are amongst the many global challenges the nation has been grappling with over the past three years, and, since 2022, the Albanese Labor government has managed the economy responsibly, while providing cost-of-living relief, as always, with an eye to building Australia's future. We have sought to deliver, after a decade of neglect under the coalition, cheaper medicines; urgent care clinics around the country; a tax cut for every taxpayer; historic pay rises for aged-care workers, early childhood educators and the minimum wage; provided cheaper child care and legislated a three-day guarantee to subsidised child care; delivered fee-free TAFE; provided student debt relief; and made a record $32 billion investment in housing. In addition, we have invested in more renewables to drive energy prices down. We have turned two coalition deficits into the first back-to-back surpluses in two decades, while continuing to tackle cost-of-living pressures on Australians.

Yesterday we announced that a re-elected Albanese Labor government will make the single largest investment in Medicare since its creation over 40 years ago, some $8½ billion, to deliver an additional 18 million bulk-billed GP visits each year, nursing scholarships and more doctors in the largest GP training program ever. Members of the committee would have heard the Prime Minister's speech and media remarks about it.

Finally, I note a letter from Senators Cash and Colbeck to the Secretary of PM&C advising of matters that may be raised by opposition senators in these hearings. In particular, opposition senators flagged again their intention at another parliamentary committee to ask questions of officials that relate to the discovery of a caravan in Dural, New South Wales. Opposition senators correctly noted this matter is the subject of a law enforcement investigation. The government has been clear that it is a matter for the Australian Federal Police to determine what information is appropriate to disclose when there is an ongoing investigation. I note AFP Commissioner Kershaw's evidence to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement on 6 February 2022, where he stated, in response to a question on this matter:

… I am conscious that this is a public hearing, and … not an appropriate forum for us to provide information relating to an ongoing investigation at this time.

In light of this, any questions about the Dural matter will be taken on notice. Opposition senators have the opportunity—

Senator McGRATH: Great start!

Senator CASH: That is a great start!

Senator McGRATH: Yes!

CHAIR: Senators, you'll have your turn to—

Senator McGRATH: 'We're here to answer questions, but we'll take them on notice'! Brilliant!

Senator CASH: Seriously! Oh, that is fantastic!

CHAIR: Senate estimates is not a place for us to spend time listening to people's guffaws—

Senator McGRATH: It is when you get statements like that.

CHAIR: so please let the minister finish her statement so we can get to questions.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 275 of 375

Senator Wong: Opposition senators have the opportunity to directly question the AFP, the Australian Federal Police, when they appear before the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee tomorrow.

CHAIR: We can now turn to questions, unless Mr Hehir also has an opening statement?

Mr Hehir: Yes, Chair. I have PM&C's organisational chart here for the committee, should you wish for it to be tabled. Since the last round of estimates hearings in November last year, there have been the following changes to the PM&C executive with the former Deputy Secretary of the Social Policy Group, Ms Liz Hefren-Webb, leaving the department on 17 January to take up the role of Aged Care Quality and Safety Commissioner. There's also been the following changes to PM&C's structure since the department last appeared before the committee with the Net Zero Economy Agency officially transitioned to become an independent Commonwealth entity, the Net Zero Economy Authority, on 11 December 2024. Mr David Shankey was appointed as the inaugural CEO of the authority on 29 November 2024, and the Jenkins report implementation team concluded on 31 December.

Senator COLBECK: Can we get Mr Hehir's statement tabled?

Senator CASH: And Senator Wong's.

CHAIR: They don't have to table them, given they are on the official transcript. But I will ask both Senator Wong and Mr Hehir if they happen to be available for tabling?

Senator Wong: I can provide that later.

Mr Hehir: I can provide it later.

CHAIR: We can now go to questions. Senator Cash.

Senator CASH: Thank you for the opening statement. Senator Wong, just in terms of the statement that you made—and I don't have it in front of me, so I'll wait to get that to ensure I don't verbal you—can I confirm that you have said that in relation to the Dural caravan incident, you will be taking questions on notice?

Senator Wong: Correct.

Senator CASH: Is that all questions?

Senator Wong: That is the intention, given the advice from both the head of ASIO and the Australian Federal Police. But if you ask me, 'Have I ever been to Dural?' or something like that, obviously, that's a different question.

Senator CASH: That's exactly right. You made a claim that you would be taking them all on notice. You would also understand—

Senator Wong: Actually, if I may, I was responding to your letter which sets out the parameters of the questions you wanted. I provided an indication that, in relation to those matters, we'll be taking those issues on notice.

Senator CASH: If we could turn to those questions then, the first question is: when was the Prime Minister first briefed on the discovery of the caravan in Dural?

Senator Wong: I have directly addressed that in my opening statement.

Senator CASH: You're not going to answer that question?

Senator Wong: I'm going to take the advice of the Federal Police.

Senator CASH: Are you making a public interest immunity claim?

Senator Wong: I am going to take the advice of the Federal Police and the advice of the director of ASIO, Mike Burgess, which I would draw to your attention: 'We have a number of investigations under way. I won't go into the details of them. We're still working through each case on its merits. I wish people would just let the police do their job and stop commentating from the sides.'

Senator CASH: In terms of the statement that you have just made, you will be aware then that the Premier of New South Wales, Mr Minns, was quite happy to disclose publicly to the people of New South Wales and the people of Australia that he was briefed by the New South Wales police on the caravan incident on 20 January. Can I ask then, given the statement that you have just made, has the Prime Minister or you had conversations with Mr Minns to advise that he has made those disclosures, contrary to the advice that you have clearly received from ASIO?

Senator Wong: Well, you received it as well, Senator. These are public statements from the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police and the director-general of ASIO, so it's not advice to government in the way that your question suggests. These are public statements, and I think you would do well to consider them as a senior member of the coalition.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 276 of 375

Senator McGRATH: Are you saying that it is an operational matter when the Prime Minister is briefed in relation to a particular security incident?

Senator Wong: I'm saying that you and your colleagues asked precisely these questions of the Australian Federal Police in open session, in other parts and also before other committees of the parliament and you received the same answer that I'm giving you today.

Senator CASH: Senator Wong, on 9 April 2019, you made this statement:

I accept that the prejudicing of an ongoing investigation is a reasonable ground of public interest immunity claim in respect of a request for documents—it is not a kind of blanket response that deals with everything. The harm needs to be specified. The basis of the assertion needs to be made.

So, on that basis, as we go through each question and—

Senator Wong: Is this 9 April last year?

Senator CASH: 2019.

Senator Wong: Well, you have been looking at my past statements, Senator.

Senator CASH: Yes, we have. That's exactly right—

Senator Wong: I hope you look at all of them, but—

Senator CASH: because you seemed to take a different attitude the last time you were in opposition. So, again, I'm going to ask you: when was the Prime Minister first briefed on the discovery of the caravan in Dural?

Senator Wong: I refer to my opening statement and the answers given by the AFP—

Senator CASH: I'm not asking about the answers—

Senator Wong: Excuse me. I hadn't finished.

Senator CASH: given by the AFP.

Senator Wong: I actually hadn't finished.

Senator CASH: Are you making a public interest immunity claim?

Senator Wong: Senator, I'd like to finish my answer. I let you finish your question. After I finish my answer, I'm sure you'll have another question. But—

Senator CASH: We will have several questions.

CHAIR: Senator Cash, don't interrupt.

Senator Wong: Can I finish my answer first? Thank you. These questions were asked directly of the Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police. I would refer you to his answer. That is the basis on which my opening statement is predicated.

Senator CASH: Again, are you making a public interest immunity claim?

Senator Wong: On the basis of the Federal Police commissioner's evidence to another committee.

Senator CASH: What was that evidence, and on what basis are you saying there is harm in answering about when the Prime Minister of Australia was advised of the Dural caravan incident?

Senator Wong: Mr Hehir is making the point to me that the claim, in fact, has been made by the Federal Police commissioner in another hearing. So I'm not in a position where, as a consequence, I can disavow or alter a position that the Commissioner of the AFP has outlined in a public hearing. You were well aware of that. You asked me to provide, I presume, the *Hansard* of the hearing, but your colleagues were the ones asking the question, so I'm sure you've been well briefed on this. It's the same set of questions. It will be the same set of answers.

Senator CASH: Let's then go to other dates when the Prime Minister determined that it was in the public interest and it was not compromising an ongoing investigation to advise the Australian people of when he was briefed by the AFP. On 6 December 2024, the Prime Minister said in relation to the Adass Israel synagogue attack:

I have been briefed this morning by the AFP Commissioner, Reece Kershaw.

Minister, I ask you: why was it acceptable to say when he was briefed in relation to that matter and not when the discovery of an explosives laden caravan was made?

Senator Wong: I'd refer you to Commissioner Kershaw's evidence to the PJC on Law Enforcement on 6 February. I'm sure you have looked at it. In response to this question, he said:

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 277 of 375

Also, I am conscious that this is a public hearing, and it's not an appropriate forum for us to provide information relating to an ongoing investigation at this time.

Senator CASH: How does the date on which the Prime Minister of Australia, the person who is accountable to the Australian people—how does that compromise an ongoing investigation? We are going to move through a number of occasions on which the Prime Minister was very happy to stand up and advise the Australian people that he was briefed by the AFP or, alternatively, held a National Security Committee meeting. How does advising the Australian people merely of a date—seeing as Premier Minns was very happy to be held accountable as to when he was first notified—compromise an ongoing investigation?

Senator Wong: I'm not conducting the investigation, and neither are you. I take advice from those statutory officials who are responsible for these matters. I've read you the quote from Commissioner Kershaw. I think it is quite telling that, as a senior member of the coalition, despite the fact that the Federal Police have made these statements and that the director-general has made his statement, you persist with this line of questioning. I think that's quite telling.

Senator McGRATH: It's not an operational question.

Senator CASH: Correct; it is not an operational issue.

CHAIR: Senator Cash and Senator McGrath, Senator Wong is answering the question—

Senator McGRATH: She's not; that's the issue.

CHAIR: Excuse me—within the limits of the office that the minister holds at the table today, in the context of referring to the appropriate agency and the evidence that they are prepared to put on the record in the context of what's in the public interest. Senators, you will keep asking questions for as long as you like on whatever topic you like but I draw your attention to the fact that there is a strong statement on the record that points you to the evidence given by the AFP. It's up to you how long you want to go around in circles on this topic.

Senator Wong: I was halfway through an answer. On this matter, or on any law enforcement matter, our first priority is to enable and support law enforcement authorities, and ensure that they can do their work, that the investigations are allowed to proceed unhindered and, if there are people that need to be apprehended, that people are apprehended and face the full force of the law. That's my priority. That's the priority of the government. I understand you want to persist with a political line of questioning which your colleagues have persisted with in the parliament and in other committees, despite the fact that the commissioner of police has made his position clear. I refer you to my answer in my opening statement. I'll take the question on notice.

Senator McGRATH: You're saying that the commissioner of the AFP has said that the Prime Minister cannot say if/when he was briefed in relation to the caravan incident because that's an operational matter? Is that what you're saying?

Senator Wong: I'm referring to the commissioner's evidence to the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement on 6 February, where he said:

… it's not an appropriate forum for us to provide information relating to an ongoing investigation at this time.

As such, I'll be taking any questions on notice. Senator McGrath and Senator Cash, I know you want to run a political line of questioning on this, but this is the position I will be taking on the basis of these public statements by law enforcement officials.

Senator McGRATH: The police commissioner has not said the issue of when the Prime Minister was briefed is an operational matter.

Senator CASH: That question was not relevant when he made that statement. Again, what is the issue with merely providing the date upon which the Prime Minister was briefed, given that Premier Minns, in New South Wales, was prepared to be held publicly accountable by the people of New South Wales and the people of Australia when he stood up and advised when he was briefed? The issue that we are currently confronted with is this: the caravan was discovered on 19 January. The matter became public on 28 January. There is a nine-day period during which the Prime Minister could have been told. We know when Premier Minns was told. The issue we all have is that it is becoming more and more apparent that the Prime Minister was kept in the dark and, as the leader of our nation, was actually not told until the matter became public. So, again, how does it compromise the ongoing investigation by merely stating when the Prime Minister was advised, unless he wasn't? Maybe that's what you're actually covering up.

Senator Wong: Senator, you are well known for being quite dramatic in the things that you say to some effect, but what I'm saying to you is that I'm simply relying on the evidence that you were aware of before you

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 278 of 375

walked into this hearing and before you wrote to me, which was the evidence given to another parliamentary committee on precisely the same issue—

Senator McGRATH: But that is not what the commissioner said.

Senator Wong: I hadn't finished.

Senator CASH: No, it's not.

Senator Wong: Can I finish at any point?

CHAIR: Senator Sheldon, on a point of order.

Senator SHELDON: For the smooth running of estimates and as normal practice, if somebody gets the call to ask the question, having multiple people asking questions separately without getting the call does make it more complicated because it means we have everybody in the coalition jumping in on each other. It is a normal practice to ask for the call from the chair. If that could be complied with—

Senator Wong: Do I answer Senator Cash or Senator McGrath?

Senator McGRATH: Maybe you could stop reflecting personally on Senator Cash and answer the question; that would be a good way to start.

Senator SHELDON: Point of order.

CHAIR: Yes, there is a point of order there. Senator McGrath, you don't reflect on the evidence of senators—

Senator Wong: I don't think that's an accurate reflection—

CHAIR: so please just ask your questions so that you—

Senator Wong: Senator Cash, I think that was more a speech than a question—

Senator CASH: How was it a speech, Senator Wong—

Senator Wong: Is it not possible for you to let me finish?

Senator CASH: Not when you're verballing me, no. How was it a speech?

Senator Wong: Actually, Senator, you also made a number of assertions about my behaviour. I at least let you finish. The questions you are asking are the same questions that your colleagues asked two weeks ago. It is unsurprising that you'll have the same answer. Now, I appreciate that you want to confect some political outrage about that, but the reality is that these are the same answers that were given by the commissioner in a public hearing a couple of weeks ago. It is unsurprising that I'm going to provide the same answers. If you wish to keep asking the question, that's your right. If you want to take up estimates with it, we will take the question on notice, as I outlined in my opening statement, for the reason I outlined in my opening statement.

Senator CASH: Did you confirm with the AFP Commissioner that his advice is that they were unable to answer this question prior to your appearance here today?

Senator Wong: I am relying on the evidence that was given in a public hearing on the same matter.

Senator CASH: So the answer to my question, therefore, is no?

Senator Wong: No. I didn't say that. But I'm here representing the Prime Minister, so I'm not in the habit of, in that context, disclosing who or what I might have discussed these issues with as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Senator CASH: You are here representing the Prime Minister. You have stated in both your opening statement and in answers to questions that you are relying on what you say is a statement made by the commissioner in another committee to not provide answers to questions. My question therefore is very simple. Did you confirm with the AFP Commissioner that it is his advice that you were unable to answer these questions prior to your appearance here? Did you speak with him, or did your office speak with him?

Senator Wong: Senator, the questions you're asking are precisely the same questions as were asked by your colleagues on 6 February. The commissioner's answer included the phrase 'at this time'. I've not received any advice as to whether—well, my understanding is that that position still holds.

Senator CASH: Upon what basis do you say 'it is my understanding'? I go back to my question: did you, your office or—let's now extend it out—the Prime Minister or his office have any conversations with the AFP commissioner prior to coming to estimates today in terms of the evidence you are now giving?

Senator Wong: I didn't discuss my evidence with him, and he wouldn't expect me to.

Senator CASH: Whether or not you—

Senator Wong: Mr Fletcher has something to say.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 279 of 375

Mr Fletcher: I consulted with the Attorney-General's Department, AFP and Home Affairs last week, following receipt of your letter, and the view of the operational agency, the AFP, was that those questions should be taken on notice.

Senator McGRATH: So you're saying the advice of the department is that—

Senator SHELDON: On a point of order?

CHAIR: Senator Sheldon?

Senator SHELDON: Just that people should be going for the call because it is about time to rotate.

CHAIR: Yes, I was about to indicate that it's time to rotate the call, but—

Senator McGRATH: We have a lot of questions here, so this session's going to be a long day. If the call is being taken off me so that the Labor Party can run interference, so be it.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, that is no way to seek the call and indicate to the chair that you are seeking the call.

Senator Wong: Actually I think you two were more fighting with each other about who was going to ask a question, rather than the Labor Party fighting with you.

CHAIR: That's right.

Senator McGRATH: I really think, with respect, Minister, you should stop the personal reflection on—

Senator Wong: Why is that a personal reflection? I was just pointing out that you just kept jumping in, Senator McGrath. It's probably more a reflection on you.

Senator McGRATH: We're a team, unlike the Labor Party, and I would suggest that—

CHAIR: Senator—

Senator McGRATH: if we're going to keep going with this, we have questions to put to this, as to why there is a cover-up going on.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, I didn't give you the call.

Senator Wong: So who has the call?

CHAIR: With your own indulgence—not mine—you handed the call between you. In the flow of the committee, that may be fine, but it is also my job as chair to give the call and rotate the call, which means I can intervene when appropriate.

Senator Wong: So where are we at—whose question and to whom?

CHAIR: I am about to rotate the call, unless of course you want to respond to the last question.

Senator McGRATH: We have a lot of questions, and I'm sure the departmental officials will be here after Senator Sheldon has asked his rather illuminating questions.

Senator Wong: His what?

Senator McGRATH: His illuminating questions.

CHAIR: I'm glad you have a deep interest in them. Senator Sheldon.

Senator SHELDON: I'm not surprised that the coalition doesn't have an interest in Future Made in Australia, so I want to ask some questions about that. That would be the last thing they'd be concerning themselves with, but I am concerned about the Future Made in Australia, so I'd like to ask some questions about that. I appreciate that I need to do this on a higher level nature, in that it's PM&C. This question of course is the critical question about what the future holds, with the biggest industrial changes and the opportunities that they entail with the Future Made in Australia. It involves a range of agencies, and that goes across responsibilities of PM&C, of course with that crucial oversight and coordination role that PM&C plays. Can you just take me through, and provide an overview of, the elements of the Future Made in Australia package, noting that there have been some substantial developments since last year with the passage of legislation and further details on the Future Made in Australia programs? That will lead into some other questions I'll need to ask.

Ms Williams: Certainly. As you noted, there were a range of measures for the Future Made in Australia package announced in the budget. I might get Mr Trease to run you through those as well as additional measures in MYEFO. Mr Trease, if you'd like to walk through those, that would be great.

Mr Trease: As my colleague Ms Williams indicated, the headline items in the 2024-25 budget package were: $13.7 billion in production tax incentives for renewable hydrogen and process-critical minerals, and the enabling legislation for that measure was passed through both houses of parliament earlier in February; $1.7 billion for the

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 280 of 375

Future Made in Australia Innovation Fund, promoting net zero innovation and covering green metals, clean energy technology, manufacturing and low-carbon liquid-fuel sectors; $1.5 billion in production incentives to strengthen battery and solar-panel supply chains; $1.3 billion to expand the Hydrogen Headstart program, supporting early movers to invest in the industry's development; and $566 million to map Australia's geological potential to support the net zero transition. That package, of course, builds on existing initiatives across government including the $15-billion National Reconstruction Fund, the Hydrogen Headstart program, expansion of the Critical Minerals Facility, the Powering the Regions Fund and the creation of the Net Zero Economy Authority.

In the 2024-25 MYEFO there were further measures, including $469 million over 14 years to accelerate investment in the Future Made in Australia priorities including $336 million to participate in the Australia-Germany H2 Global program to do with expanding bilateral engagement on hydrogen trade. There was additionally $70 million in grants for First Nations organisations to support economic opportunities in the net zero transition.

Senator Wong: Could I perhaps make some overarching comments? I know you're very interested in this, Senator. There's a lot of detail, I'm sure, on some of the measures that have been outlined .

Senator SHELDON: Thank you, Minister.

Senator Wong: If we take a step back, what are we seeking to achieve here? Fundamentally, it's about securing Australian manufacturing and securing our place in the world in a very different environment to what Australia has faced in the past. What are some of the drivers that the government is working with industry to address and to leverage? The first is the transition to net zero. That is a massive global transition—a transition in our global economy—in relation to which we want to make sure we maximise Australian opportunity. The way I often describe it to people is that Australia has done remarkably well to be a resources and energy exporter over this last century, but we want to make sure we are also able to sell those products to the rest of the world, that the global market will want them and that they will be valuable in a net zero global economy. There are enormous opportunities there for us, particularly in renewable energy, but we have to seize them. One set of objectives, or one stream of work, is to try and make sure we leverage that.

Then there is the uncertain global environment. In fact, Mr Morrison actually talked about the insecure supply chains and COVID demonstrating the challenge with supply chains, which were just in time as opposed to more reliable. But I'd add to that that much of the world is engaging in a set of policies which are fundamentally at their heart about transforming industry via different mechanisms. The previous US administration did so through a set of industry incentives and subsidies, and the Trump administration has articulated a set of economic polices including tariffs. You see it in Europe and you see it in China. Major economies are also thinking through how to use different levers of policy to transform particularly their manufacturing but, more broadly, their industrial base.

I think, at the highest level, those are the challenges that this policy framework seeks to address. Ms Williams can probably articulate it better than I in terms of the actual policy measures, but it's useful for us to remember why we need to do this. It is about jobs and prosperity in a very different world.

Senator SHELDON: Minister, I might just go to that point. The Ai Group chief executive, Innes Willox, recently welcomed the Whyalla decision. He said the joint government action 'demonstrates just how significant steel making is to the national economy'. Can you explain that broader point of green iron and green metals and how they fit into the Future Made in Australia and that role of Whyalla. The department might be able to assist.

Senator Wong: I think Ms Williams might start on that, and I might add to it.

Ms Williams: As you mentioned, Whyalla steelworks produces around 75 per cent of Australia's structural steel, and it's the only domestic producer of long steel. It's really fundamental, particularly to Australian infrastructure, including our railways, construction, transmission infrastructure, defence assets et cetera. So it's a really important piece of infrastructure, and it's in the national interest to maintain it. You wanted us to reflect a little bit on its role within green steel, as I understand.

Senator SHELDON: Yes.

Mr Trease: Under the Future Made in Australia agenda, the government recently announced a $1 billion green-iron investment fund, which is to support early-mover green iron projects. Of that, $500 million has been earmarked for supporting the Whyalla steelworks transformation as part of the government package announced for the broader response to the situation in Whyalla currently. That's in addition to the $500 million recently announced through the innovation fund, which was mentioned earlier, which is focused on steel manufacturing. So there's an intersection there as well.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 281 of 375

Senator Wong: Obviously, as a South Australian, the Whyalla steelworks is such an important part of the domestic economy and the state's economy. But, as the Prime Minister and Premier Malinauskas outlined, it's also an important part of the national economy. We are committed to the steelworks. We're committed to ensuring that we deal with this in the near term, which is why the government has announced a package—I think it's in excess of $2 billion—to save Whyalla steelworks, which includes support for local businesses and creditors. It also includes funding to stabilise the steelworks during administration—that's a fifty-fifty investment to fund operations during the administration. Then, critically, there's just under $2 billion to invest in the steelworks' long-term future, which includes, from the Commonwealth's perspective, $500 million from the Green Iron Investment Fund plus additional potential long-term financing. The South Australian government has similarly committed some $400 million for a long-term transition.

Senator SHELDON: I have no further questions. For all of us who are worried about a Future Made in Australia, thank you for your time.

CHAIR: Thank you for asking those questions, Senator Sheldon. I also have an interest in them because they're very important to Western Australia. I will rotate the call back to the coalition. Senator Cash or Senator McGrath?

Senator CASH: I'll commence the questioning. Senator Wong, do you yourself know when the Prime Minister was first briefed on the Dural caravan affair?

Senator Wong: As I've told you, I'm taking all of these questions on notice.

Senator CASH: Hold on. That is not a question that compromises the operational issues. This is merely a question that goes to your knowledge. I'm not asking for the date. I am merely asking: is it within your knowledge of when the Prime Minister was first briefed?

Senator Wong: Firstly, I'm not sure that's an appropriate question for these estimates. I'm not here as myself; I'm here representing the PM—

Senator CASH: Yes, you're here representing the Prime Minister.

Senator Wong: It's really difficult to finish an answer when you keep interrupting me.

CHAIR: Senator Cash, you could look at Senator Birmingham's answers to a very similar set of questions.

Senator Wong: I'm not here representing Penny Wong; I'm here representing the PM in his portfolio, so it isn't an appropriate question for these estimates. But I will take the matter on notice.

Senator CASH: You're not giving an answer. Is that what you're saying?

Senator Wong: No. I'm saying that I'm taking it on notice.

Senator CASH: You're not giving an answer.

Senator Wong: It will do better if you stop telling me what I'm saying and perhaps—

Senator CASH: No. I'm clarifying with you.

Senator Wong: I am taking the question on notice, which a minister is entitled to do.

Senator CASH: Absolutely.

Senator Wong: Thank you.

Senator CASH: I just want to confirm you're taking on notice whether or not you yourself have knowledge of when the Prime Minister was first briefed? Is that what you're taking on notice?

Senator Wong: I'm taking on notice all questions associated with the Dural incident for the reasons I've outlined.

Senator CASH: Yes. So just to be clear: you're taking on notice whether you know something right now?

Senator Wong: I think we all understand what you're seeking to do here. The Federal Police Commissioner and the Director-General of ASIO have made clear statements. It's disappointing that you, as a senior member of the coalition, don't wish to take that advice. You're entitled to ask questions, but I just think senior people should consider what senior officials and law enforcement officials say. Nevertheless, it's your right to ignore the AFP and ASIO if you so wish.

Senator McGRATH: Could you table the advice—

Senator Wong: May I—

Senator McGRATH: in that case of when those agencies said not to release the date.

Senator Wong: I find it really interesting that I've not been able to finish an answer.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 282 of 375

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, don't talk over the minister. Senator Wong.

Senator Wong: I'll start again. It is disappointing that public statements, including in open committee and also in committees which were in camera, have been made by officials that the coalition is ignoring. I, for one, think that law enforcement officials ought be listened to. I, for one, think the advice of ASIO to senior parliamentarians ought be adhered to. If the coalition don't wish to consider what Australian Federal Police or ASIO have said, that's a matter for the coalition. I have said, in relation to this matter, I will be taking questions on notice. In relation to the specific question about knowledge, as a matter of courtesy I've taken that on notice. The point I'm making to you, Senator Cash, is that it is not an appropriate question for this estimates because I'm not here representing myself, I'm here representing the Prime Minister—and you know that.

Senator McGRATH: Minister, you referred to advice from the prospective agencies. Are you able to table the advice or media reports or *Hansard* where the police commissioner or someone akin to the police commissioner has said that the date on which the Prime Minister was told about the security incident is an operational matter?

Senator Wong: I understand the coalition seeks to cast the question in such narrow terms. The commissioner was directly asked questions in open session. I don't know if you were in attendance, Senator McGrath, but certainly your colleagues were and they asked precisely the same questions you have asked and they received the answer which I have now quoted on three or four occasions and which I reference in my opening statement. In relation to Director-General Burgess, my recollection is—or I'm advised—he made these comments publicly. I'm sure they are available should you wish to take his views on board. I would have thought that would be a sensible thing to do.

Senator McGRATH: My understanding is that the commissioner has not said in relation to those earlier comments, in terms of questions that were put to the commissioner, that they weren't the subject of that particular hearing. The commissioner has not said that the date on which the Prime Minister was told is an operational matter. I can read it out to you. The commissioner's exact words were:

… according to the briefings I've received, that's not the subject or purpose of today's hearing …

That was in relation to that particular hearing. This is a separate hearing. We are asking a very simple question. We're not asking about operational issues; we're asking when was the Prime Minister told.

Mr Hehir: Mr Fletcher identified earlier that there had been a meeting with the Attorney-General's Department and the AFP. Both of those departments, I understand, have a copy of the letter that was provided. That letter included the list of questions that were intended to be asked here, which included when the Prime Minister was first briefed on the discovery of the caravan in Dural. Mr Fletcher's evidence was that the AFP had asked that we continue to take these questions on notice, which is what we are doing at this hearing. As the letter correctly points out, it is a matter for the law enforcement agency concerned to assess whether the ground of PII should be raised not by some other official who can merely speculate about the relationship of the information to the investigation. I think it's clear that the department has engaged with the appropriate department and law enforcement agency, and we are following their request for us to take this question on notice. As Minister Wong identified earlier, the AFP will appear tomorrow, and these questions can be put directly to the AFP commissioner.

Senator McGRATH: So what you're saying is that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is saying that it is an operational matter as to when—

Mr Hehir: Uh—

Senator McGRATH: If I could finish—and you can correct it.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: You're saying that it is an operational matter as to when the Prime Minister was told about the incident and that's why you can't—

CHAIR: I don't believe that's what Mr Hehir said—merely that—

Senator McGRATH: As informative as your interjections are, they add nothing to this hearing.

CHAIR: Don't verbal me as chair, Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: I have a question, and I don't like being interrupted when I'm asking a question, as much as Senator Wong doesn't like being interrupted when she's not answering a question.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, I will—

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 283 of 375

Senator Wong: Senator McGrath, if I may, I don't think the chair should be treated like that by you. That was rude.

Senator McGRATH: The chair should not interrupt a senator when they're asking a question of the department.

Senator Wong: You don't need to be rude to the chair of the committee.

Senator McGRATH: You also don't need to be rude, Senator Wong—

Senator Wong: I don't think I've been rude.

Senator McGRATH: and I would ask you to stop making personal reflections upon coalition senators.

Senator Wong: I'm just telling you that I think—

Senator McGRATH: Now, if you could let me put my question to—

Senator Wong: Senator, don't attack me as a way of defending yourself. I don't think you should—

Senator McGRATH: I'm not attacking you, Senator Wong. You're running a dodgy cover-up—

Senator Wong: Excuse me—

Senator McGRATH: You're running a protection racket here, because the Prime Minister was not told about a serious terrorist incident, and we still don't know when the Prime Minister found out. He probably found out when the rest of us found out, when it became a media story.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, you were trying to put a question to Mr Hehir, and I will—

Senator McGRATH: Australians should be worried about how weak this Prime Minister is.

Senator Wong: Okay, so cue, everybody. That was for social media from Senator McGrath.

CHAIR: Mr Hehir has an answer to that question, which you were seeking a clarification to, I believe.

Mr Hehir: No, I didn't raise in my answer anything about whether something was an operational matter or not. What I reflected on was that the AFP were aware of the set of questions which are identified on page 1 of the letter, the first one of which is when the Prime Minister was first briefed of the discovery of the caravan in Dural. My understanding from the evidence provided by Mr Fletcher is that the AFP have advised that their preference is that we continue to take these questions on notice. I'm not making any claim about anything. That is the role of the AFP commissioner, which your letter also clearly states.

Senator McGRATH: So, Mr Hehir, can you tell us when the Prime Minister was briefed?

Mr Hehir: As has been advised previously, we have been asked to take these questions on notice, and that's what we intend to do.

Senator McGRATH: So—I'm just going to check—you've been asked by Minister Wong to take the questions on notice?

Mr Hehir: No, that's not my evidence.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, that is not what has been—

Senator Wong: Please don't verbal him, Senator. That's not fair.

Senator McGRATH: I'm just clarifying till we fully understand the answers that have been put here.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, you can't politicise the answer and words that have not been spoken.

Senator McGRATH: I'm trying to clarify the answers, because we're trying to find out when the Prime Minister of this country was told about an alleged serious terrorist incident, and what Australians are getting at the moment is a cover-up, because we can't find out if and when the Prime Minister was told in relation to this incident, and we're being told that we cannot ask a simple question in relation to when he was told. We're not asking about operational details. It is a very precise question.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, you know—we have been through this any number of times.

Senator Wong: Thank you.

CHAIR: It is consistent between all committees. Senator Birmingham, when he sat where Senator Wong is, referred the questions to the appropriate agency. We can now stop going around in circles. Minister?

Senator Wong: If I can respond first—and then I'll let Mr Hehir respond—I'd observe that Senator McGrath has now twice engaged in what is effectively a speech instead of questions. I would also observe that, whilst I accept that, at a political level, he's going to cast aspersions on me and what I say—that's par for the course—

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 284 of 375

Senator McGRATH: I think you're impugning my motives there, Senator Wong. I'd ask you to withdraw that, please.

Senator Wong: You have cast aspersions on what I've said. I think that's a very reasonable way of describing what's occurred.

Senator McGRATH: I think that's unfair.

Senator Wong: What I'm asking is could you please not do that to officials? It is not fair.

Senator McGRATH: I have not passed—sorry, Senator Wong, I'm going to pull you up on that.

Senator Wong: Senator, can you please stop interrupting me.

Senator McGRATH: On a point order I'm going to take on that—

Senator Wong: Can you please stop interrupting me.

Senator McGRATH: I'm taking a point of order, which I'm entitled to. Chair, would I ask that you ask the minister to stop impugning in relation to the motives and the questions that I have put to the senior bureaucrats at this table. I'm trying to clarify information in relation to a serious alleged terrorist incident. I'm entitled to ask those questions. I am not impugning their motives or passing aspersions as to them whatsoever. I would ask that to be withdrawn.

CHAIR: The standing order in relation to impugning someone's motive does not apply to committees. However, for the general conduct of this hearing today, I would ask that we focus on questions and answers.

Senator Wong: If the senator is saying that he accepts the evidence of PM&C and he understands that that's given in good faith and he's certainly not suggesting that there's any lack of good faith, then he and I are in furious agreement.

CHAIR: Very good.

Senator Wong: I think Mr Hehir was going to respond.

Mr Hehir: Senator, no, that wasn't my evidence as I recall it. I'm happy to check the record, of course. My recollection of the evidence is that Mr Fletcher had advised that, following a meeting or at a meeting between the AFP and AGD, the AFP had asked that we take these questions on notice. That is the request that I was referring to.

Senator CASH: Can I then clarify, Mr Hehir, who exactly told you to take the questions on notice at this hearing?

Mr Hehir: I was reflecting on Mr Fletcher's evidence, and I think I was clear about that.

Senator CASH: My question is who told you, not if you were reflecting on someone's evidence.

Senator Wong: I don't think he means 'reflecting' in the way you might have taken it. He was recommunicating what Mr Fletcher had said. You might want to ask the question to Mr Fletcher.

Senator CASH: When were you advised that you needed to take questions on notice in relation to this issue for this estimates hearing?

Mr Hehir: I might pass back to Mr Fletcher.

Senator CASH: No, I want your knowledge, Mr Hehir, as the person in that chair.

Mr Hehir: My understanding is that was communicated by Mr Fletcher to the committee now. That was my understanding of it.

Senator Wong: It was Mr Fletcher's evidence earlier.

Senator CASH: I understand that. I just wanted to ascertain when Mr Hehir was advised. He said that he learnt of that during this committee hearing.

Mr Hehir: I reflected on the evidence provided. I followed Mr Fletcher's evidence to the committee. I'd need to check to see whether—was I aware prior to the committee? Yes. Mr Fletcher and I talked in the hall about what the advice that he'd received from the AFP was. So I was made aware earlier this morning.

Senator CASH: Do you know when the Prime Minister was first briefed?

Mr Hehir: I answered this question previously, Chair.

Senator McGRATH: It's a separate question.

Senator CASH: It' a separate question. Do you personally have knowledge of when the Prime Minister was first briefed? I'm not asking you for the date. I'm merely asking you, as the person here representing Prime Minister and Cabinet, do you have the personal knowledge of when the Prime Minister was first briefed?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 285 of 375

Mr Hehir: I do not have that knowledge.

Senator CASH: In terms of a number of dates upon which the Prime Minister has been more than happy to advise the Australian public and journalists that he was briefed, the first one, Senator Wong, that I had put to you was 6 December 2024, whereby the Prime Minister said, in relation to the Adas Israel Synagogue attack, 'I was briefed this morning by the AFP Commissioner, Reece Kershaw.' My question to you was: why was it acceptable for the Prime Minister to advise the Australian people when he was briefed in relation to that matter but not in relation to the discovery of the caravan?

Senator Wong: I think I would refer you to earlier evidence, which is, as Commissioner Kershaw has indicated to another parliamentary committee and as Mr Fletcher has reprised today, the advice to me, in relation to this matter, is that these questions ought to be taken on notice at this time.

Senator CASH: And I'm asking you, then, why it was acceptable—

Senator Wong: I don't have any advice before me or that I can recall—I can go and seek some—about the Adass synagogue attack. But I have been provided with advice via the public hearings that Mr Kershaw was part of some two weeks ago and that was confirmed again by the discussions Mr Fletcher had.

Senator CASH: Could I take you, then, to 11 December 2024. The Prime Minister again said, of the Adass synagogue attack: 'On Friday morning, very early, I got a briefing from the AFP commissioner. On Monday we had the National Security Committee to hear a briefing and, you know, I know more about events there.' I ask you again: why was it acceptable for the Prime Minister to advise the Australian people when he was briefed and indeed that there was a meeting of the National Security Committee in relation to the Adass Israel Synagogue attack and not the discovery of an explosives-laden caravan?

Senator Wong: Well, I'd refer you to my previous answer—that the advice to me at this time, based on what the federal police commissioner has said, is that questions in relation to this issue are to be taken on notice at this time.

Senator CASH: And I'm asking you: what is the difference between 6 December 2024 and 11 December 2024, where there was an attack on a synagogue and the Prime Minister was very happy to tell the Australian people that he was told promptly by the AFP? He then made that matter public promptly. He was also then happy to tell the Australian people that the National Security Committee had been convened to hear a briefing. What is the difference?

Senator Wong: Well, Senator, the assumption in your question is that effectively you're questioning the call by the AFP. So, this is the difficulty. And I understand that this is a political point you're making. But all I can say is that I respect, and the government respects, what the federal commissioner has said, which has been confirmed in preparations for this hearing, which is that these matters are to be taken on notice at this time. That's their words, not mine. And, as a consequence, that's what I'm doing. Now, you may have a set of questions about that view. I assume you will attend the estimates to ask the federal commissioner those questions. I'm acting in accordance with the advice I've been provided for this hearing.

Senator CASH: Just to be clear, I'm not questioning the call by the Australian Federal Police. I'm questioning you sitting here representing the Prime Minister. And I would put to you that if the Prime Minister, as the leader of our nation, was actually told on 20 January, clearly like the Premier of New South Wales was, he would have actually made it public, just like Mr Minns did—which again begs the question: was the Prime Minister even told or did he find out when the incident made the press?

Senator Wong: Just to go back to the very beginning of that multiple-clause set of statements, actually you are questioning the advice, because you're criticising the position I'm taking and you choose not to respect what the AFP have said. Now, that's a matter for you. But I'm behaving in a way that is consistent with what the AFP have said.

CHAIR: Thank you, Senators. It being one o'clock, we will now break for lunch.

Senator McGRATH: We have further questions—

CHAIR: We will continue with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Thank you.

Proceedings suspended from 12:59 to 14:01

CHAIR: We resume with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Senator Duniam.

Senator DUNIAM: I wonder if I could take us to a letter that the Prime Minister sent on 15 February to representatives of the salmon industry. The letter—for context, if you are aware of it—is in relation to the uncertainty the salmon industry has had for some time. It criticises the EPBC Act not allowing for a commonsense solution on an acceptable timeline. I want to go to the action the Prime Minister intends to take,

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 286 of 375

which is stated in this letter: 'Given that'—the above—'I can confirm the Australian government will introduce legislation to ensure appropriate environmental laws are in place to continue sustainable salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour. To that end, I have asked my department, along with the department of agriculture, to work with you' et cetera. Firstly, are you familiar with the letter I'm talking about?

Ms Williams: Yes, I am.

Senator DUNIAM: Excellent. When did you receive an instruction to start drafting or working with the department of agriculture?

Ms Williams: I think it would be fair to say that the Prime Minister has indicated in his letter that he has asked our department and the department of agriculture to commence those conversations with industry and build that enduring partnership around this issue. That would have commenced with the issuing of the letter.

Senator DUNIAM: So there was no request prior to the letter being sent on 15 February.

Ms Williams: There were, of course, conversations around the merits of that. But I think it would be fair to say that the Prime Minister has indicated in his letter that this is something he would like the department to do on his behalf.

Senator DUNIAM: What has the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet done since 15 February to build, as you said and as this letter says, 'an enduring partnership providing certainty for salmon farming'?

Ms Williams: It's certainly our intention to reach out to the recipients of that letter and to commence a discussion as soon as possible around the matters that the Prime Minister has raised in the letter and to open up a conversation with industry players around these issues.

Senator DUNIAM: Has contact been made with industry representatives?

Ms Williams: I would anticipate that that would happen shortly.

Senator DUNIAM: So it hasn't happened since 15 February, when the Prime Minister flew to Tasmania to make this commitment?

Ms Williams: I would anticipate that it would happen shortly, certainly within the week.

Senator Wong: Excuse me—

Senator DUNIAM: Any updates?

Ms Williams: No, Senator.

Senator Wong: I was just clarifying precisely what you were asking, Senator Duniam. I'm sorry to interrupt your train of thought.

Senator DUNIAM: That's alright. It gave me a chance to read my messages. So we've had no contact with industry.

Senator Wong: Can I make the point, though—I'm just looking back at the letter, and I also recall media from this—that the Prime Minister had previously—is that not mine? The Prime Minister went to Strahan before Christmas 2024—is that right?

Senator DUNIAM: Correct. He did, yes.

Senator Wong: It was just the suggestion there hadn't been any conversation with industry.

Senator DUNIAM: Specific to this letter, dated 15 February, is that he can confirm, on the 15th:

… the Australian Government will introduce legislation to ensure appropriate environmental laws are in place to continue sustainable salmon farming …

That's a commitment he made nine days ago, not in 2024. I want to talk about from that point onward. It's great to have conversations and barbecues, but it's about that commitment. So no contact yet from departments to stakeholders? It will happen, as you said, as soon as possible. Within the week do you think?

Ms Williams: I would envisage we would reach out this week, that's right.

Senator DUNIAM: Is there a reason you haven't reached out since the 15th when this was issued? It's an urgent issue.

Ms Williams: No. We will reach out this week. I think it is an urgent issue, as you suggest, and we're certainly keen to commence that discussion as soon as possible.

Senator DUNIAM: Did the Prime Minister ask for contact to be made in the week immediately following this announcement, the week of 17 February?

Ms Williams: We will reach out this week, as I said.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 287 of 375

Senator DUNIAM: But there was no direction from the Prime Minister to 'please do this following my letter'?

Ms Williams: We're obviously cognisant of the letter and of the Prime Minister's commitment to industry, and with our colleagues in the department of agriculture we will reach out as a matter of priority this week.

Senator DUNIAM: Okay. What work has been undertaken internally on preparing to make contact with the industry?

Senator Wong: Which department?

Senator DUNIAM: The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet here.

Ms Williams: We would envisage that we would reach out this week. We will start a conversation with industry as a matter of priority around what elements of this partnership might be required from their part and also start the conversation. As I said, we would anticipate doing that this week and that would be the starting point of any discussion. I wouldn't want to pre-empt the nature of that discussion until we've had it—

Senator DUNIAM: No, of course not!

Ms Williams: but we would—

Senator DUNIAM: But you did indicate—

Senator Wong: Could I just—

Ms Williams: certainly do that.

Senator Wong: I'm sorry, Ms Williams; I interrupted you. Did you want to finish?

Ms Williams: No, that's fine, Senator.

Senator Wong: First, this is legislation obviously not in the PM's portfolio but in the environment—what's the whole name of that department?

Senator DUNIAM: DCCEEW.

Senator Wong: DCCEEW portfolio—I only know it by the acronym. It's climate change, environment and water, I think. There you go! I can say to you that the Prime Minister has made clear that he wants this work to be undertaken, and I understand PM&C is taking a lead role, along with DAFF. I would also make the point that it's not uncommon to see litigation under this legislation, as you well know as you've asked me many questions about this. Obviously, we're very cognisant that we want a legally robust framework going forward. Obviously, this legislation has been around for many years and to give effect to the Prime Minister's commitment, not just as a matter of form but in substance, we want to ensure that the legislation is legally robust.

Senator DUNIAM: Ms Williams, you mentioned earlier that there were conversations around the merit of this suggestion, which has now materialised in the form of a letter. Those conversations, did they go to legislative change? What sort of thing are we talking about here? As far as I can ascertain at this point in time a letter has gone. The department intends to make contact as soon as possible with the stakeholders and of course with DAFF. So you haven't made contact with DAFF yet on this issue?

Ms Williams: We have had a number of conversations with DAFF. Like I said, we're cognisant of the Prime Minister's commitment via that letter, and we have discussed with DAFF how we might go about moving towards having that conversation with industry. Like I said, we intend to do that as a matter of priority this week.

Senator DUNIAM: And has any conversation occurred with regard to the form and nature of any legislative change that might give the certainty the Prime Minister has committed to here?

Ms Williams: We will work through the details of that. I think as the Prime Minister has indicated, he has made a commitment to introducing this legislation, and the government has commenced its consideration of that. We will work with industry to discuss the elements of that and to work through how that might be progressed.

Senator DUNIAM: Okay. So we will have contact soon; there will be meetings with both stakeholders and the department of agriculture, as referenced in this letter here. And we will come back to that. Has anything been drafted at all—a draft bill or anything of that nature relating to this?

Ms Williams: The government has commenced looking at legislative options, yes.

Senator DUNIAM: In a radio interview on 19 February on ABC Radio Northern Tasmania, Leon Compton, the host of the program, said:

If this is a promise to legislate after the election, why not bring parliament back and introduce the bill so that workers, so that Tasmanians, can see it before any election? Why not make that promise?

The Prime Minister said:

Well, the bill's being drafted, and who says that parliament's not sitting again? That's very presumptuous of you, Leon.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 288 of 375

Is it true—

Senator Wong: It is a common trap, isn't it? Media often try to say, 'This is your last week.'

Senator DUNIAM: It could be. It may well have passed us now, Minister, and I suspect it has.

Senator Wong: We're still preparing for the budget.

Senator DUNIAM: Ah yes. Okay. So the Prime Minister says here that the bill is being drafted. Is that accurate?

Ms Williams: Yes, legislative drafting has commenced—

Senator DUNIAM: It has commenced. What stage is the legislating drafting process at?

Ms Williams: It's still underway.

Senator DUNIAM: Underway?

Ms Williams: And you would anticipate that that would be the case, given the Prime Minister has made the commitment to work with industry on the elements of it. The Prime Minister has also made the commitment that the legislation will be introduced at the next sitting period. Again, you would anticipate that that would mean that work has commenced on this.

Senator DUNIAM: When you say 'underway'—if I can just try and drill down on that a little bit more—is there a set of clauses on paper that you will present to industry when you first meet with them?

Senator Wong: I'll let Ms Williams answer that, but you might recall from previous positions you've held, Senator Duniam, that you generally start at a higher-level set of policy propositions before you get to precise clauses. The Prime Minister has made clear that he wants certainty provided and a commonsense approach, as per the letter. Obviously, there will be a set of discussions about what the best way to give effect to that is.

And I again make the point that this legislation is a highly litigated act. We are very conscious that, if you were serious, and we are, about providing the salmon industry with certainty, then you would want the legislation to be very carefully crafted—not only the policy propositions to be the subject of consultation but the legislation to be crafted quite carefully—because you know it's going to be litigated.

Senator DUNIAM: Yes. Our friends at the EDO, for example—

Senator Wong: No, I'm not going to—obviously, people have a set of views about things, and there's a reasonable amount of litigation under this act.

Senator DUNIAM: So when was the first drafting request sent to drafters, given this process is underway?

Ms Williams: You'd be familiar with the fact that most legislative drafting and policy consideration of this nature tends to be a matter for the cabinet. And generally we wouldn't comment on the status of matters before cabinet or the timeframes that sit around them in these hearings.

Senator DUNIAM: So this is currently before cabinet?

Ms Williams: This would be a matter that would be considered by cabinet. That's correct.

Senator DUNIAM: Are you making a public interest immunity claim, in terms of the date?

Ms Williams: No.

Senator DUNIAM: Minister?

Senator Wong: Ms Williams is outlining the cabinet remit on this.

Senator DUNIAM: Yes. I'm sorry; are you telling me you won't tell me when the drafting request was sent because it might somehow reveal the deliberations of cabinet? Is that what you're telling me?

Ms Williams: It's a general convention that we won't comment on either the timing or the nature of the deliberations of matters that would go before or in front of cabinet.

Senator Wong: But I'm conscious of your interest in this, so I'm happy to take this issue on notice—

Senator DUNIAM: That would be most appreciated.

Senator Wong: and see if there's anything we can provide to you.

Senator DUNIAM: Exactly—and I expect we'll get the answer after there's been a visit to Government House. I have a final couple of questions in relation to this. The letter itself says that 'it's clear to me the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act'—which the minister has referred to—'being out of date as it is, doesn't allow for commonsense solutions or an acceptable outcome.' So will it be a change to the EPBC Act or to some other piece of legislation related to another law on this?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 289 of 375

Ms Williams: Those sorts of decisions are a matter for government.

Senator DUNIAM: Okay. Minister, what do you think it will be—a change to this act, or we're not sure yet?

Senator Wong: Well, that will be a matter for government—

Senator DUNIAM: And you are part of government.

Senator Wong: Yes, I am.

Senator DUNIAM: A very senior part of government.

Senator Wong: The response I would make is this: actually what you're asking points precisely to some of the points I was raising earlier—that we want to make sure that the Prime Minister's commitment is delivered in the most legally robust way that it can be. Without pre-empting or disclosing government consideration of this, there are different ways in which you can provide that certainty, and we'll certainly look at those and make a decision about what is the most appropriate way forward.

Senator DUNIAM: Given that it is specific to the deficiencies of the EPBC Act, why does the letter not involve the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water but just PM&C and DAFF?

Ms Williams: It's not unusual for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to be asked to facilitate a complex matter across different portfolio agencies within government. DAFF is the department with responsibility for this particular industry, and so you would expect DAFF to be engaged in those sorts of conversations. So I don't think there's anything unusual in this.

Senator DUNIAM: My question was about—the act referenced in the letter is administered by DCCEEW, not DAFF. Yes, DAFF has responsibility for the fisheries industry more broadly although not a great deal with regard to its operations in coastal waters of Tasmania. We normally look after three nautical miles and beyond, to be absolutely clear. So why is DCCEEW not specifically referenced here?

Ms Williams: I was explaining why PM&C and DAFF would be specifically referenced in that letter. But the way in which PM&C operates is something of this nature: we would anticipate working across all relevant departments within government. I think that's just an underlying assumption on our part as to how we would manage an issue of this nature. DAFF, as I said, has specific industry responsibility and therefore a relationship with those industries and would be a key player in these kinds of conversations as a matter of course.

Senator DUNIAM: So they will be part of your conversations in the coming week?

Ms Williams: The department of agriculture?

Senator DUNIAM: DCCEEW.

Ms Williams: I would anticipate that we'll work closely with DCCEEW on any elements that would relate to legislation, yes.

Senator DUNIAM: Has Minister Plibersek been involved in these discussions?

Senator Wong: Which discussions?

Senator DUNIAM: The discussions around the formation of the conclusion that we need to amend the act specifically for salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour?

Senator Wong: The Prime Minister consults ministers as is appropriate, and I think you would anticipate that in relation to these sorts of matters there would be consultations between the relevant minister and the Prime Minister.

Senator DUNIAM: So that's a yes? The minister has been—

Senator Wong: The answer is as I gave it.

Senator DUNIAM: That is the longest 'maybe' I've ever had! But is it a commitment to have these laws introduced and passed before the election, or is that not the government's commitment?

Senator Wong: Well, I think the Prime Minister has said—I'm just trying to look at this letter—

Senator DUNIAM: You said 'next sitting', and that is scheduled for, I think, late March?

Senator Wong: The 25th, or the 24th.

Senator DUNIAM: So the government will have those laws ready for late March?

Senator Wong: That is the intention.

Senator DUNIAM: So the drafting process will commence in early March and be concluded by late March—is that right, Ms Williams?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 290 of 375

Ms Williams: The Prime Minister has committed to introducing legislation in the next sitting period, so that's right.

Senator DUNIAM: In March—yes. So we had better get our skates on. Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Senator Pocock.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I have some questions about the National Capital Investment Framework. Whilst those officials come up, can I ask, on the salmon letter from the Prime Minister, whether or not DCCEEW were consulted before the Prime Minister's letter was sent.

Ms Williams: I am not aware that they were.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: And is that not a problem under our Westminster system?

Ms Williams: The way I would characterise this is that there have been numerous cross-government conversations on this matter. It would be unusual, I think, for a department to be consulted on the content of a letter from the Prime Minister, I think as—

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Even when he is giving a commitment to essentially override the laws that another minister—

Senator Wong: No, 'to change' the laws, Senator. Sorry; it's the verb I was—

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Sure; 'change'—for the same ministry?

Ms Williams: I think what I was suggesting, Senator, was that it would be unusual for a department to be consulted in that regard. Minister Wong of course made reference to any consultations that may occur at ministerial level, which is a different matter.

Senator Wong: I can—

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Minister Wong rightly talked about the complexity of the EPBC Act. So I would have thought that, before a Prime Minister gives this coverall promise to the salmon industry, you'd maybe check in and say: 'Hey, the PM wants to do this. Is it possible? Is this robust? Is it going to be overturned?' But I'm hearing that it was just PM&C and the PMO.

Senator Wong: I want to be clear that the advice to me or my understanding is that Minister Plibersek was consulted on the policy decision and also the content of the letter.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Has PM&C briefed the Prime Minister on the plight of the maugean skate in Macquarie Harbour?

Ms Williams: I am aware that these conversations have occurred. I think, as I said a bit earlier, we do provide advice in a range of contexts, including in the context of cabinet. Convention is that we wouldn't generally refer to the nature or the content of that advice. It occurs within a cabinet committee—

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I'm interested in advice directly to the Prime Minister, not necessarily to cabinet.

Ms Williams: We would brief the Prime Minister in the context of cabinet discussions.

Senator Wong: Because they're PM&C, primarily their briefing to the Prime Minister is usually in the context of cabinet or cabinet committees. So Ms Williams is flagging the red line that is often the issue in this, but if I can I'll perhaps answer at a political level—and I understand, Senator Pocock, you have a different view on this issue. It has certainly been well litigated. The Prime Minister is very aware of the issues with the maugean skate, and in fact I think there is a reference, is there not, to the population in the letter, about the scientific report from IMAS.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Minister Wong, can I take it from that that the Prime Minister's letter to the salmon industry went through cabinet before it was sent?

Senator Wong: I don't discuss cabinet deliberations, but you can take it from the advice I've given you that Minister Plibersek was obviously part of these discussions.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I'm going to move on to the National Capital Investment Framework, if that's alright.

Senator Wong: Sure.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Are you coming back to salmon on this round of the table?

Senator Wong: It's alright with us.

CHAIR: Let's conclude on the salmon, then.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Senator COLBECK: I have just one question. Is there a proposal to issue an exposure draft of the legislation before parliament sits?

Ms Williams: Again, that is a decision for government.

Senator Wong: I'll take that on notice. I'm not sure what has been contemplated—

CHAIR: I've got five minutes before we go back to the coalition.

Senator COLBECK: We'd be interested to see what's happening, clearly.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: You said the NCIF was announced in July 2023. I'm interested in what it is. What is the framework?

Ms Williams: The framework is a commitment between our two governments—the Commonwealth government and the ACT government—to work together to invest in further infrastructure in Canberra.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: But that sounds like just a commitment. Is there an actual framework behind that, or is that the extent of it?

Ms Williams: It is a set of commitments, as you say, that sits under that description of the framework.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Is that set of commitments able to be tabled?

Ms Williams: I think we might need to take that on notice, unless colleagues are aware.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: What's the reason for that?

Ms Luchetti: We'll have to take that on notice as a first step just to think about the status of it and whether it went through—

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Cabinet in confidence?

Ms Luchetti: I just need to take that on notice.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I'd be keen to have a reason.

Ms Luchetti: I have to take it on notice from a cabinet perspective.

Senator Wong: She's taking it on notice to see what, if anything, she can answer, Senator.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Sure. Is there a budget stream dedicated to the framework?

Ms Williams: Again, I may just refer to the fact that a lot of the information and details with respect to this would be something that may or may not be considered in the cabinet context. We couldn't pre-empt what we may see in budget around something of this nature.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Okay. Who's the decision-maker on requests submitted under the framework? The department of infrastructure know absolutely nothing about it and don't have a single document that mentions the National Capital Investment Framework, so I'm interested, given it's all sitting in PM&C: who's the decision-maker?

Ms Williams: At this point in time, I think it will be appropriate to direct questions with respect to the framework to the department of infrastructure, transport—

Senator DAVID POCOCK: No, sorry. They know nothing.

Ms Williams: I am aware that this is a more recent transfer of responsibility. I understand you did request some information; at that time, I suspect, they did not have responsibility for the framework. More recently, that responsibility has been transferred to that department.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Can I ask for the date of transfer?

Ms Williams: I'd have to take that on notice. I don't have that with me here.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Quite recently—I think in the last couple of sitting weeks—Minister King's office has advised me that NCIF projects do not fall with them. It's fairly recent.

Senator Wong: That's what the minister said to you?

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Yes, through the OPD.

Senator Wong: Oh, through the OPD. Okay.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: How many projects have been submitted under the framework since it was first set up?

Senator Wong: Senator, I can undertake to try and sort this out. I can say I know how irritating it is to be bounced from committee to committee. It's not an area I'm particularly close to, but my recollection was that infrastructure had responsibility or the lead.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 292 of 375

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Sure.

Senator Wong: I'm happy to try clarifying that during the course of the day, certainly before—when are the infrastructure estimates?

CHAIR: Today.

Senator Wong: Okay. Perhaps we can try clarifying that for you.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Maybe I'll just try to get a little information if possible. How many projects have been submitted under the framework since it was first announced? Surely there's some info you can give me.

Ms Williams: We would have to take that explicitly on notice. I'm aware that there have been a number of commitments made publicly to projects, but I do not have a list of projects here in front of me. I'd be happy to provide you with that information, however, on notice.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Do you have the date of the last project that was submitted?

Ms Williams: I do not, no.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: So I'm none the wiser as to what's going on here. Obviously, PM&C said that my OPD couldn't be complied with; you said there were too many documents to sort through. So I turn up to estimates to try and find out a bit more, and it seems like you can't even give me some very basic information on something that was meant to be essentially a city partnership type arrangement. After putting a lot of pressure on the government, stakeholders are saying that the ACT is the only jurisdiction without a city partnership. The National Capital Investment Framework was announced, and since then it's this secret black hole that we're not allowed to know about. It just seems strange.

Ms Williams: The way I'd characterise it is that this is an ongoing piece of work with the ACT government to identify and work through what those priority projects for investment might look like under the framework. Like I said, I'm aware of a number of announcements around this, but the full suite of what the framework will cover, I think, is still underway, which is why I don't have any information here in front of me today. But, like I said, I'm very happy to look into this and provide you with what detail we can.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Before I head over to Infrastructure estimates, can you just give me details about—you said it's been handed over to the department of infrastructure in its entirety in terms of decision-making and in terms of delivery. Which parts have been and which parts haven't been? Will they have all the files that you've—

Ms Williams: I understand that the department will work across the relevant portfolios within government—because there will no doubt be a number of projects that will have to be worked through—and would take the lead on negotiations with the ACT government on this matter. So the department of infrastructure should be able to talk to you about where they're at within that process. But, like I said, I'm happy to take on notice your question to this committee and see what information we can provide you with.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: Thank you.

Senator Wong: Senator, if you're heading straight over there, I may not have a chance to have a conversation with anybody before you get there, but obviously I understand you want to pursue questions about this. I would make the self-evident point that whether it's under the framework or not—and I don't know which of the projects have been—there has, obviously, been substantial investment by this government into the ACT, whether it's light rail, the AIS, the William Hovell Drive duplication or, frankly, the very substantial additional funding to the cultural institutions which Senator Gallagher pressed for through earlier budgets. You would know the situation that most of the cultural institutions were left in under the previous government. I take your point about the framework, but I would just make the point that there has been a significant amount of investment.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I guess that's what I'm trying to get to the bottom of, because investment in our cultural institutions, to me, is something that every government should be doing. I know there were some very serious issues over the last 10 years, but the NCIF—

Senator Wong: We've announced over $500 million of new funding, additional funding—further funding.

Senator DAVID POCOCK: I'm just trying to work out what the framework is going to deliver, but thank you.

Senator Wong: Sure.

CHAIR: Senator Cash.

Senator CASH: Can we return to the caravan issue, please. Minister, we've gone through 6 December 2024, and the Prime Minister, in relation to the Adass Israel Synagogue attack, making certain statements that he was

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 293 of 375

briefed by the AFP. On 11 December 2024, again in relation to the Adass Israel Synagogue attack, he stated he was briefed by the AFP but also that there had been a National Security Committee hearing. I want to go to 12 July 2024. The Prime Minister said of a Russian spy in the military who was charged:

Well, I've been briefed extensively by our security agencies, including the AFP, including as late as this morning but also previously, I spoke with Commissioner Kershaw prior to the press conference. They have outlined the details.

Again, my question is: why was it acceptable for the Prime Minister to advise on 12 July 2024 that he had been briefed extensively by both the security agencies and the AFP when we are unable to establish when the Prime Minister was first briefed in relation to the Dural caravan incident?

Senator Wong: This is really the same question we've gone to many times this morning, and my answer is the same. I'd refer you to the evidence of the Australian Federal Police commissioner and, as a consequence, I'll take any question on notice at this time.

Senator CASH: Yes, and the reason we're going through it—I'm sure you understand, Senator Wong—is that the Prime Minister, on certain occasions when it's convenient to him, is more than happy to stand up and advise that he was briefed by the AFP or the security agencies or alternatively held a National Security Committee meeting. But, on this particular occasion, we're unable to find out even the simplest of dates when the Prime Minister was first briefed, despite the fact that, as I said, Premier Minns was more than happy to be held accountable by both the people of New South Wales and the people of Australia. Can I then take you through 16 April 2024. This was actually said in multiple interviews. The Prime Minister said of the Wakeley church incident:

We will have a meeting of the National Security Committee meeting this morning. I was briefed by the head of the Australian Federal Police, Commissioner Kershaw, and the Director-General of ASIO early this morning and we'll be having that meeting.

He also said:

I was briefed this morning by the AFP and by our security agencies. We'll have a meeting of the National Security Committee this morning as well here in Canberra.

He also said:

And this morning we have had a meeting of the National Security Committee to receive formal briefings, following informal briefings that occurred earlier this morning.

And then he also said:

We have had this morning briefings to myself as Prime Minister. We've already had a meeting of the National Security Committee.

And again, I ask you: why was it acceptable to say when he was briefed in relation to 16 April 2024 and talk about the National Security Committee meeting when, in relation to the Dural caravan matter, he is unable to provide us the simplest of dates?

Senator Wong: I appreciate that you have determined a political strategy and you will execute it. I'm not determining a political strategy. I have received advice and have read the evidence from the commissioner and I'm going to adhere to it, which is why I said at the outset that questions on this matter will be taken on notice at this time.

Senator CASH: With all due respect, Senator Wong, it is not a political strategy. What we have here is, quite frankly, a cover-up by the Prime Minister. He is unable to tell us whether he was briefed on the 19th, the 20th, the 21st, the 22nd, the 23rd, the 24th, the 25th, the 26th, the 27th—

CHAIR: Senator Cash, you have traversed this over and over again.

Senator CASH: This is a completely new question in terms of clearly articulating, for the benefit of the committee, that there are—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine—10 dates on which the Prime Minister could have been briefed prior to the Dural caravan incident becoming public. As I said previously, we know Premier Minns was briefed. He stood up on the 20th. That's the second date here. The incident occurred on the 19th. Again, I am at a loss to understand how there is any danger to any investigation by disclosing this date.

CHAIR: Senator Cash, it is not for you to—

Senator CASH: It is because they're my thoughts.

CHAIR: accept or disagree with the grounds; that is a question for the Senate.

Senator CASH: They're my thoughts.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 294 of 375

Senator Wong: Senator, I always appreciate you sharing your thoughts, and I'm sure that's mutual. The point I would make again is that there is an ongoing investigation. Our first priority is to ensure that those investigations are completed and that, if there are individuals or entities that need to be apprehended or charged, that occurs. We're cognisant of the advice that the Australian Federal Police have provided. I would have thought, Senator Cash, that you might take account of what has been said by authorities who are responsible for assuring the safety of Australians. If you don't wish to listen to what they have to say, that's a matter for you. We have, and that is why I've taken the matter on notice at this time.

Senator CASH: Unfortunately, given that the Premier of New South Wales was able to advise not just the people of New South Wales but also the people of Australia that he was briefed by the NSW Police on the caravan incident on 20 January, the Prime Minister is, quite frankly, looking weak now in the eyes of the Australian public because he is unable to provide a simple date. Has the Prime Minister spoken to Premier Minns about the fact that Premier Minns was happy to publicly disclose when he was briefed?

Senator Wong: That was a set of opinions in a question. It was a set of opinions designed to deliver the political strategy in which you're engaged.

Senator CASH: Again, with all due respect—

Senator Wong: I hadn't finished. I let you finish.

Senator CASH: please don't verbal me in relation to a political strategy.

CHAIR: Senator!

Senator Wong: You verballed the Prime Minister, but you don't like it when someone points out you're doing that.

Senator CASH: How did I verbal the Prime Minister—by calling him weak?

Senator Wong: But I'm going to—

Senator McGRATH: If you just told the truth about when he was informed of the incident—

CHAIR: Senator McGrath!

Senator McGRATH: we wouldn't be asking this question.

Senator CASH: One of the questions that does actually—

CHAIR: Alright, you two can sit there and debate this for yourselves—

Senator Wong: We're happy to leave—

CHAIR: and Minister Wong can sit at the table and—

Senator Wong: and you can just do pieces to camera if that's what you'd like. Am I able to respond? The Prime Minister speaks with premiers and chief ministers regularly. I don't propose to go into details of any of those discussions. In relation to the issues you've raised, I refer back to my opening statement and every answer I've given since.

Senator CASH: My question was not in relation to premiers generally but in relation to the Premier of New South Wales, who stood up publicly and advised the Australian people and the New South Wales people that he was briefed on the caravan incident on 20 January. The Prime Minister is, despite questioning over a considerable period now, unable to tell the Australian people when he was briefed. My question is: has the Prime Minister specifically spoken to Premier Minns in relation to the fact that Premier Minns was able to tell the Australian people when he was briefed, but the Prime Minister is unable to?

Senator Wong: I refer to my previous answer. But I would again make the point that you are committed to not listening to the Federal Police. You're committed to not listening to ASIO. I think people watching this might well ask themselves, 'Why is it that Senator Cash, such a senior member of Peter Dutton's team, ignores the advice of these agencies and persists with this line of questioning?'

Senator CASH: The public just wants to know when he was briefed. They are at a loss to understand how Premier Minns in New South Wales was able to tell the public when he was briefed, but the Prime Minister of Australia—who on 6 December 2024, 11 December 2024, 12 July 2024 and 16 April 2024 was happy to tell the Australian people exactly what, where, when, why and how—on this particular date was unable to. One might even start to think that there was a breakdown of communication when it came to the Dural caravan incident and that the Prime Minister was not told.

Senator Wong: I think that's a statement, not a question.

CHAIR: Indeed—

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 295 of 375

Senator CASH: I'll hand the call to Senator McGrath.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: I think this confirms, Minister, that you said before that you received advice in relation to the strategy that you're undertaking here—

Senator Wong: It's not a strategy.

Senator McGRATH: It's clearly a strategy—

Senator Wong: No, no.

Senator McGRATH: There is a cover-up here at the moment in relation to a very simple answer to a very simple question about when the Prime Minister was told. It is quite clear that neither the AFP nor ASIO have said that the issue of when the Prime Minister was told actually pertains to an operational matter. There is no advice, in terms of Commissioner Kershaw's appearance at the committee hearing several weeks ago or anything else, that says the date of when the Prime Minister was told is an operational date. Have you received advice that the date the Prime Minister was told—or he may not have been told still—is an operational matter?

Senator Wong: In accordance with the evidence that the commissioner of police gave, I am taking questions about this matter on notice at this time.

Senator McGRATH: That's not what—

Senator Wong: That's the end of it full stop. I understand that you want to use particular phrases and grabs to try to get up on social media or whatever and you'll keep asking the same question. I will keep giving the same answer, and it's a responsible position.

Senator McGRATH: It has nothing to do with social media. It has to do with the safety of Australians. It has to do with a weak Prime Minister who is not telling Australians what is going on. But I'm going to read—

Senator Wong: I would have thought—

Senator McGRATH: I'm going to read—

Senator Wong: No, I'll respond—

Senator McGRATH: I'm going to read—

Senator Wong: Senator—

Senator McGRATH: I've got a question to put to you, Senator Wong.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, you don't have the call.

Senator McGRATH: I was asking a question.

CHAIR: I'll remove the call from you and rotate it. However, you can proceed with a question provided that, when you make a statement that is motivated—

Senator McGRATH: Please don't impugn my motives.

CHAIR: that is phrased not as a question, those at the table are still entitled to respond.

Senator McGRATH: There were several questions in what I just asked.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, you simply made a statement.

Senator McGRATH: That is not correct.

Senator Wong: I'm happy to respond to one of the many egregious things you said there.

Senator McGRATH: There was nothing egregious in what I said.

Senator Wong: The senator talks about the safety of Australians. That is our No. 1 priority. Integral to that is taking advice from and working with national security agencies and the AFP. It is a pity that the opposition chooses to ignore them.

Senator McGRATH: Senator Wong, neither of those agencies have said that the date in question is an operational matter, so there is a cover-up here in relation to—

CHAIR: That is not for you to determine, Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: I am going to questions in relation to what Commissioner Kershaw has said in response to a letter that Senator Cash and Senator Paterson sent to the commissioner. It reads: 'Dear senators, thank you for your correspondence dated 18 February in advance of Australian Federal Police's appearance at Senate estimates on Tuesday 24 February 2025. The AFP values the interest shown in relation to this ongoing joint investigation. As Australia's national policing agency, the AFP's main role is to protect Australians and Australia's interests. We

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 296 of 375

are committed to maintaining accountability and transparency. However, this must be carefully balanced with the importance of maintaining the integrity of operations and requirements to act in accordance with legal frameworks. I note that we previously provided evidence on this matter during the parliamentary'—

CHAIR: Senator, are you seeking to table that?

Senator McGRATH: no, I'm just reading it out because I don't want to go through what we had before—'joint committee on law enforcement annual report 2023-24 hearing. The AFP looks forward to assisting the Senate legal and constitutional affairs committee next week.' My question to you, Senator Wong, is: the commissioner hasn't said there that the date is an operational issue and cannot be answered, so on what—

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, the commissioner did say it is a matter for that hearing this week—

Senator McGRATH: He didn't actually say that.

CHAIR: not for this hearing.

Senator McGRATH: He didn't say that, so the question—

CHAIR: We have gone over this over and over again—

Senator McGRATH: Don't verbal me.

CHAIR: I'm not verballing you.

Senator McGRATH: You actually are verballing me.

CHAIR: I am just saying that if you ask the same question you get the same answer.

Senator McGRATH: You're running a protection racket on a protection racket here at the moment. Senator Wong is a very capable minister and does not need you to run interference for her.

Senator Wong: Well, there you go! I got a vote of confidence from Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: My question to you, Senator Wong—I didn't say you answer questions, though—is: what specific advice are you relying upon not to answer the question as to when the Prime Minister was told? We have the letter here from the AFP, which I'm more than happy to table if that assists the smooth running of this committee. What specific advice is there that goes to the date—not operational matters, the date?

Senator Wong: Have you finished?

Senator McGRATH: Yes.

Senator Wong: That was a very long speech, but I'm happy to respond to—

Senator McGRATH: A long question.

Senator Wong: a very long speech and contribution. First, again, I have outlined the basis on which I'm taking these matters on notice in my opening statement and, frankly, ad nauseam since. Second, if you have questions about the AFP's letter to you, I'm not the person who can respond to those. You should put those to the AFP at the appropriate Senate estimates.

Senator McGRATH: Mr Hehir, when did the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet first become aware of the discovery of the caravan?

Mr Fletcher: We are taking all questions in relation to the caravan on notice today.

Senator McGRATH: So, we have a Prime Minister who leads a government that said it was going to be the most transparent ever, and I'm asking a question as to when the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet first became aware of the discovery of the caravan, and you're taking that on notice?

Mr Fletcher: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: Who was notified in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet?

Senator Wong: He has just said he will take it on notice.

Senator McGRATH: It's a different question, and as per your opening statement—

Senator Wong: It's actually the same question.

Senator McGRATH: No, the first question was 'when did' and this one is 'who was'.

Senator Wong: Which assumes a certain set of things. If I may, it's not for the officer to have to deal with a political proposition like you just put to him—

Senator McGRATH: Asking a question about the safety of Australians is not a political proposition.

Senator Wong: May I finish? That is not what I was saying, and you know that, so please don't misrepresent me. It's not honest. That is not what I said. But it is not for the officer to have to deal with a political

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 297 of 375

proposition—that's for me. The officer has said all questions in relation to the caravan incident will be taken on notice. It's consistent with the evidence he gave before. If you have a problem with that, you should come to me and not berate the officer.

Senator McGRATH: I did not berate the officer. Please let me continue my questioning of the department. I will just repeat the question: who was notified in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet?

Mr Fletcher: I refer to my earlier answer: all of the questions regarding the caravan are being taken on notice today.

Senator McGRATH: When were these persons first notified?

Mr Fletcher: I'll take that on notice.

Senator McGRATH: How was this communication made?

Mr Fletcher: I will take that on notice.

Senator McGRATH: When did the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet advise the Prime Minister's Office?

Mr Fletcher: I will take that on notice as well.

Senator McGRATH: When the Prime Minister is briefed on a matter by the AFP, at what point does the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet become involved?

Mr Fletcher: I will take that on notice as well.

Senator CASH: That's a generic question, with all due respect.

Senator McGRATH: With due respect—

Senator Wong: He's also allowed to take that on notice.

Senator McGRATH: In terms of the strategy that was outlined at the beginning of this hearing—

Senator Wong: Senator—

Senator McGRATH: Senator Wong I will come to you shortly. You said all questions in relation to the caravan would be taken on notice. This question clearly does not relate to the caravan. It would appear that there is a strategy for all questions in relation to anything to do with national security is now being taken on notice; is that correct?

Senator Wong: Hang on, there were a range of propositions there, a number of them quite political. The officer is entitled to take a question on notice—full stop. I've given you an indication as to the reason the issues that have been traversed for a lot of this hearing would be taken on notice, but the officer is entitled, separate to those propositions, to take questions on notice.

Senator McGRATH: Do you have knowledge of the answer?

Mr Fletcher: As a general proposition, when there is an incident of national security significance, our role is to ensure that the Prime Minister's staff are aware of it. Typically, the operational agency dealing with that incident will also brief the Prime Minister's Office.

Senator McGRATH: Mr Hehir, are you able to assist with my question?

Mr Hehir: I think Mr Fletcher has just answered your question.

Senator McGRATH: As a matter of course, when the Prime Minister is briefed on a matter—the question was, 'At what time does the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet become involved?' I don't believe you have answered that aspect of the question. Mr Hehir, are you able to assist?

Senator Wong: 'At what time'—what does that mean? I thought that you asked a general proposition, Mr Fletcher gave you a general answer, and now you are asking 'What time?' I don't understand.

Senator McGRATH: At what point does Prime Minister and Cabinet become involved?

Mr Fletcher: As soon as possible is the simple answer.

Senator McGRATH: Is Prime Minister and Cabinet briefed at the same time as the Prime Minister?

Mr Fletcher: Every case is different. There are times when an incident occurs and the operational agency will directly brief the Prime Minister's office prior to officers of our department learning about the incident. I can think of one: the incident in Bondi last year was one such occasion. Our job is, as soon as we find out information of relevance, to inform the Prime Minister's staff.

Senator McGRATH: So you inform the staff. Let's step back here a little bit. The Prime Minister is briefed by the AFP, and—

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 298 of 375

Mr Fletcher: That may occur at times directly, ahead of us finding out about a particular thing, yes.

Senator McGRATH: Would the staff of the Prime Minister's office be briefed before the Prime Minister?

Senator Wong: What—

Senator McGRATH: This goes to process, Senator Wong.

Senator Wong: No, but he can't answer, 'Would they be briefed'—

CHAIR: How would he know the answer?

Senator Wong: Yes. He can only answer what he can answer. Do you see what I'm saying? He's just given evidence about different ways in which information might be provided in this context, but you've asked him a general question.

Senator McGRATH: What I'm getting to is: is there a process in place, in terms of the briefing of the Prime Minister by the AFP and whether Prime Minister and Cabinet are briefed at the same time? I think there's been an answer in relation to that, but now I'm asking: at what point are the staff within the Prime Minister's office briefed?

Mr Fletcher: I'll repeat my earlier answer: as soon as possible. That is our role.

Senator McGRATH: Is there a process document of guidelines for the briefing of the Prime Minister or the staff by the AFP in relation to incidents?

Mr Fletcher: We have the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework, which is the general overarching framework for handling incidents, whether it's a major bushfire, terrorist attack et cetera.

Senator McGRATH: And there have been no breaches of that policy in the last 12 months?

Mr Fletcher: As I said, things happen and they are dealt with as quickly as possible depending on the time of day, whether it's weekend, evening or whatever. Our role, as a policy agency, is to ensure that the Prime Minister's staff are up to date with what's going on of policy significance. Operational agencies have their own channels. We talk to each other as often as we can.

Senator McGRATH: Mr Hehir, has the Secretaries Committee on National Security been briefed about the discovery of the caravan?

Mr Fletcher: I'll take that on notice.

Senator McGRATH: If so, when?

Senator Wong: We wouldn't usually disclose what happens in SCNS.

Senator McGRATH: Unfortunately, Minister, because I'm getting the same answer to all of the questions I'm putting to you, that you'll take it on notice—

Senator Wong: I'm just making the point that SCNS, obviously, is part of the NSC and cabinet processes, so it would be unusual in this context, under either government, to provide information about what SCNS has or has not been discussing. You've asked a question; we'll take the question on notice. But I'm saying to you that it's an entity which has existed for some time, and I don't think either side of politics would be in the business of disclosing what has been or has not been on the SCNS agenda.

Senator McGRATH: In terms of the guidelines that you follow, often prime ministers are very busy and staff are briefed ahead of the Prime Minister. Would you brief the Prime Minister's staff in relation to a national security issue before the Prime Minister is briefed?

Mr Fletcher: We communicate directly with the Prime Minister's advisers, and how they then brief the Prime Minister or whether there is other direct briefing of the Prime Minister are not matters to which we are privy.

Senator McGRATH: In relation to the caravan incident, were the Prime Minister's staff advised prior to the matter becoming public?

Mr Fletcher: I'll take that on notice.

Senator McGRATH: Have the Premier of New South Wales or his office communicated to the Prime Minister or the Prime Minister's office about the discovery of the caravan, and, if so, when?

Mr Fletcher: I'll take that on notice.

Senator McGRATH: Has there been any communication between the office of the Premier of New South Wales or his department and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet about the discovery of the caravan, and, if so, when?

Mr Fletcher: I'll take that question on notice as well.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 299 of 375

Senator CASH: I just have one more line of questioning. During question time on 6 February 2025, Senator Paterson asked the following:

On 21 January, National Cabinet agreed to establish a new national database to record antisemitic crime and other antisemitic incidents. Minister, has the database been established, and, if so, how many incidents of antisemitism has it recorded so far?

I also note this was in the letter sent on 18 February 2025. That was the question. Minister Watt, at the conclusion of question time, came back with additional information and advised as follows:

I'm advised that the Attorney-General's Department has commenced work with key Commonwealth agencies on this project. Obviously, a national database of this kind cannot be stood up overnight by the Commonwealth government alone. It is a significant undertaking that requires work across all jurisdictions. It's work that this government is committed to leading, in consultation with the states and territories and with community organisations like the Executive Council of Australian Jewry.

Could you advise: what role is PM&C playing in the standing-up of the database? How many staff are involved and at what level?

Mr Walter: We have a very limited role. The work is being led by the Attorney-General's Department. You would be aware, I'm sure, that the Standing Council of Attorneys-General met on Friday, discussed the database there and agreed to take forward work on the database. We have ongoing engagement with the Attorney-General's Department about it, but it's more of a monitoring role, and it's pretty light touch at this stage. We don't have any dedicated staff in relation to the database.

Senator CASH: Thank you very much. Will the Attorney-General's Department be providing regular updates to Prime Minister and Cabinet?

Mr Walter: We keep in touch with them on a whole range of issues. That's not in a formal sense, but we will be updated informally on a regular basis, yes.

Senator Wong: Senator, as you probably would know, National Cabinet has made a range of decisions, but often those particular portfolio departments might be responsible for the implementation. This is one such area. I did ask that people come back to me ahead of the estimates hearing, because you or Senator Paterson had asked that question. As the officer says, the Standing Council of Attorneys-General—SCAG is a somewhat unfortunate acronym, but anyway—has established the working group, which is to be led by the AG's department. So they obviously can talk to you a bit more. I would make the point that the decision to implement the national cabinet decision is to develop a national hate crimes and incidents database. Obviously a number of organisations, including ECAJ and others, have called for the establishment of a hate crimes database for some years.

Senator CASH: Is there anyone in the Prime Minister's Office who has the responsibility or involvement in the establishment of the database?

Mr Walter: As the proposal has developed through both the national cabinet process and the usual kinds of formal approval processes that we go through, we do work with the Prime Minister's Office.

Senator CASH: Perhaps I should ask the minister then: is there anyone in the Prime Minister's Office who has responsibility or involvement in the establishment of the database?

Senator Wong: In addition to the Attorney-General's office?

Senator CASH: Correct.

Senator Wong: I'll take that on notice.

Senator CASH: This was the centrepiece of the national cabinet on antisemitism. Is this going to be a regular agenda item for national cabinet?

Ms Steel: The agendas for national cabinet are set at the discretion of the Prime Minister as chair, and it depends on what's appropriate.

Senator CASH: Minister, is this going to be the database that's a regular agenda item for national cabinet?

Senator Wong: That's ultimately a matter for the Prime Minister, as Ms Steel said, but I would make the point that generally, under both governments, national cabinet is not necessarily used as the implementing body. The responsibility for implementation and timelines is with the federal and state and territory attorneys-general. That's what the SCAG is.

Senator CASH: I know that, but we have a national crisis on antisemitism.

Senator Wong: That wasn't what you asked me.

Senator CASH: I know what the SCAG is, and I'm a little bit surprised, to be honest with you—

Senator Wong: Senator, let me explain. You were asking me specifically about the database.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 300 of 375

Senator CASH: Correct.

Senator Wong: I'm making the point that the implementation of that is in the Attorney-General's portfolio. The broader issue, about how we deal with the unacceptable rise of antisemitic hatred and crimes in this country, is obviously something that leaders will continue to discuss because, as I've said repeatedly, these are not only attacks on the Jewish community; they are attacks on what it is to be Australian.

Senator CASH: This was, as I said, the key outcome of the national cabinet on antisemitism. I would have therefore thought that the Prime Minister at the very least would be on the front foot about the database. But it would appear that the involvement of his department is only light touch, according to Mr Walter. I find that very disappointing. Do we have knowledge as to when this database is expected be operational?

Senator Wong: These are probably matters you should address to the Attorney-General's Department.

Senator CASH: Minister, with all due respect, this is the Prime Minister of our country. It is an outcome of national cabinet. I would have thought the Prime Minister had a keen interest in the outcome of a database and perhaps would have provided you with a brief today so you're able to answer questions instead of the answer being that perhaps I should ask Attorney-General's.

Senator Wong: I am not sure it's his job to brief me. I doubt Mr Morrison would have briefed you.

Senator CASH: This is an issue of national significance.

Senator Wong: I was trying to be helpful, because the implementation is being undertaken through the Attorney-General's portfolio, which is what both PM&C officials have explained to you. I understand, again, the political point is being made. This is an important issue. It's an issue that has actually been on the agenda for some years but has not been taken up by past coalition governments. It is a good thing that it has been taken up. It should be implemented, and Mr Dreyfus and his department are the ones who have primary responsibility within the Commonwealth for it.

As to a report back on this is for National Cabinet, ultimately that will be a matter for the Prime Minister to consider, and I'm sure he would consult with his state and territory colleagues about that.

Ms Steel: I could add that we do actively track major items agreed by National Cabinet, in addition to what Mr Walter suggested about keeping track of Attorney-General's portfolio matters. So we will be keeping in touch with the Attorney-General's Department on progress and ensuring the Prime Minister is regularly briefed.

Senator CASH: I have to say, unfortunately, based on those answers I'm struggling to find how the database is actually a priority for the Prime Minister.

Senator Wong: Why are you making that political point? This was something that—

Senator CASH: It's not a political point, Senator Wong.

Senator Wong: Let me finish.

Senator CASH: It is based on the evidence that has been given.

Senator Wong: Could I please finish my answer? Thank you. I don't know why—well, I do know why, but I disagree with your political point. The Prime Minister led this at National Cabinet. It is now at meetings of the attorney-generals of Labor and Liberal governments for implementation nationally. That is a good thing. The Prime Minister's department has said they are tracking it.

I know you want to make a political point here, but actually that is in the timeframe more action than we saw on hate crimes than we saw for many years, including when you were a senior member of the Morrison government.

Senator CASH: Senator Wong, was there a national crisis of antisemitism in this country the likes of what we are currently seeing, where Jewish people have little to no faith in the Prime Minister and are saying that he is a weak leader and they do not feel safe on a daily basis, under the former coalition government? Perhaps I can answer that question for you. The answer is no.

CHAIR: Senator Cash!

Senator Wong: If you want to talk about what happened under the former coalition government, as I recall, your personal position and the position of Senator Paterson and of many in your party was to remove section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. In fact, as I recall, you were one of the signatories to an advertisement saying it should be removed. I recall the Leader of the Government in the Senate, Mr Brandis, standing up and saying, 'People have a right to be a bigot.' That is what I and many Australians recall about your government.

Senator CASH: I'm actually going to turn to another topic now: the two nurses in New South Wales. I want to table for the benefit of the committee a letter from psychologist Dr Jacqueline Rakov, who wrote to Minister

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 301 of 375

Mark Butler on 26 October 2023—this was signed by 235 other medical professionals—in the wake of Hamas's terrorist attacks on Israel. The letter expressed alarm that many doctors were endorsing pro-Hamas views on social media. Mr Hehir, can you take us through your department's knowledge of this letter. It was also cc'd to the Attorney-General, Mark Dreyfus, and Minister Clare O'Neil.

Senator Wong: This is a letter that was sent—sorry, can I just be clear. I don't have a copy of it.

Senator CASH: No, I'm just waiting for it.

Senator Wong: Thank you. Can I be clear that this is a letter to Mr Butler and cc'd to Ms O'Neil and Mr Dreyfus?

Senator CASH: Correct.

CHAIR: So how is it relevant—

Senator Wong: How is it relevant to the Prime Minister?

Senator CASH: Given the nature of what is in the letter and the seriousness of what is in the letter, which we will go through, my questions are going to be around whether or not any of these ministers actually advised the Prime Minister of this letter or forwarded the letter to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

CHAIR: Senator Cash, I can't see, in the first instance, how these questions are going to be in order because I can't see any possible way that this would have come to the notice of the officials here.

Senator CASH: That's the whole point of the line of questioning. That is exactly the point of the line of questioning. This is a letter that, when you see it, is incredibly serious—in particular what is annexed to the letter. The whole point of my questioning is: was this elevated to the Prime Minister or the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet? Whilst I'm waiting for the letter to be provided to Senator Wong and Mr Hehir, the letter from Dr Rakov, bearing in mind this was shortly after the incident in Israel on October 7: there were a number of antisemitic comments from Australian doctors in the large dossier about antisemitism from parts of the medical profession. Some examples are as follows—

CHAIR: Senator Cash, we haven't tabled this document because I am still unclear how it is relevant to questioning this afternoon.

Senator CASH: The whole point is whether or not it was elevated to the Prime Minister, given the serious nature of what is contained in it.

CHAIR: Are you arguing the letter was also sent to the Prime Minister, Senator Cash?

Senator McGRATH: This goes to the government's response to the growing antisemitism in Australia.

CHAIR: I understand the topic.

Senator McGRATH: Senator Cash has a range of questions that are connected to this particular letter and how it was treated by the government—

CHAIR: We've all received letters of this kind, Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: Thank you for helping me—and whether the Prime Minister has seen the letter. There are a range of questions connected to that. It is not controversial for this letter to be tabled. If it is controversial, we're going to have a very long day.

Senator CASH: We are. We're setting a whole new test of relevance. We can no longer ask questions—

CHAIR: Senator McGrath and Senator Cash.

Senator Wong: Just so we're clear: you want to table a letter that was sent to other ministers but not the Prime Minister, in order to be—

Senator CASH: Correct—so you can see it.

Senator Wong: Can I just finish? Goodness me! I'll start again. You want to table a letter that was not sent to the Prime Minister or his department in order to quote from the content and ask questions about what happened to the letter that wasn't sent to the Prime Minister—just so we're clear.

Senator CASH: No, that is not it.

Senator Wong: The letter was not sent to the Prime Minister.

Senator CASH: I don't know. That's why I want you to see it—to identify if it was.

Senator Wong: I thought you said the letter wasn't sent to the Prime Minister.

Senator CASH: No, which is why I want you to see it, to identify whether or not—

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 302 of 375

Senator Wong: Chair, I think it is relevant for Senator Cash to ask if a letter has been seen by PM&C or the Prime Minister.

Senator CASH: That is the question.

Senator Wong: I don't think it's relevant for her to read screeds from it in order to make a political point about a letter that may not have been sent to the Prime Minister or to Prime Minister and Cabinet.

CHAIR: If you're comfortable, then, I think it's in order for you to see that letter.

Senator Wong: Perhaps Senator Cash could table it, I'll get instructions and then we can respond to the question, which is, 'Has this letter been sent to the Prime Minister?'

CHAIR: We can table the letter.

Senator CASH: Was it forwarded to the Prime Minister and was it forwarded to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, given the allegations in the letter are incredibly serious and given what then occurred, recently, with the two nurses in New South Wales basically making threats to Jewish patients?

Senator Wong: Okay. I will obtain some advice on that. We can come back to it.

Senator CASH: Thank you. Are you able to come back to the committee with that advice?

Senator Wong: You just asked the question, and I haven't moved in the last two seconds.

Senator CASH: I'm sure someone from the Prime Minister's office—are you able to come back to the committee?

Senator Wong: I will try and obtain some advice about this.

Senator CASH: Thank you very much. Can I then go to the unfortunate incident with the Bankstown hospital workers—in particular, with them bragging about refusing to treat Israeli patients. Just to get an understanding about the actions of the Prime Minister's department following what, we unfortunately saw, were the very public threats, can you, Mr Hehir, take us through the measures that your department, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, are working on in relation to this issue.

Mr Hehir: I might need to check with Mr Fletcher whether there's something conditional. My understanding is that the New South Wales police were investigating this matter, but I can check to see whether there's any further information available.

Senator Wong: Senator, you asked me this question, I think, in question time—or one of your colleagues did; I can't recall who. I will see if there's anything further that I can provide, but my recollection is action was being taken in the health portfolio. Obviously, it would be best if you asked questions of them. My recollection is the answer I gave you was that—it's probably best if I don't try and pass it, because it was a brief I read a couple of weeks ago in the Senate, but action was being taken under the national health regulatory framework as a consequence of the action being taken by the New South Wales authorities. But those are regulatory matters that really are dealt with by the health department.

Senator CASH: Specifically then—perhaps I haven't been clear enough in my question. My question is given the seriousness of the threats that were made—

Senator Wong: I found it. Sorry, I have something—if I may. Obviously, the registration of nurses in New South Wales is the responsibility of the relevant body, which I am advised is the Nursing and Midwifery Council. That body has suspended the registrations of registered nurses Ahmad Rashad Nadir and Sarah Abu Lebdeh, effective as of 13 February 2025. As a result, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency has automatically updated their records on the public register of practitioners. As a consequence, this means the two nurses are unable to practise nursing anywhere in Australia.

Senator CASH: Is that it?

Senator Wong: Yes. I knew that I had provided information to the Senate, and I think it was along these lines.

Senator CASH: The confusing part, for me, is that you have two nurses, albeit in the Bankstown hospital, Ahmad Rashad Nadir and Sarah Abu Lebdeh, who brag about refusing to treat Israeli patients, killing them and saying that they would go to hell—they'd send them to Jahannam—with a finger movement across the throat. My question is in relation to what the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet are doing, given this is such a significant issue—not palming it off onto the New South Wales government or the relevant departments there.

Senator Wong: I am going to respond first; Mr Hehir may have something to add. I reject the use of that language, and I would say to you that it does you no credit that you would use that in this context. We have all condemned what was said. The appropriate regulatory action to prevent these individuals from working in the health sector again should have been taken and was. That is not palming off. That is the appropriate regulatory

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 303 of 375

action being taken to ensure Australians are not in a position where individuals who express those views are providing medical care. In terms of other action, that's obviously not a matter for us if there are other—I think Mr Hehir referred to other investigations that might be taken by authorities. That's obviously a matter for law enforcement authorities.

Mr Hehir: To my knowledge—and I'm happy to take it on notice—the action is being undertaken by the relevant law enforcement body and the relevant health regulatory bodies. It's certainly, in my view, not the role of Prime Minister and Cabinet to interfere in any investigations that are underway by the relevant law enforcement bodies. I've only read media around the New South Wales police. I'm not aware if there are other bodies interested. But, certainly, the minister's advice around the health regulatory body seems to deal with whether these nurses should be working in the healthcare sector. In relation to the policing, it's important that the police are left to do their job.

Senator CASH: Minister, did the Prime Minister ask for a briefing from either the New South Wales department of health or Ahpra in relation to this particular issue?

Senator Wong: I'll take that on notice. The fact of the video became public to all, including authorities, very quickly, so which timeframe are you talking about?

Senator CASH: The moment the Prime Minister became aware of this issue. From that point in time, has he asked for a briefing from either the department of health or Ahpra or both in relation to this issue? Mr Hehir, did the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet ask for or have you had a briefing from the New South Wales department of health or Ahpra in relation to this event?

Mr Hehir: Not that I'm aware of.

Senator CASH: Has there been a national security cabinet meeting specifically looking at the safety of Israelis and Jewish Australians in our healthcare system?

Mr Hehir: I think Minister Wong has already answered that. By convention, we do not discuss what matters are discussed at national security cabinet.

Senator CASH: Minister, the Prime Minister was very happy to make public a National Cabinet meeting in relation to antisemitism at which he announced a database. Can I ask you, then, given the significance of this issue, has there been a national security cabinet meeting specifically looking at the safety of Jewish Australians and Israelis in our healthcare system?

Senator Wong: First, as a matter of principle, we don't discuss the agenda of the National Security Committee, but I would make comments broadly, consistent with those the Prime Minister has made, that of course we—the Deputy Prime Minister, the Attorney-General and I—are deeply concerned about what we have seen in this country in recent times. I think we were all shocked and sickened by the video and by what was said in it. I said that publicly, so did the Prime Minister, in this parliament. And there isn't a political difference on that, Senator Cash. There isn't a political difference on that.

The government has taken a range of decisions in relation to antisemitism. You will recall that we banned hate symbols and the Nazi salute. You will recall that we legislated against doxxing. Regret that you voted against that, Senator. You will recall that it has been made public that Special Operation Avalite has been established with the AFP to combat acts of antisemitism. You will be aware that we've appointed Ms Segal as the first Special Envoy to Combat Antisemitism. You would be aware that we provided additional safety and security funding for Jewish sites across Australia, including Jewish schools, and we've also provided additional funding for countering violent extremism. We have taken heed of the words of Mr Burgess, the Director-General of Security at ASIO, about the importance of politicians lowering the temperature.

Senator CASH: Have you finished?

Senator Wong: Yes.

Senator CASH: Good.

Senator Wong: I just wonder if you heard that last phrase.

Senator CASH: Has the Prime Minister called a National Cabinet on the safety of Israeli citizens and Jewish Australians in the Australian healthcare system? If not, why not?

Mr Hehir: I'm not aware of a National Cabinet being called.

Senator CASH: Thank you. Senator Wong, are you aware of a National Cabinet being called in relation to this issue?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 304 of 375

Senator Wong: You're defining it very narrowly. There was a National Cabinet that the Prime Minister called to discuss with first ministers how we best work together to stamp out antisemitism. At that meeting he reaffirmed that the full resources of the AFP and federal intelligence agencies stand ready to do work with, and do work with, state and territory law enforcement to that end.

Senator CASH: No, this was a National Cabinet in relation to the issue of the safety of Jewish Australians and Israelis in our hospitals given what the nurses had bragged about—refusing to treat Israeli patients, killing them and saying they would send them to Gehenna? Has a National Cabinet been called in relation to that? Yes, you are right; it is a specific issue.

Senator Wong: Yes, it's a very specific issue. I'll take that—

Senator CASH: I do find nurses killing people in hospital because of their race is a serious issue as well.

Senator Wong: Wow! Senator, are you seriously suggesting that we don't think this is serious? Are you really suggesting—

Senator CASH: I'm asking you whether or not you have called a National Cabinet.

Senator Wong: We are—

Senator CASH: It is a very simple answer.

Senator Wong: May I finish, please?

Senator CASH: Yes, you did—

Senator Wong: May I finish please?

Senator CASH: or, no, you didn't?

Senator Wong: May I finish, please? I've outlined the range of measures we are taking in response to antisemitism, some of which you voted against. It is a serious issue. I regret that there's not more bipartisanship to confront it.

In relation to these nurses, they have been deregistered and they can't work nationally. That is the appropriate path. That is appropriate. In terms of other action being taken against them, that's a matter for law enforcement authorities. We will continue to work with first ministers and other governments to confront antisemitism and hatred in all its forms. There will not be legislation to remove 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act.

Senator CASH: Post the threats made by the two nurses at the Bankstown hospital, did the Prime Minister speak with the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu?

Mr Hehir: I'm not aware, Senator. I'll see whether—

Senator CASH: Minister?

Senator Wong: I'll have to take that on notice.

Senator CASH: You'll take it on notice? Could you also advise when was the most recent time that the Prime Minister spoke to the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu?

Senator Wong: Yes.

Senator CASH: Mr Kang, I don't know if you have any further information.

Mr Kang: The last time the Prime Minister spoke with Prime Minister Netanyahu was in April last year.

Senator CASH: April of last year?

Mr Kang: That's right.

Senator CASH: April 2024?

Mr Kang: Yes, Senator.

Senator McGRATH: A year ago.

Senator CASH: A year ago. Israeli President Herzog issued a statement on this synagogue attack in Melbourne. I understand he spoke to the Prime Minister afterwards, calling on the government to do more about antisemitism. You'd be aware that Prime Minister Netanyahu has also publicly expressed concern over the attack on the Melbourne synagogue. When did the Prime Minister last speak with President Herzog?

Mr Kang: The Prime Minister last spoke to the President of Israel on the occasion to which you're referring late last year.

Senator CASH: When you say 'late last year', can you narrow that down a bit?

Mr Kang: It was on 6 December 2024.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 305 of 375

Senator CASH: Thank you very much. So that was the president as opposed to the prime minister. Senator Wong, from the perspective of the Prime Minister, will the Australian government uphold the arrest warrant of the International Criminal Court for Mr Netanyahu if he travels to Australia?

Senator Wong: I've answered this question in the Senate. I refer you to that answer.

Senator CASH: I can't hear you, sorry.

Senator Wong: I said I've answered this question numerous times in the Senate and I'd refer you to that answer.

Senator CASH: Well, I'm asking you on behalf of the Prime Minister in Senate estimates. I can't recall what your answer was and I'm giving you the benefit of being able to clarify it here.

Senator Wong: It's actually a matter for the Attorney-General's Department, not for the Prime Minister.

Senator CASH: I understand that, but this is a significant issue in terms of our relationship with Israel. This is a prime minister that seems very hands off, I have to say.

Senator Wong: No, Senator—

Senator CASH: So, again, I ask you—

Senator Wong: Unlike Mr Morrison, he doesn't swear himself in to multiple portfolios—

Senator McGRATH: Senator Wong, stop interrupting.

Senator CASH: I'm allowed to be interrupted, but Senator Wong is not allowed to be interrupted.

Senator McGRATH: Chair, wake up. Senator Wong is interrupting Senator Cash, and I think Senator Cash should be able to put her question without being interrupted by Senator Wong.

CHAIR: You interrupted each other.

Senator CASH: Can we just confirm then that, in relation to whether or not, under Prime Minister Albanese, the Australian government would uphold the arrest warrant of the International Criminal Court for Mr Netanyahu if he travels to Australia, Mr Albanese's response, as the Prime Minister, is: that's a matter for the Attorney-General?

Senator Wong: Senator, please. I know—

Senator CASH: This is very important, because there are members of the Jewish community who are very, very interested in the Prime Minister's stance on this, given in particular we have made it clear that if we were in government we would not uphold it. It was not difficult to say that.

Senator Wong: Yes, I'm aware of your view and I'm also aware, as I said, of Mr Morrison swearing himself in to multiple ministries—

Senator CASH: Don't try and deflect, Senator Wong—

Senator Wong: Can I finish?

Senator CASH: from what is a very, very—

Senator Wong: Oh, man.

Senator CASH: important issue. The Prime Minister either has a view or he hasn't got a view.

Senator Wong: We respect the independence of the court.

Senator McGRATH: Are you serious?

Senator CASH: Apparently so!

Senator McGRATH: My goodness.

Senator CASH: But it's for the Attorney-General, in any event, under this government—

Senator Wong: No, actually—Senator, you're a lawyer. I know that you may not recall these matters, but the Attorney-General is the minister with legal authority in these matters, and he has made clear that we respect the independence of the court.

Senator McGRATH: So, under Mr Albanese, if Mr Netanyahu came to Australia, he could be arrested?

Senator Wong: Just hang on, please—

Senator McGRATH: That's what you were saying.

Senator Wong: We respect the independence of the court and we will not be dealing with hypotheticals.

Senator McGRATH: It's not a hypothetical.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 306 of 375

Senator CASH: It's not a hypothetical here. What is the hypothetical? We have made it clear that if we were in government we would not uphold the arrest warrant. It is as simple as that.

CHAIR: 'If Mr Netanyahu is coming to Australia'—I think it's a hypothetical.

Senator McGRATH: Well, it's not a hypothetical. We would welcome Mr Netanyahu coming to Australia—

Senator CASH: Correct.

Senator McGRATH: but he cannot come to Australia—

Senator CASH: Correct.

Senator McGRATH: because the Labor government will not give a commitment that he will not be arrested if he comes here. So it is definitely not hypothetical.

CHAIR: I doubt it's high on his priority list, Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: It goes to the arrest of a democratically elected prime minister.

Senator Wong: Well, I know that international law is something that sometimes you don't like to support and international entities are things that you take issue with. I would make the point that Australia—for example, in the South China Sea, and elsewhere—exercises our rights in accordance with international law, including the law of the sea. So we do take the view that we respect the independence of international tribunals. As the Attorney-General has said, we are not responding on this hypothetical.

Senator CASH: Well, it's not a hypothetical, because the Attorney-General, as you would know, has the discretion to not comply with the International Criminal Court arrest warrant. Has the Prime Minister given a direction to the Attorney-General that he is not to comply with it?

Senator Wong: I'm not responding on a hypothetical.

Senator CASH: That is not a hypothetical. That is asking whether or not the Prime Minister has given a clear direction to the Attorney-General.

Senator Wong: What is your proposition, just so I'm clear with somebody who wants to be the Attorney-General of this country? You want the Prime Minister to give a direction to the Attorney-General about how the Attorney-General is to exercise legal authority?

Senator McGRATH: In relation to not arresting a democratically prime minister.

Senator Wong: No, I'm asking Senator Cash. Senator Cash, as the shadow Attorney-General, you're saying it would be appropriate for the Prime Minister to issue a direction to the Attorney-General of this country requiring him to act in a certain way when he has to make a certain legal decision?

Senator CASH: This is a question, Senator Wong, of government policy, and I can assure you that Jewish Australians are incredibly disappointed by the Prime Minister's inability to stand up and say that Mr Netanyahu is welcome here and he would not be arrested if he came here despite the warrant issued by the ICC. Mr Hehir, has your department discussed this matter with the Attorney-General's Department?

Mr Hehir: Not that I'm aware of.

Senator CASH: Not that you're aware of?

Mr Hehir: No.

Senator CASH: We now want to go to another line of questioning, in relation to Oscar Jenkins.

Senator Wong: I would really ask the opposition not to do this in open session. I'm very happy to provide a briefing.

Senator CASH: Let me take instructions on that given what you just said.

Senator Wong: Thank you.

Senator McGRATH: Can I ask a question: why is it the case that Jewish Australians don't feel safe in Australia under Prime Minister Albanese?

Senator Wong: Senator, the rise of antisemitism in this country—which has been so shocking to those of us who have always argued for respect, inclusion, the observance of the rule of law, for people of all faiths and cultural backgrounds to be respected and for all of us to feel and be safe—has been abhorrent. As we have said, it is antithetical to who we are as Australians. It is something which has been of great distress to Jewish Australians, and action is being and must be taken. I would observe that we have seen a rise in hateful prejudice not only in Australia but in many parts of the world. I'm very conscious of what Mr Burgess said: 'It is up to all of us to turn down the temperature.' I appreciate that you are seeking to make a political point—

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 307 of 375

Senator McGRATH: I'm not making a political point, Senator Wong. It was a very serious question.

Senator Wong: Let me finish. Let me finish. Let me finish. Let me finish.

Senator McGRATH: You're running a line with every question that we put.

Senator Wong: Let me finish. May I finish, Chair?

CHAIR: Senator McGrath—

Senator McGRATH: We are trying to hold the government to account, and the question was very deliberately worded as an open-ended question.

Senator Wong: May I finish?

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, I withdraw the call from you.

Senator McGRATH: Why do Jewish Australians feel unsafe under Prime Minister Albanese?

CHAIR: I'm just going to keep talking over you so that Senator Wong has the opportunity to finish her answer.

Senator Wong: There is no doubt that the conflict in the Middle East has led to division in our country. It has led to division in many countries, and there is no excuse for that. As others have said, people have a right to disagree on the issue. People do not have a right to turn that disagreement into attacks on other parts of the Australian community. We've seen unacceptable incidents of antisemitism—both said and with violence engaged in. We saw violence against two Muslim women—I think last week. We all have a responsibility to articulate the values of respect and inclusion, which I have advocated for my whole life and will continue to advocate for; we all have a responsibility to ensure we take action in government to try to ensure people are and feel safe; and we all have a responsibility to promote social cohesion.

Senator McGRATH: Does the Prime Minister take responsibility for the growing antisemitism in Australia, and does he take responsibility for Jewish Australians feeling safer in Israel than they do in Australia?

Senator Wong: Senator, that's a very provocative way of putting that to me. I want to remind you—you might recall—that, when a particular senator spoke about the 'final solution' in his first speech to the parliament, I went to Senator Mathias Cormann and urged him to move a bipartisan motion with me condemning it and censuring the senator, Senator Anning. I said to him at the time that, from my experience of John Howard's call to lower Asian immigration and my experience of Pauline Hanson's call that Australia was in danger of being swamped by Asians, all of these sorts of prejudices were best met by the major parties working together against prejudice. We did move that motion, and we did speak together on that. I'm very happy, and so is the Prime Minister, to work with you against prejudice and discrimination, including antisemitism, in our country. I'm very happy to do that.

Senator McGRATH: But why do Jewish Australians, under this Prime Minister, feel unsafe.

Senator Wong: But what is not helpful is the way in which you try to weaponise this, just as you are now.

Senator McGRATH: I'm not weaponising it. I speak every day to Jewish Australians who feel unsafe because of the actions, or the inactions, of this Prime Minister. So my question was a deliberate question: does the Prime Minister take any responsibility for Jewish Australians feeling unsafe in Australia, their home?

Senator Wong: We take responsibility for working for an Australia where Australians can feel safe and be safe. We all take responsibility for that, and I hope you do too.

Senator McGRATH: So the Prime Minister doesn't take any responsibility?

Senator Wong: He takes responsibility every day for working for an Australia in which Australians can be and feel safe, every day. I hope you do too.

Senator McGRATH: On what date was he briefed by the Federal Police or ASIO in relation to the caravan incident?

Senator Wong: On which date—

Senator McGRATH: On what date? If the Prime Minister is so concerned about the safety of Australians, why won't he tell the truth about when he was briefed about the caravan incident?

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, we've been around this a dozen times.

Senator Wong: On which day did you call for the protective provisions of section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act to be removed?

Senator McGRATH: On which date was the Prime Minister briefed?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 308 of 375

Senator Wong: On which day did you vote against antidoxxing legislation which was designed to protect Jewish Australians?

Senator McGRATH: There is a cover-up here at the highest levels of the Australian government. We have a weak Prime Minister who is not across his brief.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, this is not a time for—

Senator McGRATH: We have a weak Prime Minister who cannot tell the Australian people when he was briefed about a possible mass terror event.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, we've been over this again and again.

Senator McGRATH: Until the Prime Minister tells the truth about that, these words are weasel words.

Senator Wong: Senator McGrath, on which date did you vote against the antidoxxing legislation designed to protect Jewish Australians?

Senator McGRATH: Tell us when the Prime Minister was briefed.

CHAIR: I'm going to suspend the hearing.

Senator McGRATH: If you can't tell us, he wasn't briefed. He's a weak Prime Minister.

CHAIR: The hearing is suspended.

Proceedings suspended from 15:48 to 15:55

CHAIR: Senator Cash or Senator McGrath—who is seeking the call?

Senator CASH: Senator Wong, in relation to the line of questioning I raised, you said you would provide us with a briefing. I'm happy to accept—

CHAIR: Sorry, which line of questioning was that?

Senator Wong: It's actually not a matter for PM&C; it's a matter for DFAT.

Senator CASH: The questions I want to ask go to the Prime Minister and his knowledge—I'm not going to ask them here. Are we able to be briefed?

Senator Wong: Your colleagues have been briefed on this matter. I'm happy to provide more if you weren't asked by your colleagues to come to consular briefings.

Senator CASH: That's fine. Can I have that briefing before Thursday? That is my only request.

Senator Wong: If we can. We provide an opposition consular briefing as a matter of course. A number of your colleagues—you weren't advised, but that's a matter for your team. We deal with the shadow minister.

Senator CASH: I understand that. As I said, the questions I have go to the Prime Minister's knowledge. I'm prepared not to ask them here—

Senator Wong: I won't be answering them here.

Senator CASH: based on your advice; I've said that to you. Am I able to have the briefing? It won't take long, I'm assuming; there are only about 10 questions. It doesn't need to be from you; it could come from your office.

Senator Wong: Sure. We'll see what we can do.

Senator CASH: Thank you very much. I have some more questions.

CHAIR: While you turn to your next questions, I want to revisit the issue of the tabling of the letter. I undertook to source its provenance in terms of it having been directed to the health minister's office. They indicated that the covering email attached to that letter, not the letter itself, included a request that said: 'We stipulate a strict nondisclosure of all names involved due to the risk of reprisals. The enclosed evidence is also confidential and not for public dissemination, to avoid defamation or libel.' On that basis, I don't think it's appropriate that the document be tabled. I'm sure the signatories to it may have distributed it themselves.

Senator CASH: We have deidentified the letter.

Senator Wong: I think you gave the name.

Senator CASH: The name of the woman, but not the additional names. Are you happy for me to move on to—

Senator SHELDON: Sorry; I know the letter's not being tabled, even though it's been mentioned. I just want to raise this: I'm seriously concerned that if a series of people ask for a piece of correspondence that is potentially libel, in their view, to not be handed up—there were several attempts to have it tabled here. That is just beyond the pale. It is a breach of faith with those people. I find that absolutely appalling.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 309 of 375

Senator CASH: My understanding is it's been previously tabled in Health estimates in any event.

Senator SHELDON: So someone got away with it in Health estimates.

Senator CASH: We deidentified the one without the names and had permission from the person to table. It was deliberately deidentified for that exact reason.

Senator SHELDON: Contrary to the instructions in the email.

Senator CASH: As I said, it has already been tabled previously in Health estimates.

Senator SHELDON: Contrary to the instructions in the email. It's disgusting.

CHAIR: Thank you, senators. Senator Cash, do you want to return to your questions?

Senator CASH: I do. Senator Paterson had asked a series of questions in relation to a camera in the sensitive compartmented information facility when the Prime Minister was speaking with President Trump. He asked it of Home Affairs, and he's actually been directed to Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Senator Wong: Sorry, what was this about?

Senator CASH: The Prime Minister issued a tweet:

This morning I had a great conversation with the President—

and in it there was a telephone. We had some questions in relation to the telephone actually being in the Parliament House briefing room sensitive compartmented information facility. As I said, on 11 February 2025, the Prime Minister posted a photo on his Twitter X account, showing the Prime Minister in front of a phone talking to President Trump. Can you confirm that this photo was taken here in the PHBR SCIF at Parliament House?

Mr Hehir: I'm not aware of the issue. I'll need to check with the team to see if we're aware of any advice provided.

Senator CASH: Whilst you're going through that, the photo appears to depict a classified phone system. Can you confirm the call was made on a classified line?

Mr Hehir: We'll need to check.

Senator CASH: As you'd be aware, typically recording devices such as a camera are not permitted in secure areas, such as the sensitive compartmented information facility. Is that correct, Mr Hehir?

Mr Hehir: Yes, that's normally the case.

Senator CASH: Therefore, would bringing in such a device without prior approval constitute a serious security breach?

Mr Hehir: I'd need to check and see whether there was prior approval. I don't want to speculate on what conversations occurred or what advice was provided.

Senator CASH: Who manages the approval processes for bringing in these kinds of devices to this particular room?

Mr Hehir: If it's the room that I believe it to be, it's my understanding that the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet would have responsibility for that room. I'll check that.

Senator CASH: Is there anyone in this room who has knowledge of the phone call and the photograph that was taken and then tweeted?

Senator Wong: Can I take this on notice? I don't have all the information on this.

Senator CASH: That's okay. I'll continue asking Mr Hehir questions because he's just said it's the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet who managed the approval processes. Mr Hehir, did Prime Minister and Cabinet or the PMO seek formal approval to bring a recording device into the room known as the SCIF?

Senator Wong: I've just been provided with some advice. I'm advised that the call happened in the side room, not the main NSC room, and that there was a specific request and approval for a photo. I've also been provided with a photo that was published of Mr Morrison engaging in an MCN, also in a secure facility.

Senator CASH: The question wasn't about Mr Morrison. The question was about Mr Albanese and whether or not the approval processes had been gone through.

Senator Wong: I'm just talking about consistency. The advice I have is that they—

Senator CASH: I was getting to whether or not the approval processes had been gone through.

Senator Wong: That's what I just said—yes.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 310 of 375

Senator CASH: What was the process for approval?

Senator Wong: I don't know. I'd have to take that on notice.

Senator CASH: On what date was approval sought and then granted?

Mr Hehir: Again, we'll need to take that on notice.

Senator CASH: From whom was approval sought?

Mr Hehir: Again, I'll need to check and see which officer it was.

Senator CASH: Was the camera a government issued device?

Mr Hehir: Again, I'm not aware of the detail but happy to take that on notice.

Senator CASH: I have a number of questions in relation to this that I will place on notice. In terms of the tweet of the photo, do you need to consult with the United States President or his office before posting such a photo?

Senator Wong: I will try to assist. Counterparts post photos of engagements with me without seeking our approval. I can check what the arrangements are, but, generally, the photo gets taken, and participants publish their own.

Senator CASH: That's fine. As I said, given that they've all been taken on notice, I will put the rest on notice.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: On 13 December, I wrote to the Prime Minister in relation to the member for Tangney sending a WhatsApp message to a group of community members and leaders, and I'll just table that letter. Was the letter received by the Prime Minister? Can someone confirm? It's a letter from me.

Senator Wong: It's a letter from you to the PM.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Yes. You'd be no doubt familiar with some media reporting in relation to a message that was sent from Mr Lim's phone from his WhatsApp account to community leaders and community members. In it he quoted the Prime Minister:

When PM was confronted by the Murdoch mercenaries, and others: he said

"What I'll say is this. Mr Netanyahu should consider that the bombing of a synagogue in Australia is likely the manifestation of a few despondent radicals who had had enough of the continued aerial bombing of thousands of innocent children and women in Gaza by his single-minded troops. Australia is a robust democracy. We do not encourage violence to those whom we do not warm to. If he continues to blame me and other world leaders, he might as well be remembered in history as another hegemon who blamed everyone else for his crime against innocent civilians."

Did the Prime Minister say this?

Senator Wong: Well, it doesn't sound like it.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: I certainly hope he didn't, because it's essentially an apologist message for an offence that has been caused at a synagogue in Melbourne.

Senator Wong: I haven't seen your letter, Senator, so I'm sorry—I'm not—

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Earlier this morning there was media reporting. I tabled the media reports this morning.

Senator Wong: I'm sorry; I missed that.

CHAIR: I can pass it to you. It does appear to be correspondence that was sent to the Prime Minister.

Senator Wong: When was the correspondence sent?

Senator O'SULLIVAN: It was on 13 December.

Senator Wong: Can I just get some instructions on this? I don't have any advice on this.

CHAIR: We'll provide you a copy of it.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: We can probably get a copy of the media article that was tabled this morning.

Senator Wong: I'm sorry? The 'media'?

Senator O'SULLIVAN: There was media reporting on—

Senator Wong: Well, I apologise, but I was at G20, I've only been back in the country briefly, and I haven't caught up on all the media, Senator O'Sullivan. So I'm sorry if I haven't been across the media you've got on this. I will get some information about this and come back to you.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: As you will see in the article that's before you there, Mr Lim sent a WhatsApp message to a group of—

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 311 of 375

Senator Wong: This is, as I said, not the Prime Minister's language.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: That's fine; you're confirming that the Prime Minister did not say that.

Senator Wong: I don't think the views or the language are his.

Senator CASH: The issue therefore becomes that what Senator O'Sullivan has read out:

When PM was confronted by the Murdoch mercenaries, and others: he said

Sam Lim allegedly posted that in his chat group, and it was distributed to a number of people. The media then found out about it and raised certain issues, because clearly the issue that comes up is: did Mr Lim put this into his chat group and the Prime Minister did say this, or—and this is the 'or' Mr Lim has now stated—was his phone hacked? If his phone was hacked, that sets us down another course of action. That's what we're trying to establish.

CHAIR: There are lots of different ways of having your phone hacked.

Senator Wong: What's the question of me?

Senator O'SULLIVAN: I've got a line of questions that we're trying to ascertain. Mr Lim sent this message to a community group with a quote from the Prime Minister. You've just said that these are not the words from the Prime Minister. It's not the sort of thing the Prime Minister would say.

Senator Wong: (a) the views are not views I've ever heard him use, (b) the language is not language I would associate with the Prime Minister—

Senator O'SULLIVAN: But nonetheless Mr Lim has sent this and said that it was the Prime Minister. Mr Lim claims in the media article, when confronted by a journalist, that his phone was compromised and that it was hacked. Given that Mr Lim is a member of your government, what has the Prime Minister done to correct the record?

Senator Wong: I'll take that on notice.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Has the Prime Minister satisfied himself that Mr Lim's claim that his phone was hacked is indeed correct?

CHAIR: We will go for a break now, unless you want to be able—

Senator O'SULLIVAN: I'm asking questions.

CHAIR: Okay. Answer the question. I'm not seeking to move us on. It's just that I had undertaken to go to the break, and I forgot to take us there.

Senator Wong: I'm happy to just try and finish this, Matt. I'll take that on notice. I don't know what's been said publicly about this at the time other than what you've told me.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: I did write to the Prime Minister on 13 December.

Senator Wong: With respect, a lot of people write to the Prime Minister.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: There's been reporting in national media—

Senator CASH: In relation to an issue that a phone was hacked—

Senator O'SULLIVAN: following a firebombing of a synagogue.

Senator CASH: Good grief!

Senator Wong: I appreciate that.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: This message has been sent days after, and it's been in the *Australian*.

Senator CASH: And Sam Lim responded to it.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: It's been in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. It's been in the *West Australian*.

Senator Wong: I'm pleased that you read the *Australian* so much, Senator, but what is your question to me?

Senator O'SULLIVAN: My first question is: has the Prime Minister satisfied himself that his phone was hacked, as was claimed by Mr Lim?

Senator Wong: The allegation is not that the Prime Minister's phone was hacked.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Mr Lim's phone—one of his members of parliament is claiming that his phone was hacked.

Senator Wong: I will take that on notice.

Senator SHELDON: Can I just clarify the date of the correspondence. Was this letter we're referring to from 13 December 2023?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 312 of 375

Senator O'SULLIVAN: It's 2024.

Senator Wong: I think it's incorrectly dated.

CHAIR: Is that the correct date?

Senator SHELDON: I'm just clarifying it's the same letter.

CHAIR: Is it 23 December 2023?

Senator O'SULLIVAN: There's an incorrect date; you're right. It's 2024. So you can't tell me whether or not Mr Lim's phone was hacked?

Senator Wong: No, that wasn't your question to me.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Has the Prime Minister satisfied himself—

Senator Wong: Your question to me was about the Prime Minister's knowledge or satisfaction about this. I said that I would take that on notice.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Have you seen reporting where Mr Lim was asked to clarify what was meant by 'Murdoch mercenaries' and whether it was someone from Murdoch University, to which Mr Lim claimed, nearly six hours later, that it was the mainstream media? The curious thing is that the so-called PM quote was sent at 9.11 am, then the clarifying message that 'Murdoch mercenaries' refers to mainstream media was sent at 3.10 pm. In that time, there was no claim that this was a hack or that his phone had been compromised. In other words, the conversation—

Senator Wong: Sorry. Senator O'Sullivan, I understand that it's an election, and Sam Lim is an extraordinarily good local member, and I understand that the loss of the seat of Tangney last election was tough on the Western Australian Liberal Party and you want to get it back—I understand that. He is not appearing at these estimates.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: But—

Senator Wong: I know you're really trying to get questions to me which are really questions for Mr Lim, but he's not here at the table.

Senator McGRATH: But did the Prime Minister say what Mr Lim said he said?

Senator Wong: Well, I've just said—I've just read this, and I've said to you that these are neither his views nor the sorts of language he uses.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: So a member of his government is just claiming that—

CHAIR: Mr Lim said that the message was fabricated.

Senator Wong: Now that I've looked at this—I think Mr Lim has said that the Prime Minister did not say those words. So I think it has been dealt with.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Well, he's claiming that his phone was hacked. It's a very serious matter. He has quoted the Prime Minister.

Senator Wong: No.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: In the message, he has quoted the Prime Minister—right? He's then subsequently saying that his phone was hacked. But that was only after journalists made an inquiry. He had conversation with people on this group following that initial quote from the Prime Minister. At no time did he say, 'Oh, my phone's been hacked.' He continued in the conversation. And now that a journalist, some time later, has asked some questions about it, he suddenly claims that his phone was hacked!

Senator Wong: Is there any question that's relevant to the Prime Minister's portfolio in this?

CHAIR: I am yet to see one in this context, given—

Senator CASH: I am happy to ask some questions in relation to this.

CHAIR: Senator Cash, are they relevant questions for the purposes of this estimates hearing?

Senator CASH: Yes.

CHAIR: Okay. Put the question, and then we'll see.

Senator Wong: She's chancing her arm, anyway!

Senator CASH: Minister Wong, given that Mr Lim has claimed that his parliamentary phone has been hacked and Senator O'Sullivan last year wrote to the Prime Minister—and I understand you have a copy of the letter in front of you?

Senator Wong: I've just been given it, yes.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 313 of 375

Senator CASH: Yes. Has the Prime Minister received a briefing from the AFP about Mr Lim's phone being hacked?

Senator Wong: I'll take that on notice. But I would make the point that that might not be the appropriate agency.

Senator CASH: I can't hear you, sorry.

Senator Wong: I said, I'll take it on notice. I would make the point that that might not be the appropriate agency in these circumstances.

Senator CASH: This may not be the appropriate agency?

Senator Wong: I will take on notice whether or not the Prime Minister has had a briefing from the AFP or any other relevant agency. Okay?

Senator CASH: The issue is: if Mr Lim's phone was hacked, that is a serious issue. We have tried to find out whether or not it was hacked, or unfortunately Mr Lim—if he made a mistake and put it into a chat group, that's all he needs to say, but Senator O'Sullivan has not yet received a response to his letter from the Prime Minister.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: And nor have we seen any apology from Mr Lim for the hurt that has been caused.

Senator Wong: I understand why people are again pursuing a political line of questioning, but these estimates are not into Mr Lim; these estimates are actually supposed to be, for the purposes of additional estimates, for the PM&C portfolio. I take a very liberal view—a small L liberal view; 'liberal' as in a non-partisan view—about questions associated with the operations of the Prime Minister's portfolio. But what Mr Lim has said and done is not a matter for these estimates.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: But it's about standards that the Prime Minister is prepared to accept. There's been a very hurtful and damaging—you'd have to say, inflammatory—message that has been sent from his phone. Now, he's claiming that his phone was hacked, but there's been no offer of any apology to the community. There were religious leaders, Jewish leaders, that stood up and said that an apology must be given, yet there has been no response from either the Prime Minister or the member for Tangney. So why is the Prime Minister not demanding this of his member?

CHAIR: Because it was unauthorised use of his account. That's just—

Senator O'SULLIVAN: My question then is: has the Prime Minister satisfied himself that his phone was in fact hacked, or is he just claiming it was hacked because it's convenient to do so? It sounds like: 'My dog ate my homework.'

CHAIR: Senator O'Sullivan, I cannot see how these questions are relevant to this Senate estimates.

Mr Hehir: Can I just get some clarity? Senator, we don't have a copy of this letter in our system, and our DLOs don't recognise the letter. How was it sent?

Senator O'SULLIVAN: It would have been sent by email to the Prime Minister.

CHAIR: He didn't tweet it, by chance?

Senator O'SULLIVAN: No.

CHAIR: Was it sent on 13 December or is there another date that you—

Senator O'SULLIVAN: It was 13 December 2024.

CHAIR: Not 2023?

Mr Hehir: We'll check.

Senator Wong: I'll take it on notice and see if there's a reply.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Regardless, it's been reported in national media across multiple outlets that this message was sent. Serious concern was raised by national leaders in the Jewish community concerned about the content of this message and whether or not, in fact, the Prime Minister sent it. As you've said, in that article, it says that Sam Lim says it wasn't the Prime Minister, but there are still questions remaining as to who actually fabricated this message.

Senator Wong: I can't answer these questions, Senator, and nor can the department. I understand that you want to make a political point, but these are not matters we can assist you with.

CHAIR: We'll now move to the afternoon tea break, and hopefully—

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Can I just ask one more question?

CHAIR: Is it in order? Is it as in order as the others?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 314 of 375

Senator Wong: As long as we come back a few minutes later.

CHAIR: Senator O'Sullivan.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: I'll keep it brief. A Labor MP claims that his phone has been hacked to misrepresent the Prime Minister. Isn't the Prime Minister interested in whether or not this is the case?

Senator Wong: If it's a law enforcement question, we have faith in our law enforcement authorities and our security agencies. That's why we take their advice.

CHAIR: Thank you. We'll break for afternoon tea.

Proceedings suspended from 16:22 to 16:41

CHAIR: Let's get back underway. I understand we'll be ready to move on to some new topics very shortly. Senator Wong.

Senator Wong: I did have some further information for Senator O'Sullivan, which I think he may or may not be aware of. I understand that Senator O'Sullivan's office sent the email to Mr Albanese's parliamentary address, aalbanesemp@aph.gov.au. That email account is closed. I understand from the Prime Minister's office that there should have been, and that there still is, an automatic response advising that this account is closed and providing the link to write to the Prime Minister. Until today—the advice I have is neither the department nor the PMO have a copy of the letter you've tabled. But I can take on notice a response.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: I have checked my system, and there is no automatic response. But, in any case—

Senator Wong: I'm not sure that's right, so we're just going to have to disagree on that.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: I've just checked, and there is no automatic response. In any case, these were matters that were quite widely discussed in the media at the time. It would have been, I'm sure, brought to the Prime Minister's attention, given the seriousness of it. Can you confirm whether or not it was brought to the Prime Minister's attention?

Senator Wong: I'll have to take that on notice. I appreciate this is—

Senator O'SULLIVAN: Putting aside the letter, there was national reporting on this matter.

Senator Wong: There's national reporting on many issues, with respect.

Senator O'SULLIVAN: On one of his MPs? Surely that would, days after the firebombing of a synagogue—

Senator Wong: I suspect that the more important issue was the response to what occurred at the synagogue, but I will take on notice the response to your letter.

Senator COLBECK: Could I just ask one question about the email address?

Senator Wong: Sure.

Senator COLBECK: The email address, as I understand it, comes up on the APH system. I understand it's not been received, but has there been any action taken by the PM to have that address removed from the APH system, given that it's no longer—it's a simple process question. If another MP goes to the APH system and types in 'Albanese' and that comes up—

Senator Wong: The message that we got when we just checked it now was a response message which says, 'This email is now closed.' That's why said I don't agree with Senator O'Sullivan but we're just going to have to disagree on that point.

Senator COLBECK: Okay.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: Minister, when did the Prime Minister send out invitations for the party at the Lodge for the teals?

Senator Wong: I wasn't part of sending out invitations, so I don't know, but I can take that on notice and try and find out.

Senator McGRATH: Can anyone answer the question as to when the invitations were sent out?

Mr Spyrou: It's my team that assisted with that particular function. I can come back to you very shortly in terms of the timing of the sending of those invitations if that's helpful.

Senator McGRATH: Very shortly—while I'm asking the following questions—would be great, so if your team could send you the answers while—

Senator Wong: I don't think Senator Birmingham ever got back to me during a hearing—in many years.

Senator McGRATH: Senator Birmingham, I'm sure, was very helpful towards you, Senator Wong.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 315 of 375

Senator Wong: He was very helpful and very polite, but he never got back—

Senator McGRATH: My question is: when were the invitations sent out? The event was only a couple of weeks ago. We're not asking about an event that was—

Senator Wong: He's just said he'll take that on notice and come back to you. That's what he just said.

Senator McGRATH: I think the answer was that you'll try and get the answers pretty quickly. I don't want to verbal you.

Mr Spyrou: We'll get them as quickly as we can.

Senator McGRATH: How were the invitations being sent out? By email or paper or—

Mr Spyrou: I'll check on that.

Senator McGRATH: What's the usual process for people invited to the Lodge or Kirribilli House? Is it a paper invite or an email invite? Is there a process for the sending of invitations?

Mr Spyrou: It depends on whether it's a formal or an informal event or whether it's a personal event. It can be just by word of mouth. It can be just by an email. It can be with a printed card.

Senator McGRATH: So there was no printed card for this particular event?

Mr Spyrou: I don't believe there was a card, but, again, I'd have to check it. Ultimately this was a small gathering, and it would have been an invitation that was given, as you said, within the two weeks prior. I've got to check what the actual method of dispatch was.

Senator McGRATH: That's why I'm hoping someone can assist you while I'm asking these questions. The event was only a couple of weeks ago, and there should be some fresh knowledge of this particular event. Who decided which crossbenchers to invite?

Mr Hehir: In terms of the general principles around the use of Kirribilli and/or the Lodge, there's capacity for the Prime Minister of the day to invite a small group of parliamentarians or a range of other people and for that to operate within the usual parameters of the management of the household. Mr Spyrou has already taken the question on notice, but I would presume that the decision about who would come to the Lodge would be a matter for the Prime Minister. But we'll check that and make sure.

Senator McGRATH: Minister, will the Prime Minister be extending a similar invitation to Senate crossbenchers?

Senator Wong: I know the Prime Minister engaged quite a lot with the Senate crossbench, particularly in getting agreement to the passage of so much legislation at the end of last year.

Senator HUME: He didn't want to say thank you?

Senator Wong: I'll pass on your views about that. These are matters for the Prime Minister.

Senator McGRATH: Who actually attended this particular event—the teal party at the Lodge?

Mr Spyrou: I don't have a guest list. I can take that on notice if it's helpful.

Senator Wong: I think Ms Sharkie was a former member of your party. I know that it's a nice, grabby title, Senator, but I don't think that's a reasonable moniker—m-o-n-i-k-e-r.

Senator McGRATH: What about the cost in relation to the event? What was the cost of the event?

Mr Spyrou: What Mr Hehir was saying before is that there's a set of guidelines in terms of the use of the official residences in relation to various events. There are various categories of events. There is essentially a set of events which are so small they don't actually feature as being an additional budget line, and I suspect that this is one of those events.

Senator McGRATH: You're saying that the Prime Minister got out the SAOs with tomato and cheese and some sarsaparilla. This was quite a public event, though. Are you saying there was no formal catering for this event?

Mr Spyrou: I'm saying that I'm not aware of there having been any formal catering for this event. But that wouldn't have been an unusual thing, because small gatherings, whether they be of an official or a private nature, are not things that we retain a record of, ordinarily.

Senator McGRATH: How many events are held at the Lodge each—it is a private residence, but it's also a public residence. So how many events were held there in the last six months?

Mr Spyrou: I can take on notice how many have been at the Lodge for the last six months, for that period of time. If it's helpful, in the broad, across both the official residences and the official establishments, there have

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 316 of 375

been 96 official functions, overall, that my team or others have organised. That doesn't mean that all of them were in fact hosted by the Prime Minister. The majority would have been hosted by the Prime Minister.

Mr Hehir: To clarify, the 96 are from the date of—

Mr Spyrou: That's since the commencement of the 47th Parliament in May 2022.

Mr Hehir: We've answered this question on notice on a number of occasions. We can certainly seek to get an update from the last QON that was provided on this one.

Senator McGRATH: You don't have this information to hand? It's a pretty regular question that gets asked at these estimates.

Mr Hehir: I'm not sure if I've got it on hand. I can check.

Mr Spyrou: I don't think we've got it cut along the six-month lines.

Senator McGRATH: Going back to the event with the teals and the crossbenchers—and I hope the information I've asked for previously is coming along—can I get an itemised list of what food was served and what beverages were served, including the names and the vintages of any wines or champagnes.

Mr Hehir: I'm not sure that we'll have that information. We can certainly seek to find it out. As Mr Spyrou said earlier, if it's a small event it'll often be undertaken within the normal arrangements within the household, so I'm not sure if a menu was developed for it as opposed to the food just being prepared. We can check.

Senator McGRATH: If you could. If there were any catering services—notwithstanding the size of the event and your previous answer that they were specifically procured for the purpose of the event—what catering services were brought online, and, in particular, were there waiters, kitchen hands or cleaning staff? Was there any audiovisual equipment or any services such as that used for the event?

Mr Hehir: Not that I'm aware of, but I can check.

Senator McGRATH: Were any photographs taken of the event?

Mr Spyrou: We didn't have a departmental photographer that I'm aware of. Whether photographs were taken by house staff, or whether there were any of the Prime Minister's staff there, I couldn't tell you.

Senator McGRATH: Minister, did you attend the event?

Senator Wong: No.

Senator McGRATH: Were you invited to attend the event?

Senator Wong: I think we were sitting.

CHAIR: Yes, we were.

Senator Wong: I take my responsibilities to the Senate quite seriously.

Senator McGRATH: You have a permanent pairing arrangement—

Senator Wong: Yes, but how often do I just disappear? I've always got to keep eyes on. You never know what McGrath will be up to, I say.

Senator McGRATH: You're not the only one to say that, by the way. Do we have any answers yet, sir, in relation to the questions I asked earlier?

Senator Wong: He's not going to have an answer now, and, even if he does, I'd like to look at it before he gives it to you, so you can wait until the break. That's not unreasonable.

Senator McGRATH: We'll get an answer today, though.

Senator Wong: He's not giving that commitment either, and Senator Birmingham never allowed officials to give such a commitment. Best endeavours.

Senator McGRATH: Thank you, Senator Wong. You did promise to be a part of the most transparent government ever, and I would hope that you live up to that pledge in relation to what funds were expended on behalf of the taxpayers for a party at the Lodge.

Senator Wong: We have no secret ministries, that is true. The Prime Minister is not sworn to any other ministry.

Senator McGRATH: I don't think that's particularly relevant to—

Senator Wong: Speaking of secrets.

Senator McGRATH: the catering services that were invited to the Lodge while he was trying to be nice to the teals. I'm okay with those questions, and I look forward to the answers that come back soon, thank you.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 317 of 375

CHAIR: Senator Cash.

Senator CASH: The Minister for Defence revealed through media that, on Tuesday 11 February, a Royal Australian Air Force P-8A Poseidon aircraft had been intercepted over the South China Sea by a People's Liberation Army Air Force J-16 fighter, which fired flares just 30 metres from the P-8, and also that Defence was tracking a task group of People's Liberation Army Navy warships through the Coral Sea. My first question is: when did the department first become aware of the P-8 incident?

Mr Kang: In relation to the P-8 incident over the Paracel Islands, the department first became aware on the morning of Wednesday 12 February.

Senator CASH: When was the Prime Minister first briefed?

Mr Kang: I can't advise you when the Prime Minister was first briefed. I can advise you on when we first briefed the Prime Minister's office, and it was that same morning, shortly after we were notified by the Department of Defence.

Senator CASH: Minister Wong, are you aware of when the Prime Minister was first briefed in relation to the P-8 incident?

Senator Wong: I'll have to take that on notice. Can I just correct something you said. You said, I think, that this became public by way of media. A public statement was issued. It was not just the Deputy Prime Minister's interview. A public statement was issued in relation—

Senator CASH: Sorry, I said it was revealed in the media.

Senator Wong: But, obviously, a decision was made to make sure this was appropriately disclosed. I appreciate you are going to ask questions about this, but, in terms of timelines and so forth, these are matters for Defence.

Senator CASH: I understand that, but the last time I checked I was in Prime Minister and Cabinet—am I? Am I not asking questions about the Prime Minister? Is that correct?

Senator Wong: I'm making the point—I was trying to be helpful—that, if you want information about timelines and events associated with the P-8 incident to which you referred, that is appropriately addressed tomorrow or Wednesday in Defence estimates.

Senator CASH: But I'm asking questions about the Prime Minister's knowledge. I'm assuming that they are relevant here.

Senator Wong: You've asked them all day, Senator, so go ahead. I was actually trying to be helpful, but go ahead.

Senator CASH: Did the Prime Minister receive advice from any other departments or agencies in relation to the P-8 incident?

Mr Kang: I'd have to take that on notice. Often, as a general principle, we provide advice to the Prime Minister's office on incidents in relation to either international issues or national security, and, quite often, the Prime Minister and/or his office will receive separate advice from operational agencies.

Senator CASH: Minister, are you aware if the Prime Minister received advice from other departments or agencies in relation to the P-8 incident?

Senator Wong: I don't quite understand what you're trying to ask.

Senator CASH: The first question was: when did the department first become aware? I now understand that that was Wednesday 12 February. My question then was: when was the Prime Minister briefed? My understanding is his office was briefed the same morning. I am now asking: did he receive advice from any other departments or agencies in relation to this issue?

Senator Wong: I would have to take that on notice. I can say to you it would be normal practice for these sorts of issues to be discussed at senior levels of the government.

Senator CASH: Did the Prime Minister direct any instructions on the type of response the Australian government would make?

Mr Kang: No, I'm not aware of any specific direction from the Prime Minister. Obviously, there was an initial assessment, which was primarily a responsibility of the Department of Defence, of the interaction and the nature of it—whether it was, say, professional or otherwise—and then, following that assessment, there would have been some discussion in terms of what the government's response would be.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 318 of 375

Senator Wong: Senator, this is partly why I suggested these might be issues for Defence. So can I answer in the broad. This is in relation to the P-8, yes?

Senator CASH: Yes. My question is in relation to—

Senator Wong: The P-8.

Senator CASH: the Prime Minister.

Senator Wong: The usual process would be that Defence would go through an assessment of what occurred, to provide advice about how they would describe or categorise the incident, and that would form the basis of any decision to make public what occurred—in accordance with Defence advice. And that is what occurred on this occasion.

Senator CASH: That wasn't my question. My question was—

Senator Wong: It's relevant to your question because there is a clear principle and a clear set of protocols—that is, we respond based on Defence advice and we respond in a way that is consistent with practice.

Senator CASH: So that's what you're saying, then? You responded in accordance with the protocols.

Mr Fletcher: Senator, it is well understood among senior levels of the government how we respond to such incidents in relation to China.

Senator CASH: Yes, I understand that. My question was a very simple one.

Senator Wong: This is not the Prime Minister directing. There's a—

Senator CASH: I know that.

Senator Wong: With respect, you're asking the wrong question. There is a methodical, clear process that is gone through. As Mr Fletcher said, it's well known within government how we deal with these matters, and the matter was dealt with in the way that I've outlined.

Senator CASH: Did the Prime Minister make representations to counterparts in the Chinese government?

Mr Fletcher: No, Senator. There has been no recent contact directly between the Prime Minister and his counterparts in China.

Senator CASH: Who in the government made the decision that the incident would not be made public—

Senator Wong: That's not correct.

Senator CASH: until 13 February?

Senator Wong: I don't think that's an accurate reflection of the timeframe.

Senator CASH: Could you take me through, then, the timeframe?

Senator Wong: Again, you should ask these questions in Defence because they are the ones responsible for it. But the abiding principle is that there is a response that is consistent with practice, and it is based on Defence advice. Defence will often take some time to make an assessment of how they will characterise an incident. They have very clear categories for how they would describe various interactions. You would recall, from many incidents, that often it takes a period of time for Defence to be clear about their assessment of how they would describe a particular incident.

Senator CASH: In terms of the Chinese warships, when did the department first become aware of the task group's presence in Australia's exclusive economic zone?

Senator Wong: They're not in—

Mr Fletcher: Defence is best placed to answer that question. It relates to operational security matters about our monitoring of our northern approaches. This is not a question we can answer.

Senator CASH: I will continue to ask my questions, and it might be that I do have to take them to Defence.

Senator Wong: I don't think that he's—

Senator CASH: Please, Senator Wong. You clearly have something to say that's not reflected by merely shaking your head and rolling your eyes at me.

Senator Wong: I'm sorry. I wasn't intending to roll my eyes. Mr Fletcher has just given you some indication about the area of concern in terms of public disclosure. I'm not sure whether you've actually asked for a briefing on this. If not, we would take you through that.

Senator CASH: As I said, I will ask the questions, because we will also be asking them of Defence. If you are unable to answer them or if you would prefer that they go to Defence, then that's all you need to say.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 319 of 375

Senator Wong: We won't be answering them in a public forum.

Senator CASH: That's fine. Then that becomes, for the *Hansard* record, what the answers to the questions are. When was the Prime Minister first made aware that the task group had formed and were travelling south along Australia's coast?

Mr Fletcher: I'll take that on notice, but I refer to my previous answer.

Senator CASH: How regularly was the Prime Minister updated?

Mr Fletcher: I'll take that on notice as well.

Senator CASH: Did the Prime Minister make representations to counterparts in the Chinese government?

Mr Fletcher: My previous answer said there has been no recent contact between the Prime Minister and his counterparts, including on this matter.

Senator CASH: When was the Prime Minister made aware of the live-firing exercise?

Mr Kang: Again, I can't speak to when the Prime Minister was first made aware of the exercise. But we did brief the Prime Minister's office in the early afternoon of Friday 21 February.

Senator CASH: And what coordination was there with the New Zealand government?

Mr Kang: I think that's more of a question for the Department of Defence. As far as this department is concerned, the only contact with the government of New Zealand occurred after the incidents in question.

Senator CASH: Thank you. Chair, Senator McGrath has some questions on a separate—

CHAIR: I'll rotate the call. I understand Senator Sheldon has also got some questions that he's been waiting to ask, so we'll come back to Senator McGrath. Senator Sheldon.

Senator SHELDON: I want to ask some high-level aviation questions regarding Rex Airlines. It's critical that we ensure regional communities are receiving services. You don't have to be an ex-aviation wonk, which I was in my previous life—I still take an interest in it—to understand the critical role that Rex plays in air services, particularly in regional areas. It includes everything from health services to supporting tourism industries and local economies, let alone social connectivity, which, again, is critically important.

I noted that the Western Queensland Alliance of Councils said that Rex plays a critical role in both ensuring access to health services and supporting health workers reaching us. They went on to talk more about the critical role that Rex plays in the community. Can you advise us on what steps the government has taken since being notified that Rex entered administration? Could you step me through that?

Ms Williams: I'm very happy to step you through that. Before I start though, I will note that the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts is working closely with the administrators and can answer more detailed questions should you have them. That department is working very closely with the administrators to ensure people in regional communities continue to have access to aviation services. The government is supporting this process by committing to work with shortlisted bidders on potential government support to maximise the prospect of a successful sale of the airline, and undertaking necessary work on contingency options. There are a range of other supports that are being provided, which Ms Garbin might like to run us through.

Ms Garbin: Some of the other steps that the government has undertaken to support Rex include the terms of government support. That will be subject to negotiation, but conditional commitments by bidders must provide that ongoing reasonable level of service to regional communities and remote communities. They also need to provide value for money for taxpayers and to include good governance. The government is also committed to ensuring access to regional flight slots at Sydney airport until 24 October 2026. The government has also acquired $50 million of debt to become Rex's largest secured creditor so it can continue through the administration process until the middle of this year through the second sale process—and the government has provided $80 million in doing so. When Rex went into administration, the government quickly provided a guarantee in relation to regional ticket sales during the voluntary administration period.

Senator SHELDON: I have another question on the administration about the workforce. A critical role is to make sure the workforce is intact to keep the airline in the air and give a degree of certainty to make sure—the likelihood of people coming to an airline that's in trouble is very unlikely. When you lose somebody, you lose somebody. I understand that in July 2024 it was announced by the Rex administrators that 600 jobs would be lost, and in August 2024 it was announced that another 70 jobs would be lost. This would have been devastating, of course, for their families and for regional jobs across the country. Can you tell me how the government has

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 320 of 375

assisted those Rex employees that have lost their jobs as a result of the administration and how the assurances we're giving now for the airline are assisting in maintaining the workforce there?

Ms Garbin: I can take you through those steps. The government has announced commitments for former employees of Rex Airlines, and that they have early access to the Fair Entitlements Guarantee, the FEG. Early access to the FEG scheme ensures that those former employees can access their entitlements such as unpaid wages and annual leave, and that these are not delayed by the voluntary administration period extension. For example, as of late January, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations has received about 306 claims and processed 302 claims of former Rex employees, with more than $7.1 million already paid for Rex staff through the FEG. Entitlements of former employees of regional businesses who have been made redundant during the administration will also be paid by Rex administrators and be made secured creditors during this time.

Senator SHELDON: Obviously, it's important that these jobs and livelihoods are maintained to keep regional Australians receiving the support that Rex gives. The arteries of large parts of regional Australia are supported by Rex's service. The work by the administrators to find a private buyer, and to plan for a Commonwealth acquisition if one is not found—my commentary is that the opposition is saying different things. On one hand Sussan Ley, the deputy opposition leader, is criticising the government intervention and its moves to help the airline, but on the other hand the Nationals' David Littleproud and Michael McCormack have said everything should be done to save the airline and nothing should be left off the table. This question is to the department and then maybe the minister, if she would like: what role does aviation play in regional communities and why is it so important to safeguard its future?

Ms Garbin: One of the examples we can provide is that Rex Airlines in particular flies into quite a number of airports where it is the sole provider of these services in terms of those services that you mentioned earlier—health care, education and access to services. For example, some of the regulated routes to Albany, to Carnarvon, to Normanton—there is a range of airports where Rex is the only provider of these services to those regional and remote communities.

Senator Wong: It is the case, and it's quite striking, where, if you look down the electorates and states for airports where Rex is the only provider of passenger services, you'll see—in WA, New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland—there are quite a number of airports and communities where Rex is the only provider of passenger services.

I know from personal experience that the Broken Hill Rex is the way in which residents of Broken Hill access specialist medical appointments—often fly in, fly out from Adelaide, obviously, and sometimes Sydney, depending on the issue. And of course across northern Queensland—Longreach, Mt Isa, Cairns, Mornington—Rex is critical for specialist medical services. So in addition to those airports that have been mentioned, including Birdsville, Mornington, St George and others, we also know that Rex is the way in which urgent medical services in some of these communities are provided.

Senator SHELDON: Thank you. I have no further questions.

Senator McGRATH: I have some questions in relation to Ukraine. I do note, Minister, your opening statement and also that today is the third anniversary of the invasion of Ukraine. What are Ukraine's priority needs?

Mr Kang: Obviously Ukraine has a range of priority needs, which the government has been committed to addressing. I think it's principally military equipment and assistance, but also a range of humanitarian needs and some needs in relation to energy assistance—all of which the government has been providing.

Senator McGRATH: So there is a list?

Mr Kang: There's no specific list. There are requests that Ukraine will issue to us and other like-minded countries, and we endeavour to consider those requests and respond as appropriate.

Senator Wong: I visited Ukraine—this is probably a question more for Foreign Affairs—and obviously I expressed to my counterpart that it was useful for us to have clarity about what their top priorities were so that they could inform how we responded. We've sought to ensure that's the case. Obviously, there's a lot of media around different requests et cetera, but we've asked them to be really clear so we could have a clear understanding from Ukrainians what they regard as their priorities. But obviously, at the moment, the big issue is the next steps in peace negotiations.

Senator McGRATH: In terms of the requests that come in, do you keep a list of the requests? You mentioned earlier military, humanitarian, energy. Is there a central list somewhere that PM&C have kept or keep?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 321 of 375

Mr Kang: The department's role is to oversee and coordinate government efforts, to ensure that support that we do provide to Ukraine is both timely and well calibrated. We do take into account, obviously, requests as they come in, but, as you would appreciate, most of those requests are then the subject of consideration by the relevant line agency.

Senator McGRATH: I don't think you'd deliberately not answer the question, but requests have come in. Do we keep a copy of those requests somewhere?

Senator Wong: I think it might be better—we can take that on notice. I suspect some of the communications about priorities would have occurred either to DFAT or Department of Defence. So different portfolios, yes.

Senator McGRATH: I'll ask the questions here. Some, I realise, may have to go to other committee hearings, but I'll continue. Can you take on notice what list of priorities the Prime Minister and Cabinet may have, if you're unable to answer that particular question, noting the minister's advice then?

Senator Wong: What I can say to you is, on each occasion where we've made further decisions about assistance, we have obviously been informed that that's been the subject of discussion in consultation with the Ukrainians.

Senator McGRATH: On notice, can you provide a list of what priority needs we have supplied to the Ukrainian government? Minister, you mentioned when you're in Ukraine—

Senator Wong: Excuse me. We can provide some of that information now, so we'll do that.

Mr Kang: Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the government's provided more than $1.5 billion in assistance. That covers defence, humanitarian assistance and economic assistance. Out of that $1.5 billion, around $1.3 billion has been provided in military assistance; $85 million has been provided in humanitarian assistance, to meet the urgent needs of the Ukrainian people; $66 million has been provided to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, to support Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery efforts; and about $63 million worth has been provided to support Ukraine's energy security.

Senator McGRATH: Have the M1 tanks been delivered yet as part of our military support?

Senator Wong: This is a matter for Defence.

Senator McGRATH: Does Prime Minister and Cabinet know when they'll be delivered?

Senator Wong: This is the parliament. This is estimates. I take, as I said, a very relaxed attitude around the boundaries. A lot of things get asked which might not technically be about—certainly, we haven't had a single question about any budget matter or any money. But leave that aside. Military assistance and the issue of tanks is a question for Defence. It is not a question for PM&C.

Senator McGRATH: When was the last conversation the Prime Minister had with President Zelenskyy?

Mr Kang: That was earlier this month.

Senator McGRATH: What were the topics discussed in that conversation?

Mr Kang: We won't usually go into the full details of revealing conversations between leaders. I would note the Prime Minister did put out a social media message, afterwards, reinforcing our solidarity with the government and people of Ukraine, and President Zelenskyy put out a similar message.

Senator McGRATH: Did President Zelenskyy ask, in relation to priority needs, when the M1 tanks would be delivered?

Mr Kang: As I said, we don't usually go into the details of what was discussed unless they've already been revealed by the Prime Minister.

Senator McGRATH: But Prime Minister and Cabinet is supposed to be coordinating the Ukraine support. Is that correct?

Mr Kang: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: You would have knowledge, therefore, of when particular items of support are due to be delivered or have been delivered. That would be correct?

Mr Kang: As the minister has said, the detailed knowledge of logistics and timing resides with the particular agency—in this case, the Department of Defence.

Senator McGRATH: So you're saying—

Senator Wong: We can answer questions about the humanitarian funding, which is my side of it, or our side of it, and Defence can answer detailed questions about the defence assistance.

Senator McGRATH: But Prime Minister and Cabinet is coordinating the support.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 322 of 375

Senator Wong: Senator, you just have to wait two days. It's about making sure that the answer is current and correct and given by the people, the officials, who are charged with the responsibility of implementing the program. It's just how government works. The commitment has been made. Defence is responsible for some parts of the initial assistance. We are responsible, in DFAT, for humanitarian and also for sanctions, which were announced today. Of course there's coordination. Of course there's discussion. But Mr Kang is not responsible for the delivery of the tanks.

Senator McGRATH: So who is coordinating our support to Ukraine?

Senator Wong: That wasn't your question.

Senator McGRATH: But that's the question I'm asking now.

Senator Wong: No, no, no, Senator; your question—

Senator McGRATH: I'm asking the question—

Senator Wong: But I just want to be clear: your question was not, 'Who is coordinating?' Your question was a detailed question about the delivery of tanks, and I'm just saying: that is a matter for Defence.

Senator McGRATH: And I'll come back to that.

Senator Wong: Thank you.

Senator McGRATH: Who is coordinating our support to Ukraine?

Mr Fletcher: It's the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Senator McGRATH: Does the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet have any knowledge in relation to the support that is provided by the other government departments?

Mr Fletcher: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: My question therefore is: in relation to the M1 tanks, that you would have knowledge of, what is the department's knowledge of when those tanks are going to be delivered?

Mr Fletcher: That is a question for Defence.

Senator McGRATH: So you have no knowledge—

Mr Fletcher: We have knowledge—

Senator McGRATH: The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has no knowledge—

Senator Wong: Chair—

Senator McGRATH: of when the tanks are being delivered?

CHAIR: Yes. Senator—

Senator Wong: Really, I understand—I think I understand—the attempted political tactic here, which is that everything—

Senator McGRATH: It's not a political tactic, Minister.

Senator Wong: Please let me finish.

Senator McGRATH: Well, stop implying improper motives.

CHAIR: Senator—

Senator Wong: Please, I'd like to finish my answer.

CHAIR: Please let the minister finish.

Senator Wong: Right—where everything is somehow in the PM's portfolio, but I just want to say again, Senator: yes, this department, as under you, has a coordinating role, but for detailed questions about timelines, delivery or the reasons for dates, it's the responsible department. I'm happy to answer questions on sanctions, when I have Foreign Affairs officials, and on the humanitarian assistance, because I and my department are responsible for that. The Department of Defence is responsible for the delivery and the provision of military assistance. It is not a conspiracy for us to say to you: 'Can you please ask the responsible department those issues of detail.' We just go round in circles here.

Senator McGRATH: Has Prime Minister and Cabinet, in its coordinating meetings, ever asked when the tanks are going to be delivered?

Mr Kang: We cover off a range of issues to do with timeframes for delivery and provision of assistance to Ukraine.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 323 of 375

Senator McGRATH: I'm going to repeat the question because I didn't understand that answer. So has Prime Minister and Cabinet in your coordinating meetings, because you are a coordinating department, ever asked when the tanks are going to be delivered?

Mr Kang: Yes. We ask questions around delivery of humanitarian and military assistance, including in relation to the tanks, but the detailed timing is a matter for the Department of Defence.

Senator McGRATH: But you would have documents that would list when humanitarian aid is being delivered? You would have documents that would show when the military aid is being delivered?

Senator Wong: Why don't you want to ask our departments, Senator? I've tried to be helpful here. I've explained to you who is doing what. Why are you so intent on not asking our departments? And you wanted to ask here. Well, we've told you that they're the ones with responsibility for the programs.

Senator McGRATH: The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet is responsible for coordinating our support to Ukraine, and yet we can't get any answers out of the department in relation to timelines of what support has been delivered to Ukraine.

Senator Wong: Senator, as I said, you keep acting like this is some sort of problem. I'm saying to you we have $1½ billion worth of assistance in total. We have different programs delivering different parts of it like, for example, humanitarian aid. There may be different parts of the humanitarian budget we've been using for different things we have been funding. We're simply saying the people who have the responsibility for and the knowledge of timelines and why are not the ones at the table. I don't know why it's such an issue asking the appropriate department.

Senator McGRATH: Well, I'm unsure why it's such an issue that the department that is responsible for coordinating our support to Ukraine is unable to answer some very simple questions in relation to the timeframes concerning the delivery of the said support. This is taxpayers' money we're talking about here. What value-add does the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet bring to the delivery of support to Ukraine, in that case?

Mr Fletcher: We bring together the full range of agencies involved in assistance to Ukraine and make sure that everyone knows what's going on with each other. But the implementation, the timelines and the specificities of how and when the assistance is delivered are a matter for the agencies concerned.

Senator McGRATH: This is more of a light-touch approach, as a witness previously said today. Okay.

Senator Wong: No, Senator, it's just that we actually think ministers are responsible for their portfolios. We don't have a prime minister who swears himself secretly into other portfolios.

Senator McGRATH: We have a prime minister who can't answer a basic question as to when he was briefed as to a possible mass terror event.

Senator Wong: We have a prime minister who expects ministers to do our jobs and that, if I am part of an announcement on Ukraine, I am responsible, with my department, for the delivery of that assistance. So, yes, we do have a system where the Prime Minister expects ministers to do their job.

Senator McGRATH: I am asking Prime Minister and Cabinet if they can tell us any information in relation to the coordinating of the support for Ukraine, and it is quite clear that I cannot get an answer from Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Senator Wong: No, Senator, please. Please stop saying things which are just not true. You have got an answer; it's just not the answer you want. The answer is: if you want timelines on tanks, can you please ask that in Defence, because they'll be able to give you a much more correct and current answer on timelines on delivery of tanks. If you want an answer to a question on sanctions, I'm happy to answer that in DFAT estimates, and I'm also happy to answer questions on humanitarian assistance which we provide.

Senator McGRATH: You just referred to the current timeline in relation to delivery of tanks. How often does the Department of Defence update Prime Minister and Cabinet in relation to the delivery of the tanks?

Mr Kang: We have a process where we get together with relevant agencies on a regular basis to discuss current and future assistance to Ukraine. It's an interdepartmental committee process. It occurs every couple of months, roughly.

Senator McGRATH: Every couple of months?

Mr Kang: That's a formal IDC process. Yes.

Senator McGRATH: So you say the coordinating department in relation to the support that is going to one of our allies, Ukraine, only meets with the other departments every couple of months?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 324 of 375

Mr Kang: No, that's not what I said. I said we have a formal IDC process that meets every couple of months. There are much more regular ongoing working-level discussions between relevant agencies, including this one.

Senator McGRATH: When was the last time the Department of Defence updated the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in relation to the delivery of the tanks?

Mr Kang: That would have been at the last IDC process. I'd have to double-check on exactly when. It was within the last two weeks.

Senator McGRATH: In relation to President Zelenskyy's peace formula, what is the Prime Minister's approach to the 10 essential points that have been outlined by President Zelenskyy?

Senator Wong: I would suggest to you that a deeper discussion on Ukraine and the current negotiations, for example, would probably be best in the Foreign Affairs portfolio. I'll see if Mr Kang can outline anything. The Prime Minister has made clear his views, his continued support and the government's continued support for Ukraine against Russia's immoral and illegal war that has been waged contrary to the UN Charter. That's why we continue to support Ukraine both substantively and diplomatically.

Mr Kang: Yes. I would just mention that the government has consistently pursued two key objectives in relation to the war: firstly, supporting Ukraine to achieve comprehensive, just and lasting peace on its terms; and, secondly, holding Russia accountable for its actions. The Prime Minister has stated that very publicly, including in relation, obviously, to the third anniversary of the invasion today, and it was a sentiment that he also shared in his phone call with President Zelenskyy earlier this month.

Senator McGRATH: Have President Trump's recent statements and actions altered Australia's practical approach to supporting Ukraine?

Mr Kang: Our approach is based on supporting Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and those two objectives that I just mentioned. As you'd appreciate, discussions around a potential resolution of the war are ongoing and evolving.

Senator McGRATH: Minister, has our strategy changed at all following President Trump's comments?

Senator Wong: Again, it would be better if these were in my portfolio—

Senator McGRATH: In terms of—

Senator Wong: Just hang on. It should be my portfolio for these discussions, but you would have seen from the Prime Minister's, my and the Deputy Prime Minister's joint statement today—and the Prime Minister's comments over the weekend and prior to that—that Australia's position in relation to Ukraine has not changed.

Senator McGRATH: Has China made any representations to Australia about Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

Mr Kang: Sorry, Senator. I'm not quite sure what you mean. Has China made representations to us?

Senator McGRATH: Has China raised the issue of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in whatever sense with the government of Australia?

Senator Wong: Again, this should be in Foreign Affairs estimates, but I'll answer it here because I'm generous. I have publicly said on more than one occasion that we call on China to use its relationship with Russia and its status as a P5 member to end the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine.

Senator McGRATH: Are you able to update the committee on steps that the government has taken in relation to the support of China, North Korea and Iran for Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

Senator Wong: This is really something that should be dealt with in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Senator McGRATH: But it is also something that the Prime Minister—

Senator Wong: You can't just make everything a PM&C matter because you decide that the Prime Minister has to respond to you on it. This is actually Senate estimates. The Prime Minister has been consistent in his support for Ukraine, and he has engaged at his level with others not only about that support and concern about any support for Russia by the parties; the government has also made its concerns very clear about the involvement of the DPRK.

Senator McGRATH: Has the Prime Minister spoken to the foreign minister—

Senator Wong: Me.

Senator McGRATH: you—

Senator Wong: Regularly.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 325 of 375

Senator McGRATH: in relation to the North Korean, Iranian and Chinese support for the Russian invasion of Ukraine?

Senator Wong: The foreign minister doesn't disclose conversations she has with the Prime Minister. I'm sure Ms Bishop didn't, either, and nor would I recall Senator Payne saying she would disclose that. But I can say that our clear public position and our clear position is that we support Ukraine. Our position has not changed. We continue to stand by Ukraine, and we have expressed publicly—and privately, you would therefore anticipate—concerns about others' support for Russia, including the involvement of the DPRK.

Senator McGRATH: Has Australia identified all Russian assets in Australia that are subject—

Senator Wong: That's a matter for the sanctions part of DFAT, not for PM&C.

Senator McGRATH: Well, I'm going to—

Senator Wong: No. You can't make something that is not in the—

Senator McGRATH: You can't interrupt, with respect, Senator. I haven't even gotten to the [inaudible] and you got in.

Senator Wong: Senator, you're asking a question again that we've spent all afternoon on. I note that the opposition have not yet asked a single question on cost of living—not one question all day on cost of living.

Senator CASH: The Prime Minister probably wouldn't know much about that anyway—

Senator Wong: Not one.

Senator CASH: based on what we've heard today.

Senator McGRATH: You haven't answered any questions today [inaudible]—

Senator Wong: It's 20 to six, and it shows you what sort of priority they have on cost of living.

Senator CASH: You just take it on notice—let's be honest. It's a light touch!

Senator Wong: Everyone can notice that. Apart from the fact that there's been not one question on cost of living from the opposition, I would say to you, Senator, you continue to ask questions which are not within the administrative orders for this department. I have sought to be helpful, but, if you're going to ask questions about sanctions, can you please come on Thursday and we will answer them.

Senator McGRATH: I'll start again. Has Australia identified all Russian assets in Australia that are subject to sanctions, and is Prime Minister and Cabinet coordinating this activity?

Mr Hehir: To repeat what Minister Wong said previously, that's a matter best put to the sanctions area within the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. They are the people who have the level of detail, the context and the ability to provide an accurate answer. But they're also the department accountable for that particular activity.

Senator McGRATH: Is Prime Minister and Cabinet involved?

Senator Wong: Did you have a conversation one time about this and decide you were going to ask a question here? Seriously, Senator. These are serious matters. I'm very happy to make sure that officers both in AGD and DFAT can answer your questions on this, but these are not the offices responsible for Australia's sanctions regime. It's the wrong portfolio.

Senator McGRATH: So what you're saying is that Prime Minister and Cabinet—

Senator Wong: No, I'm not saying that. I'm saying they are not responsible within government.

Senator McGRATH: Does Prime Minister and Cabinet have a role for the coordination of sanctions imposed upon Russian assets in Australia?

Senator Wong: I'm the responsible minister for sanctions.

Senator McGRATH: I'm asking whether Prime Minister and Cabinet—

Senator Wong: No. I'm the responsible minister for sanctions.

Senator CASH: You might be the responsible minister, but that is not the question.

Senator Wong: I don't understand why it is you don't want to actually ask questions of the people who can give you answers.

Senator CASH: We're in Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Senator Wong: So you've got nothing else to ask. If you don't have anything else to ask, let's move on.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 326 of 375

Senator CASH: These questions are directed to what the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet are doing—or, alternatively, the knowledge of the Prime Minister. Based on today, there's not a lot of knowledge, and I'm worried about what Prime Minister and Cabinet are doing, quite frankly.

Senator Wong: Based on today, it's clear that you want to ask this department questions on programs and issues that they're not responsible for in order to try make political points. I think everyone can see that. And you haven't asked a single question on cost of living. Everyone can see where your priorities are.

Senator McGRATH: That's because you've taken them on notice. You're interested in cost of living after the—

Senator Wong: I have tried to be of assistance. I'm very happy to answer questions about Russian sanctions. We have just imposed the largest set of sanctions that Australia has imposed since February 2022.

Senator CASH: You should have answered them in other estimates.

Senator Wong: Senator, if you're not interested in why we've done that and how we've done that and how those are framed—

Senator CASH: You should, because we've asked them in a different committee. You're only here representing the Prime Minister, not as yourself.

Senator Wong: Senator, I'm very happy to answer them—

Senator CASH: That's what you told me this morning. I'm confused now.

Senator Wong: I'm very happy to answer them in the appropriate portfolio. The sanctions are the responsibility of the minister and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Senator CASH: Then why are you answering the questions now?

Senator Wong: Because I'm trying to get you to get something that we can actually deal with rather than deal with something that is actually not this department's responsibility.

Senator McGRATH: It's not our fault that questions keep getting taken on notice by you and your staff.

Senator Wong: It's not my fault that you don't ask the questions in the right committee.

Senator McGRATH: That is not correct.

Senator Wong: You know that is your responsibility, not mine.

Senator McGRATH: We've spent most of today—

Senator CASH: Is Prime Minister and Cabinet the lead on Ukraine or not? That's what I want to know.

Senator McGRATH: That's a really good question. Does Prime Minister and Cabinet have the lead on Ukraine?

Mr Fletcher: We have the policy coordination role—

Senator CASH: Apparently not—

Mr Fletcher: within the government, and we exercise that role through the regular meetings at band 2 level and also the IDCs.

Senator McGRATH: So we can ask questions in relation to Ukraine and the government's response to Ukraine, because of that answer you've just given then. So what I want to know is: what activity is Prime Minister and Cabinet coordinating in relation to the sanctions on Russian assets in Australia? What is the role of Prime Minister and Cabinet in relation to that issue?

Mr Fletcher: Our role is just to keep informed as to the actions undertaken by other portfolios and to assist when there are coordination matters that need attention. But, as the minister said, portfolio ministers have responsibility for the implementation of policy in their portfolios, and they carry those things out.

Senator McGRATH: In response to recommendation 7 of the Senate inquiry report into our support to Ukraine, Prime Minister and Cabinet, I presume, drafted this:

Under Australian sanctions law, Russian assets can be frozen, however asset seizure is not provided under legislation. Any proposal to seize assets through the sanctions framework would raise complex legal and policy issues.

Are you able to expand on why that seems to be a problem?

Mr Hehir: Again, I suspect that's probably a matter for DFAT and/or, potentially, Attorney-General's Department, given the raising of legal issues. I do believe that it's more appropriate that those questions get put to those relevant departments where they'll have the experts available to answer those questions in detail.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 327 of 375

Senator McGRATH: We're able to seize assets that are deemed to be the proceeds of crime and assets related to terrorism offences. Minister, what is the Prime Minister's view in relation to the seizing of Russian assets in Australia? Will he be instructing the government to proceed with changes to any relevant legislation?

Senator Wong: I think that's a tactic we've seen for a long time today—which is, you just put a proposition and ask what the Prime Minister's opinion is on it, as if that somehow makes it relevant to these Senate estimates; it doesn't. The Prime Minister's position on Ukraine is clear. We stand with Ukraine. I refer you to the statement released today on the anniversary of the illegal invasion. In relation to the sanctions framework, how that is implemented and any proposed changes to it—which is what your question goes to—that is legislation and a set of legal responsibilities that resides with the foreign minister and the foreign affairs portfolio. So we're happy to answer those questions including in relation to that report. It may be that the asset point that you raised would be something that the Attorney-General's Department would be able to provide information on. Certainly, I can tell you that we take Senate reports seriously. The responses are considered across government and across portfolios.

Senator CASH: Could I turn to a cost-of-living issue—

Senator Wong interjecting—

Senator CASH: I wouldn't laugh, Senator Wong, because it's a cost-of-living issue that's—

Senator Wong: I'm sorry, it was just on cue, that's all—

Senator CASH: not playing out well for you in Western Australia and that is, of course, destroying the lives of many sheep farmers who relied on exporting their sheep. So, for them, I'll be honest with you, it's not a laughing matter. In fact, the last time I met with a group of farmers, they cried.

Senator Wong: Please don't verbal me and misrepresent me.

Senator CASH: I'm not verballing you. You have been saying—

Senator Wong: No, let me finish. Oh my goodness!

Senator CASH: 'Why is the coalition not asking questions on the cost of living?' I am delighting you now by asking some questions.

Senator Wong: Chair, can I ask for some protection, please.

Senator CASH: Oh, please, you of all people!

Senator Wong: I need protection.

CHAIR: Senator Wong, I offer you my protection.

Senator Wong: Thank you.

CHAIR: Senator Cash, please come to order.

Senator Wong: I laughed at the fact that five minutes after I pointed out that you had not asked a single cost-of-living question, you then said, 'I'm now asking a cost-of-living question.' That is what I was laughing at. I'm not laughing at anybody's distress, so please do not verbal me and suggest that I am, because it is really dishonest to do so. You have a question about the ending of the—

Senator CASH: Live sheep export industry.

Senator Wong: Thank you. I think Ms Williams can respond briefly.

Senator CASH: Thank you, Ms Williams. What conversations did the Prime Minister or his office have with counterparts in Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates prior to the Albanese government's decision to introduce the legislation to ban live sheep exports?

Ms Williams: We may not have the right people at the table. If you could give me a second.

Senator CASH: Not a problem at all, Ms Williams.

Senator Wong: My recollection—this is going back some time—is that that engagement was undertaken not by the Prime Minister but by the then minister for agriculture, but I will check that.

Mr Kang: Sorry, I don't have anything. I'm not aware of specific conversations on this topic.

Senator CASH: Minister Wong, could I confirm—because I wouldn't want to verbal you—that your understanding, or your recollection—

Senator Wong: My recollection.

Senator CASH: is that the Prime Minister or his office wouldn't have had the conversations with his counterparts in Kuwait, Qatar or the UAE.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 328 of 375

Senator Wong: No, my recollection is that the engagement with the countries which are the live export markets was undertaken in part at least by the then minister for agriculture. But I will take that on notice.

Senator CASH: If the conversations were not had at the prime-minister-to-prime-minister level, could you also take on notice why not?

Senator Wong: I understand—consistent with the approach that you and your colleagues have taken all day—that you pose a range of questions about what the Prime Minister has or hasn't done, or has thought or hasn't thought, or what his opinion is in an attempt to make everything that government does his response. But the Prime Minister expects his ministers to do their jobs, and he trusts his ministers to do their jobs. I understand the position you have in relation to the phase-out of live sheep exports. I make the point that this was an election commitment. I also make the point that the government has put in place a transition or assistance package and given a substantial amount of notice as to the transition out of live exports. That is being led by the agriculture department.

Senator CASH: Perhaps, instead of taking offence every time we ask a question about what the Prime Minister did or did not do, you could simply answer the question, 'He did not have any conversations with his counterparts.'

Senator Wong: I've taken that on notice. I'm simply saying, because I'm trying to be helpful, that I think the engagement with export markets and the discussion with them before or as part of implementing this decision is relevant. My recollection is that the then minister for agriculture engaged in those consultations, but I will take that on notice and check that.

Senator CASH: How many times has the Prime Minister visited Western Australia and met with members of the live sheep export industry?

Ms Williams: I'd have to take that on notice. We don't have that information in front of us here today.

Senator CASH: Are you aware of any times he has come to Western Australia and met with members of the live sheep export industry?

Ms Williams: As I said, I don't have that information with me here today.

Senator CASH: Minister Wong, are you aware of whether or not the Prime Minister or how many times the Prime Minister, in all his visits to Western Australia, has met with members of the live sheep export industry?

Senator Wong: I'll take that on notice.

Senator CASH: My understanding is zero; is that true?

Senator Wong: I've just taken the question on notice.

Senator CASH: On 5 February the WA farmers group Keep the Sheep released a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, urging him to reverse the phase-out of live sheep exports. The letter itself points out that WA farmers are suffering, with the sheep flock declining by 25 per cent last year, two major abattoirs closing and wool production at its lowest level since the 1920s. Meanwhile, shearers are reporting their businesses have dropped by 30 per cent in the last 12 months. The letter explains that these outcomes are because 'a viable WA sheep industry needs competition from three markets—meat processing, wool production and live exports'. The letter goes on to say: 'Good governments do not shut down industries that support regional businesses and communities, no matter how small you consider them, for political purposes. Please do the right thing for WA. Repeal the ban. Listen to farmers that feed and clothe Australia and the world.' Minister, are there any circumstances where the Albanese Labor government would reverse or reconsider its decision to shut down the live sheep export trade?

Senator Wong: I will take that on notice. I note this is a matter that has been dealt with in the agriculture portfolio.

Senator CASH: I'm asking about the Prime Minister's perspective, though. The letter was to the Prime Minister, specifically pleading with him on behalf of WA farmers whose livelihoods are being destroyed.

Senator Wong: I haven't seen this letter. Do you have a response to the letter as well?

Senator CASH: No.

Senator Wong: If I can see the letter, I will chase up the response to the letter.

Senator CASH: But could I ask you: from a governmental perspective, are there any circumstances where the Albanese Labor government would reverse—

Senator Wong: You've asked that, and I've answered that.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 329 of 375

Senator CASH: or reconsider? So, in other words, no? It's a real shame. Senator McGrath has some further questions.

CHAIR: We are due to break for dinner. We were hoping we would make it through your brackets of questioning before the dinner break, as you indicated tentatively before. I understand that Minister Wong has an engagement outside the building.

Senator McGRATH: We've got further questions, so we'll have to come back after the dinner break.

Senator Wong: That's fine. I wonder, given there are agencies afterwards, if you want to tell us who you don't want.

Senator McGRATH: We'll talk to the committee.

Senator Wong: I also raised with your colleague that I'm a little time constrained, so, if you want me to come back for me, I ask we start a little later.

Senator CASH: I said that was fine, yes.

Proceedings suspended from 17:59 to 19:01

Net Zero Economy Authority

CHAIR: We will resume. I thank the officers at the table for the indulgence of changing their time. For those listening, we suspended for the dinner break and subsequently made a decision as a committee to move the Net Zero Economy Authority forward, albeit some two hours later than their originally scheduled time, so Minister Wong was able to attend an official function with the Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, PNG. On that basis we're very grateful to Senator the Hon. Jenny McAllister for stepping in at the table for the next half an hour. I welcome chief executive officer Mr David Shankey and other officers of the Net Zero Economy Authority. Do you have an opening statement this evening?

Mr Shankey: Yes, a very brief one. As you are aware, the legislation to set up the authority was passed in September 2024, and my appointment and that of board members coincided with the Net Zero Economy Authority commencing as a statutory entity on 11 December. In my first week we started work to implement the energy and industry jobs plan, conducting a consultation to inform decisions on whether the plan should be applied to the Torrens power station, which is scheduled to close in June 2026. The board has met twice since being formed, and in the last fortnight the board held its second meeting in Collie—Australia's most successful potential example of an energy transition in progress.

CHAIR: Thank you for acknowledging that. That community is very important to me.

Mr Shankey: Thanks very much for fitting us in.

Senator McGRATH: There were some questions on notice I don't believe I have responses to. I'll start with question on notice 631. Can you confirm it hasn't been answered?

Mr Shankey: I confirm that, yes.

Senator McGRATH: Why is that?

Mr Shankey: There are processes to be followed here. It's standard policy, as I think you're aware, that draft answers are provided to the relevant minister's office to provide any comments. We don't lodge them until we know that there are no more sufficient comments, and we haven't reached that stage yet.

Senator McGRATH: When were they lodged? I presume the relevant minister is the Prime Minister's office?

Mr Shankey: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: When did you lodge them with the Prime Minister's office?

Mr Shankey: It should be clear, from the response tabled in response to Senate order 21, that the draft responses were lodged by 19 December.

Senator McGRATH: So the Prime Minister's office had question on notice No. 631 since 19 December?

Mr Shankey: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: I might come back to that one. In relation to question on notice No. 632, has that been answered?

Mr Shankey: It's the same situation.

Senator McGRATH: Has it been answered?

Mr Shankey: No.

Senator McGRATH: It hasn't been answered.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 330 of 375

Mr Shankey: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: And when did you lodge it with the Prime Minister's office?

Mr Shankey: It's the same situation.

Senator McGRATH: Which date?

Mr Shankey: By 19 December.

Senator McGRATH: When you say 'by 19 December'—did you lodge it earlier than that, or did you lodge it on the 19th?

Mr Shankey: I think they were lodged by 19 December; I'm not quite sure if that's the exact date.

Senator McGRATH: Could you check your records? Can someone advise you as to when they were actually lodged with the Prime Minister's office?

Mr Shankey: Yes, we can do that.

Senator McGRATH: Like now?

Senator McAllister: We can take it on notice.

Mr Shankey: We can take it on notice, yes.

Senator McGRATH: Has question No. 633 been answered?

Mr Shankey: It's the same situation.

Senator McGRATH: Has it been answered?

Mr Shankey: No.

Senator McGRATH: It hasn't been answered. On what date did you give your draft response to the Prime Minister's office?

Mr Shankey: By the 19th.

Senator McGRATH: Of December?

Mr Shankey: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: You'll take on notice the precise date?

Mr Shankey: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: Has question on notice No. 635 been answered?

Mr Shankey: No.

Senator McGRATH: And on what date was your response provided?

Mr Shankey: By the 19th.

Senator McGRATH: By 19 December?

Mr Shankey: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: Has question on notice No. 636 been answered?

Mr Shankey: No.

Senator McGRATH: And when did you give your draft response to the Prime Minister's office?

Mr Shankey: By the 19th.

Senator McGRATH: Of December?

Mr Shankey: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: Has question on notice No. 637 been answered?

Mr Shankey: No, it hasn't. It's the same situation with that one.

Senator McGRATH: And a draft response was given to the Prime Minister's office on 19 December?

Mr Shankey: By the 19th, yes.

Senator McGRATH: Has question on notice No. 638 been answered?

Mr Shankey: It's the same situation with that one.

Senator McGRATH: It hasn't been answered?

Mr Shankey: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: And a draft response was given to the Prime Minister's office by 19 December?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 331 of 375

Mr Shankey: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: Minister, why hasn't the Prime Minister's office approved the answers to the questions on notice that were given to the Prime Minister by 19 December?

Senator McAllister: The official, I think, has indicated to you that the advice that they've received is that there are some questions that remain to be resolved. I have just had handed to me, for example, your question No. 635. I note that it runs to just over a page of 10 point, and it is a very detailed 16-part question. It is quite a substantial set of questions that need to be answered. I'm not particularly surprised that people are taking the time that's necessary to develop an appropriate answer for the Senate.

Senator McGRATH: Didn't the Prime Minister commit to lead the most transparent government ever?

Senator McAllister: I think you'll find the record of the government in answering the Senate's questions in this forum and other forums is very strong. There are very large quantities of information presently being requested from the government and we do our best to make the information available to the Senate in a timely way. I also note that many of the things you asked about in some of the questions you have just run through go to issues which really are already in the public domain, but, nonetheless, we take our obligation to provide information to the Senate seriously. We do seek to be transparent and responsive to the requests of the Senate, and I'm sure that these answers will be finalised at the first opportunity.

Senator McGRATH: Let's put some of the questions to you. The department stated at estimates that $6,732,000 had been allocated to campaigns in the Gladstone and Hunter regions. It was broken down. There was $527,000 for engagement with multicultural audiences. How was that money spent?

Mr Bover: The engagement and multicultural audiences program was part of a broader program of engagement with the broader communities of the Hunter and Gladstone—Central Queensland—regions. We also specifically targeted multicultural audiences and First Nations audiences. Specifically, the funding for multicultural audiences supported engagement with community leaders in the culturally and linguistically diverse community of those regions to support their role as trusted voices and leaders of conversations within that community. It also supported the production of information communication kits and their translation into seven different languages. It supported four different events that brought together almost 300 people from the CALD communities within those two regions, and it also supported a pledge of support process among leaders of the CALD communities within those regions.

Senator McGRATH: Were two events held in each region?

Mr Bover: That is correct, yes, two in each region, specifically targeting CALD audiences but, as I said, that was part of a broader engagement with those communities.

Senator McGRATH: What did each event cost?

Mr Bover: We don't have the breakdown for specific events. The delivery of these services for multicultural audiences, First Nations and the general community was outsourced to a range of providers, and their contracting is around the delivery of broad services rather than activity based costing.

Senator McGRATH: To which providers did you outsource?

Mr Bover: Specifically for multicultural audiences, are you asking about?

Senator McGRATH: Yes, the $527,000.

Mr Bover: Embrace Society is the name of the organisation.

Senator McGRATH: Embrace?

Mr Bover: Yes. So you might be aware, the Department of Finance, communications branch, maintains panel arrangements for the delivery of government communication information campaigns. They have villages of providers across research, multicultural, First Nations, media and so forth. So our selection was driven by that Department of Finance process around the delivery of government information campaigns.

Senator McGRATH: So they've organised four events, two in each region, 300 people in total, or was it 300 people per event?

Mr Bover: In total, but, just to be clear, that's certainly not the totality of what they've done. As I mentioned earlier, there was a range of activities, including developing communications resources and translating them into seven different languages. Part of that role was also: what is the strategy, and how do we best reach multicultural audiences in those two regions? I'd say a fair degree of their effort was around understanding those regions, the multicultural communities in those regions and the best pathways for reaching and communicating with those communities.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 332 of 375

Senator McGRATH: So when you said there was collateral—you didn't use that word, but it's the word I'm using—in terms of material that was prepared, what type of material are we talking about? Are we talking about a website, a Facebook page, printed material or posters?

Mr Bover: The 'collateral', to use your term, has all been published on our webpage, so it's all available to access, including the materials that have been developed specifically for multicultural audiences and the materials that have been translated into other languages as well. There's a range of information and resources that explain what net zero is, what the net zero economic transition is, what it means for different regions, what supports are available to community, workers and individuals to engage with the transition and how it's playing out in their region specifically.

Senator McGRATH: Can you take this on notice? I'm assuming I won't get a response to this based on the track record. Can you ask from the contractor a breakdown of what the money was spent on? I ask because $527,000 is a lot of money to spend on four events that 300 people attend. I'm assuming that there is some heavy spend on other things. Is it correct to assume that there was some heavy spend on advertising?

Mr Bover: Not under that particular contract. Again, as I've mentioned in my response to your first question, it certainly wasn't just four events that that provider delivered; it was the strategy and the knowledge of how to reach audiences. It was engagement with leaders within the multicultural communities of those two regions. It was providing them with resources so that they could lead discussions within their communities as well as developing communications materials and translating them into a variety of languages. I didn't want to leave you with the impression that $500,000 was spent just on four events, because that's certainly not the case. In terms of advertising, I'm happy to go into the details of that. Universal McCann is the government provider for above-the-line advertising. They've developed media strategies and plans for the rollout of the campaign in both the Hunter and Gladstone Central Queensland regions based on the scale of the audience—

Senator McGRATH: So that's just for the multicultural aspect.

Mr Bover: The multicultural aspect was what communications people would call below-the-line activity; that's engagement with the community. It wasn't advertising—

Senator McGRATH: You've also spent $1.6 million on community engagement, public relations, partnerships and other activities. Is that correct?

Mr Bover: As of the question that you asked at the last hearings, yes. That's $1.6 million allocated for broader community engagement. As I mentioned, in the two regions, there was a broad program of community engagement and public relations activities. There was $1.6 million for the communities in the broad, and then there was also specific funding for multicultural audiences and First Nations audiences.

Senator McGRATH: You've spent $1.9 million for the development of 'creative assets', to use your words. Is that correct?

Mr Bover: That was the response I gave at the last estimates hearing—

Senator McGRATH: Has that increased?

Mr Bover: Yes. Since the last hearings, when we last discussed this issue, the campaign was rolling out from 22 September to 30 November. We then paused over the Christmas summer break. As you can probably appreciate, it's not a great time to communicate with communities. Everyone is focused on the summer holidays. We also took the opportunity to do a midpoint evaluation of the campaign at that point, and then the campaign resumed on 10 February. There's an increase in costs across all categories associated with that continuation of the campaign in the new year.

Senator McGRATH: So the $1.9 million, what's that now?

Mr Bover: It's $2.8 million.

Senator McGRATH: That's just for the development of the creative assets?

Mr Bover: Yes, that's right.

Senator McGRATH: How much have you actually spent on advertising?

Mr Bover: Just to clarify, the campaign is obviously still underway, so when I say 'spent' I'm talking about allocations rather than actual expenditure. In terms of our advertising budget for the entire campaign, taking in what has been spent and what we will spend for the remainder of the campaign, the allocation is $2.3 million.

Senator McGRATH: Is that divided evenly between the Gladstone region and the Hunter region?

Mr Bover: No, it's not. As I mentioned in an earlier answer, it is based on a media strategy and plan that has been developed by Universal McCann based on the audiences that we're trying to reach. In that regard, it's

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 333 of 375

noteworthy that the Hunter region has a population of about 1.1 million, and the Gladstone region in Central Queensland has a population of about 380,000. Obviously, the Hunter is a much larger and more diverse region with very distinct communities in the lower and upper Hunter, so there are more people and more channels that we need to use in order to reach the audiences that we're targeting through this campaign. As a result, it's not an even split between the two regions. It's probably about 60-40 between Hunter and Gladstone.

Mr Shankey: It is one of the functions of the authority to encourage, support and develop educational and promotional material about the net zero transition.

Senator McGRATH: Yes, there are more marginal seats in the Hunter too.

Senator McAllister: I think the actual truth is that for a decade these communities were entirely uncertain about their future because there were economic changes underway, and the government that you were part of chose to do absolutely nothing about that. So, if we want to make political remarks, then these communities were badly let down by your government. Our view is that we do need a serious policy process to engage with the futures of these communities. We need to communicate with them about that clearly and directly. These are communities that require support, and we're not going to take a step backwards from that. These are communities that we seek to engage with and to assist.

Senator McGRATH: Let's go back to Embrace Society, which is the company that you contracted. How much money have you contracted for Embrace Society to work with or deliver with multicultural communities?

Mr Bover: The allocation is now $570,000. I would add that it's also a part of government guidelines for public information campaigns that there are specific strategies to reach multicultural and First Nations audiences, and that's a driver of our investment in that aspect of the campaign as well.

Senator McGRATH: Who's the CEO of Embrace Society?

Mr Bover: I don't know.

Senator McGRATH: Is it Paula Masselos?

Mr Bover: I have no knowledge of the CEO, as I explained earlier. The providers for campaigns are governed by the Department of Finance. They have panels of providers—'villages', they call them—that are assigned to support different campaigns, depending on the nature of the campaign. The Department of Finance can speak in more detail as to who's been appointed to those panels and why they've been appointed, but a competitive tender process would have been used.

Senator McGRATH: Who made the decision to appoint Embrace Society?

Mr Bover: The Department of Finance assigns a village. A village is a collection of providers across all the different aspects of services you need to deliver a campaign, from market research to media buying and strategy, public relations, First Nations, evaluation—

Senator McGRATH: Who made the decision to appoint Embrace Society—from the village or town or whatever you want to call it—to deliver the $570,000 engagement with multicultural communities?

Senator McAllister: I think, if you let the official finish the answer, he is talking you through the procurement process.

Mr Bover: The Department of Finance ultimately determines the providers, so you may need to direct your questions to the Department of Finance. They've appointed panels of providers. As part of the campaign development process, the Department of Finance assigns one of the panels it's established to support the campaign. It's a function of a tender process managed by the Department of Finance; it's not a decision that the authority or PM&C took. Your detailed questions about how they were appointed to the villages would be best directed to the Department of Finance.

Senator McGRATH: The Net Zero Economy Authority—or agency, as it was—had no role in deciding that Embrace Society would be appointed to run the engagement with the multicultural audiences?

Mr Bover: That is my understanding. As part of the process, we were assigned a village of providers to work with by the Department of Finance. If I'm incorrect about that I'll correct the record, but that is my understanding.

Senator McGRATH: I'll ask the CEO: is it correct that your authority had no engagement, no decision-making, in relation to the appointment of Embrace Society as the contractor who was given $570,000 of taxpayers' money?

Mr Shankey: This particular engagement occurred before my time in the authority. If there is a correction we have to make to what Travis has said, we will do that.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 334 of 375

Senator McGRATH: It's just that Embrace Society's CEO is a current Labor councillor on Waverley Council and is a former Labor mayor of Waverley Council. I'm intrigued to know why $570,000 of taxpayers' money is going to a Labor mate and you're saying that your authority had absolutely nothing to do with the appointment of this Labor mate.

Mr Bover: I'm saying the appointment flowed from a tender process managed by the Department of Finance, not managed by this authority—or the agency, as we were at the time.

Senator McGRATH: There was no consultation with the agency, as you were, in relation to the appointment of this particular company—and I'd advise you to tread carefully with your answers here; I don't want you to unintentionally get into trouble. There was no engagement of any kind with the agency/authority in relation to the appointment of Embrace Society?

Mr Bover: That is my understanding. As I say, my team engaged with Finance at the commencement of this process and the selection of a village. At most, there would have been some discussions about—there are different villages. There are villages of providers for economically focused campaigns and villages for environmentally focused campaigns. I recall there was some discussion about which village would be best for the nature of our campaign. I don't believe there were any conversations about specific providers. As I've said in previous answers, my understanding is that that's an issue the Department of Finance manages. If I'm mistaken about that—and I don't believe I am—I'll correct the record.

Senator McGRATH: Who actually signs the contracts?

Mr Bover: We sign the contract.

Senator McGRATH: So you sign a contract with a company that you had absolutely no involvement with in terms of the selection of that company—a company that is run by an active member of the Labor Party?

Mr Bover: That fact around a member of the Labor Party is something that my team and I had no knowledge of. We signed a contract based on a procurement process that was run by the Department of Finance. Our role is to work with the providers that they've assigned to the campaign to scope the work and execute contracts to deliver the work. It's our job to define the scope and make sure it's delivered. It's not our job to select who's providing the services.

Senator McAllister: This is the same model, of course, that was in place and operational under the government that you were part of. In fact, I believe that the village model was established by the previous Liberal government and that the suppliers largely reflect the suppliers that were available at that time.

Senator McGRATH: But I'm asking about the contracting between the authority and a company that is run by an active member of the Labor Party. I think the perception would be—

Senator McAllister: I think the information being provided to you is that there was a standard contracting process put in place that mirrors the processes that were utilised when you were in government and that, through this standard tendering process, a competitive tenderer was selected by the Department of Finance. That's the basis on which the selection occurred. That is the advice the official has provided to you.

I think the official has also indicated to you that one of the features of this procurement process is that it is largely done by another agency, the Department of Finance. There are more detailed questions you could certainly put them to the Department of Finance about this particular procurement, but I think the official—and he's welcome to keep providing answers—has given you quite a number of answers about the extent of the agency's involvement at that time.

Senator McGRATH: What other companies that have active Labor Party members either involved in the company or with shareholdings in the company has the authority contracted with?

Mr Bover: It's not a consideration in any of our procurement processes. It's not something that we look at. We test the market transparently and we select providers based on value-for-money considerations of the most competitive tender that meets our specifications.

Senator McGRATH: So you're saying to me that a perception of a conflict of interest, in that the authority, who are in a contentious policy space, have engaged with a company that is run by an active member of the Labor Party, is not something that you would take into account?

Mr Bover: We certainly, as part of procurement processes, do look at conflicts of interest. I don't believe this particular interest was something that we were aware of at the time of contracting. As I said, the procurement was governed by the Department of Finance. It's usually at the point of running the procurement process and selecting successful providers that issues associated with interests are considered.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 335 of 375

Senator McAllister: I will just make the point, as I have already, that the department that did this work is available for questioning tomorrow. I do think the official has provided you with as much information as he can, based on the limited involvement that the agency had in the actual procurement process. You are, of course, very welcome to put these questions to Finance tomorrow, but I do think you're at the limit of what is possible to be shared, simply because this work was done in another area of government.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath, I have other senators seeking the call. Do you have more questions on this particular procurement?

Senator McGRATH: I have more questions, yes. I don't have too many questions.

CHAIR: If you finish on this procurement, then I'll rotate the call. But is it on this topic?

Senator McGRATH: It's on this topic. I'm aware of the time limits and the agreement. For the evaluation of the pilot campaign, what is the updated figure there? The figure that you have is $240,000. Has that gone up?

Mr Bover: It has. Hall & Partners are the provider for the evaluation associated with the campaign, and the total budgeted amount now is $382,000.

Senator McGRATH: What I might do is go through all the figures. Could you say the updated figure and who the contractor is, to assist with the smooth running of the committee. For the First Nations engagement?

Mr Bover: The provider is Cox Inall Ridgeway and the total allocated amount is $450,000.

Senator McGRATH: Developmental research?

Mr Bover: Ipsos, and the budgeted amount is $563,000.

Senator McGRATH: We've done multicultural. You may have answered this. I may have missed the answer. The $1.6 million for community engagement?

Mr Bover: Community engagement is being led by Horizon and the budgeted amount is $2.1 million. I should say, these are all round figures.

Senator McGRATH: Yes, I get that; that is cool. The advertising in local TV is 2.3. Who was contracted to do that?

Mr Bover: Universal McCann. It is not just on TV; it is a range of channels.

Senator McGRATH: There was $2.8 million for the development of the creative assets. You did say the name before?

Mr Bover: The Monkeys.

Senator McGRATH: Maybe you didn't say it; I can't remember that. I do have further questions that I will put on notice that I'm sure the Prime Minister's Office will give due consideration to.

CHAIR: We were expecting Senator Rennick, and I think Senator Shoebridge has said that he can't come. Senator Stewart, I know we have a couple on the government side. My colleague has helpfully said you covered a couple of questions I had in the first instance. I will take his word for it there. One of your roles is supporting worker transition, including through the Energy Industry Jobs Plan. Can you provide a brief recap of the scope of that scheme and how it operates, working with local businesses and employees to redeploy workers impacted by closures and what sorts of activities have been undertaken already?

Mr Shankey: I would say that worker transition is at the heart of the work of the authority, in the sense that the whole genesis of the authority is seeking to avoid incidents that transpired around Hazelwood and the closure of that particular power station. Two years after that particular power station closed, only 40 per cent of the people who worked in that facility ended up working in full-time employment. So our challenge as an authority is really to try to do better than that for the upcoming changes in operation and closures we have up to 2035. The authority is able to use the powers that have been granted by parliament to ensure that there are appropriate transition arrangements in place two years before the next scheduled closure we might have. The next one of these that we have upcoming is in Torrens, as I said in the opening statement, and the one after that is probably in Eraring. What the parliament indicated that it wanted to see was appropriate financing counselling arrangements, appropriate training opportunities, time off for training, funding for training, and it wanted people to be able to take advantage of those things in a negotiated way. So that's the challenge, I guess, that the parliament has set. We are appropriately resourcing that challenge and making sure that we start in a methodical way through the stations as they come.

Senator STEWART: Absolutely. How important is that clarity and notice for businesses in managing the transition—the timing of power station closure?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 336 of 375

Mr Shankey: The board, Rachel and I had the opportunity of going out to Collie in the past couple of weeks. A couple of significant things arose out of that for us—mainly that having some sort of certainty around the timeline is probably the most fundamental thing that workers and the stations are looking for: (1) to know when this is happening; (2) to know there are supports in place; (3) to know that the state government, local government and the Commonwealth are standing with them through that process.

Senator STEWART: Yes, absolutely.

Mr Shankey: So the most significant things were that there are changes in Collie happening because of changes in coal supply but also the age of the station, the amount of solar we have in the state. So certainty is probably their No. 1 request, followed by supports and then, of course, knowing that there are real career pathways and alternatives that can be before them.

Senator STEWART: Sorry to interrupt, but are there differences from what the communities might want as opposed to the businesses? Are there similarities in what people might want, or do your comments cover broadly everyone?

Mr Shankey: It does depend somewhat on the region we're operating in. Certainly, Collie is a place that has around a 71 per cent blue-collar workforce, as opposed to about a 49 per cent average. So that is a place where a lot of people in the community are looking for a certain type of employment, and you probably cannot make those same generalisations into other communities. So it does particularly depend on what that community is looking for.

Senator STEWART: Part of your role is making sure that it's fit for purpose. You work with the community to see what they need and want in the transition.

Mr Shankey: Yes. I don't think we can effectively do our role without having good relationships with the state and local governments and, indeed, the community themselves.

Senator STEWART: I'm happy to share the call, Chair.

CHAIR: Are you finished with this agency? That's a question for the coalition.

Senator McGRATH: I believe I'm finished with it, yes.

CHAIR: Thank you, and thank you for asking those questions. I was very pleased to see Collie as an example. Thank you to the NZEA for your very important work and for your participation in Senate estimates—your very first estimates as an independent, newly established agency.

Office of National Intelligence

[19:42]

CHAIR: I welcome Mr Andrew Shearer, director-general, and other officers of the Office of National Intelligence. Mr Shearer, do you have an opening statement for us this evening?

Mr Shearer: Yes, just a brief one, Chair, if that's okay.

CHAIR: Please go ahead.

Mr Shearer: Thank you very much. The world has kept changing apace since I last appeared before the committee, so I'd just like to briefly update the committee on some of those developments where they bear most significantly on Australia's interests.

Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine continues, with horrific loss of life on both sides but particularly Russia's. What's at stake now in the conflict is whether US led diplomatic efforts can fashion an outcome that secures Ukraine, stabilises the European security order and deters future aggression not only in Europe but also in the Indo-Pacific. This will be a tall order, with significant implications for Australia.

The US administration is also seeking to catalyse peace in the Middle East—obviously, a laudable goal, but one fraught with difficulties. It's clear President Trump is determined to shake the parties out of their entrenched positions. That will be complex and will entail new risks, but it's worth recalling that the first Trump administration had some success in the region, fashioning the important Abraham Accords between Israel and a number of Arab neighbours. Iran's position as regional spoiler and destabiliser, chiefly through its proxies, has been severely weakened by Israeli operations. It is clear the Trump administration has little or no tolerance for Tehran's nuclear weapons program.

My colleague the Director-General of Security has addressed the domestic security outlook comprehensively in his recent annual threat assessment, so I will not go into the onshore implications of these conflicts now. Suffice it to say, though, that, individually and collectively, the axis of Russia, Iran, North Korea and China continues to pose significant cyber, espionage, military and interference threats to the interests, security and prosperity of

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 337 of 375

Australia and of our allies and partners. On the latter score, I can assure the committee that ONI is working closely with our partners in the National Intelligence Community and with the Australian Electoral Commission, through the Election Integrity Assurance Taskforce, to ensure the integrity of the forthcoming federal election at a time of elevated foreign interference risk.

Meanwhile, Australia's immediate strategic environment continues to deteriorate. The National Intelligence Community has been providing 24/7 support to government and to the Australian Defence Force's robust response to the passage of a Chinese People's Liberation Army naval task group through waters proximate to Australia. The Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and foreign minister have made clear publicly that the vessels are operating in accordance with international law, albeit short of the best practice the ADF consistently employs in such circumstances. Our preliminary view is that the deployment demonstrates China's growing capability to project military power into our immediate region, now matched by an increasing intent to do so. The largest and least transparent military build-up since the Second World War will mean that the PLA will be able to operate at greater distances from mainland China, in greater numbers, including into Australia's immediate seas and skies. This is the furthest south a PLAN task group has operated, and at least some of its activities seem designed to be provocative. We judge Beijing intends to normalise this sort of presence, shape the responses of those in the region and observe and learn from our reactions.

In the South Pacific, important government initiatives have shored up our influence and position in an increasingly competitive strategic environment. PICs signed up to a regional policing agreement at last year's Pacific Islands Forum Summit and then agreed to October's South Pacific Defence Ministers Meeting to establish a regional response group based in Brisbane, with a focus on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. And in December Australia landed the NRL deal with PNG, an agreement to support Solomon Islands policing and also the Nauru-Australia Treaty. But the Cook Islands moved to sign a comprehensive strategic partnership with China, and recent tensions between Kiribati and New Zealand highlight the continuing challenges we face in this strategically critical region for Australia. We assess that China will continue to step up its own efforts in the region this year.

Finally, having recently met my new US intelligence counterparts, I'm pleased to inform the committee that I'm heartened by their commitment to working closely with us and continuing to build our vital intelligence partnership. I've also come away from other recent meetings with counterparts, whether from the UK, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, India, South-East Asia or Europe, likewise reassured that our intelligence partnerships are in good shape to navigate this complex and difficult period. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Shearer. We'll now turn to questions. Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: Thank you. That was a very sober assessment and a very worrying one. In relation to the Chinese ships and the exercises taking place at the moment—and you touched upon this in your opening statement—what did China, in your view, want to achieve by this particular exercise?

Mr Shearer: As I said in my statement, the exercise is consistent with a pattern of Chinese naval deployments further from China. They are doing that, in our view, because that's been part of their strategy for a considerable length of time. But now what we see is Chinese military capabilities coming online at greater scale and giving them the capabilities to project power further, to match that intent to project Chinese power further.

Senator McGRATH: Going back to your opening statement, I think you said this is further south than they've been. Is there any precedent for exercises like this elsewhere in the world?

Mr Shearer: Exercises of this type are common. The Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy has been conducting them, as I've said, further from mainland China in a number of different geographic areas, and other navies routinely conduct such deployments in international waters also.

Senator McGRATH: Is there a parallel to be drawn between the operations of the PLAN and our own activities in the South China Sea?

Mr Shearer: Only, I think, in that, as I said, navies customarily operate within the confines of international law in international waters and operate in international skies.

Senator McGRATH: The defence minister in New Zealand has said that the flotilla of Chinese warships that were conducting the drills off Australia were packing 'extremely capable weapons' with a range of up to a thousand kilometres. Is that something that you would agree with, in terms of the hardware that was on these particular vessels?

Mr Shearer: I won't comment in detail here on the capabilities but I would say that, for example, the presence of a guided missile cruiser does demonstrate a fairly formidable amount of military power.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 338 of 375

Senator McGRATH: In relation to Ukraine—today being the three-year anniversary and it also being something you touched upon in your opening statement—what should Australia be worried about in relation to the axis of four countries that you mentioned, in relation both to their own activities and how it relates to Ukraine? Is there something that you can say in this open forum that Australia should be aware of?

Mr Shearer: I would say that the activities of this axis globally, including in Europe and with regard to Ukraine, are of increasing concern to us and many other agencies. In the case of Ukraine, the provision of North Korean weapons, including artillery, ammunition in vast quantities and ballistic missiles, has helped to keep Putin in the war against Ukraine. Of course, more recently we've seen the provision of North Korean troops to fight alongside the Russians in that war. Both of these are materially assisting Russia's war effort. We've also seen Iran actively providing drones and other equipment to Russia, and, as I've said before publicly, Chinese diplomatic, economic and dual-use support for Russia has also helped prolong Putin's illegal war.

Senator McGRATH: You mentioned that you met with your counterparts recently. Do you believe that the statements or actions of President Trump could impact our approach to Ukraine?

Mr Shearer: I won't get into the detail, obviously, of those conversations. My impression from those introductory meetings is that the Trump administration will take a firm and forthright position on an array of threats that they perceive to be directed at the United States, but I won't get into commentary on that.

Senator McGRATH: I think that's all that I've got in relation to those two particular issues. So I'm happy to finish my questioning there, Chair.

CHAIR: I believe that is all the questions that you will have this evening. Thank you very much for the role that you play in national intelligence and the support and protection of our nation.

Senator McGRATH: Could you table your opening statement? Is that possible?

Mr Shearer: I've got—

Senator McGRATH: Lots of scribbles on it?

Mr Shearer: a lot of personal annotations, but I will provide it to the secretariat.

Senator McGRATH: Thank you.

Mr Shearer: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you. We will go on to the Australian National Audit Office.

Senator McAllister: Chair—

CHAIR: Yes, Minister?

Senator McAllister: I understand that Minister Wong is returning now. I'm not sure if that in any way impacts the program, but I wonder if we might just suspend briefly?

Senator McGRATH: Yes, that's fine.

CHAIR: Yes, that's fine. We will suspend briefly. Senator Wong is available, so we will go back to PM&C and then we'll move on to ANAO and the Australia Day Council.

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

[20:00]

CHAIR: We are back with officials from the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: I've got a question about the Prime Minister's visit to Washington last year for the Quad, which was ahead of the presidential election. Was the department asked to provide advice, or did the department provide advice, to the Prime Minister or his office about seeking a meeting with President Trump weeks before he was re-elected?

Mr Fletcher: No, Senator.

Senator McGRATH: So the department was not asked to provide advice? That's a no for that answer?

Mr Fletcher: That's correct.

Senator McGRATH: And it's no to: 'Did the department provide advice to the Prime Minister or his office?'

Mr Fletcher: That's correct.

Senator McGRATH: Minister, with the two hats that you wear, why wasn't the department asked to provide advice to the Prime Minister in relation to a meeting with President Trump?

Senator Wong: This is pre the election—correct?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 339 of 375

Senator McGRATH: Correct.

Senator Wong: So the question is—sorry?

Senator McGRATH: The question was: when the Prime Minister was in Washington last year, was the department asked to provide—

Senator Wong: He wasn't—this is why I'm confused. The meeting was in Delaware.

Senator McGRATH: Sorry—Delaware.

Senator Wong: Yes. That's why I was confused. I was thinking, 'Washington was earlier'—July, wasn't it?

Senator McGRATH: Just to clarify the geography: in relation to the Prime Minister's visit to Delaware, ahead of the presidential election, I'm just checking that your answers still stay the same? Your answer's still the same. So my question to you, Minister, is: why was it the case that the department was not asked to provide advice to the Prime Minister in relation to a meeting with candidate Trump or, as the Americans would still call him, President Trump, at that point?

Senator Wong: Well, the purpose of the meeting was to attend the Quad, which I think is what all leaders did, but if there's anything further I can provide for you on that I will.

Senator McGRATH: Minister, do you think the Prime Minister should have sought a meeting with one of the two contenders for the presidency of the United States?

Senator Wong: You're asking me an opinion.

Senator McGRATH: Well, I'm asking you, as the minister representing the Prime Minister, whether he should have sought a meeting—

Senator Wong: That's not really a question for me.

Senator McGRATH: It's not a question for you?

Senator Wong: No.

Senator McGRATH: Representing the Prime Minister?

Senator Wong: Well, you're asking my personal opinion.

Senator McGRATH: I'm asking you, representing the Prime Minister.

Senator Wong: You asked me what his opinion is.

Senator McGRATH: I'm asking the Prime Minister whether he should have sought—

Senator Wong: This is very confusing! I will take on notice your question, which I think is asking the Prime Minister whether or not he should have. Is that right?

Senator McGRATH: I'll give you one question, yes. Should the Prime Minister have sought—or did the Prime Minister—

Senator Wong: I would say to you—and I'm sure you know this—as a matter of general practice, the relationship is with the country. Generally, we would engage with the elected leader or the members. In whatever country you go to, you would engage with the leader or your counterpart. There may be occasions on which you'd meet with the opposition. It would be unusual to do that in the context—well, I shouldn't say that. It would not be normal practice or standard practice to meet with candidates ahead of an election.

Senator McGRATH: Sir Keir Starmer did.

Senator Wong: I think that was after the election.

Senator McGRATH: No.

Senator Wong: I'm sorry. I thought it was after—but before inauguration. But I could be wrong on that. I could be wrong. But I would say the Prime Minister has had two very positive conversations with President Trump after his election and then after the inauguration.

Senator McGRATH: So, I suppose, if Sir Keir Starmer is able to do it, why wouldn't the Prime Minister meet with candidate/president Trump?

Senator Wong: I've answered that, and I'll take on notice if there's any further information I can provide.

Senator McGRATH: Okay. I've finished with that bit. I do have some general questions.

Senator Wong: Most of your questions have been general.

Senator McGRATH: From general questions—

Senator Wong: I smiled when I said that afterwards!

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 340 of 375

Senator McGRATH: From general questions, you'd normally get specific answers, sometimes, Minister. My question is to you, Mr Hehir. In relation to any committees that fall within the remit of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet—I'm talking about not internal departmental committees but committees that require external appointments—are all committees filled at the moment?

Mr Hehir: Committees?

Senator McGRATH: Yes. In terms of all committees that have a full complement, are there any vacancies on committees which sit within Prime Minister and Cabinet? I'm okay if you need to take this on notice by the way.

Mr Hehir: Can I just clarify—statutory appointments?

Senator McGRATH: Yes.

Mr Hehir: I think they're pretty close to full, but I can check that detail on notice.

Senator McGRATH: Do I have an answer in relation to my questions about the—you do?

Mr Hehir: I do.

Senator McGRATH: About the teal party/crossbench party at the Lodge?

Senator Wong: I don't think Dai Le would appreciate you calling her a teal.

Senator McGRATH: I did say 'crossbench' then. I said 'teal/crossbench party'.

Senator Wong: Nor would your former member, Ms Sharkie.

Senator McGRATH: I think Dai Le is very much on the crossbench at the moment in relation to certain activities of Minister Burke.

Senator Wong: I'm just saying I know that you'd like to diss the teals, but really—

Senator McGRATH: Mr Hehir.

Mr Hehir: As we indicated earlier, it's longstanding practice for the Prime Minister to host or agree to the use of official establishments for events and functions. This event was organised by the Prime Minister's office in accordance with official establishments' guidelines for use, and the department had no involvement in the organisation of the event. So we didn't issue invitations or organise any part of this.

Senator McGRATH: So the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet had absolutely nothing to do with the teal/crossbench party at the Lodge?

Mr Hehir: That's correct.

Senator McGRATH: Minister, on behalf of the Prime Minister's office/the Prime Minister, are you able to answer the questions that were put on notice earlier?

Senator Wong: No, I'd have to take them on notice.

Senator McGRATH: So you don't know who was invited?

Senator Wong: I told you I think we were sitting.

Senator McGRATH: I also said that you have a permanent pair.

Senator Wong: You say that, but—I don't know if you'd notice—I tend to hang around to make sure you don't do things that I don't want you to do.

Senator McGRATH: That's very hurtful, Senator Wong! That concludes my questions, so thank you.

Senator Wong: Thank you, Senator McGrath.

CHAIR: Senator Hume?

Senator HUME: No, thank you.

Senator Wong: She's waiting patiently for her bit!

CHAIR: Senator Liddle? Okay. We are able to conclude, therefore, with the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Thank you all for your attendance today. Thank you all for being here for that extra couple of hours, but I'm sure you're nevertheless relieved it was short and sweet once we got back to it.

Australian National Audit Office

[20:13]

CHAIR: I now welcome Dr Caralee McLiesh, Auditor-General, and other officers of the Australian National Audit Office. Dr McLiesh, do you have an opening statement?

Dr McLiesh: No, I do not. We're happy to answer questions.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 341 of 375

CHAIR: We'll go to questions. Senator Hume.

Senator HUME: Thank you very much for attending tonight. I want to ask you about the report that you completed in December 2024 on the conflict-of-interest management for three Indigenous corporations: Aboriginal Hostels Ltd, Aboriginal Investment NT and Outback Stores Pty Ltd. I note that you concluded this report in December. Do you think you could, for the rest of the members of the committee, provide a brief overview of what it was that you found?

Dr McLiesh: I will hand over to colleagues to answer your questions.

Ms Mellor: We've been doing a series of audits in the broad integrity space for about a year. We've been doing gifts, benefits and hospitality and conflicts of interest as two lead things. We've been doing a little bit of work on credit cards, and we're moving into travel. What we're looking for across these kinds of audits is this: do people have good frames around the use of public resources from an ethical or integrity perspective? Across the 250-odd entities, we're trying to touch a broad range of entities.

Senator HUME: What were the areas? Gifts, benefits and hospitality, conflicts of interest, credit cards and—

Ms Mellor: Travel. We're having a look at the use of travel.

Senator HUME: Terrific.

Ms Mellor: We're currently auditing in DAFF—the department of agriculture—and we're moving through a number of entities. Conflicts of interest is an interesting piece. Mr Whyte's joined us to talk specifically to the audit. I was filling in time before he got here.

Senator HUME: Well done.

Mr Whyte: I'll just provide a bit of an overview of the audit. We looked at the three Indigenous entities: Aboriginal Hostels Limited, Aboriginal Investment NT and Outback Stores Pty Ltd. They were three different types of entities. One was a corporate Commonwealth entity, and the other two were Commonwealth companies. They had different requirements they needed to follow for conflicts of interest, so that was an interesting element of the audit as well.

Overall, we found they were partly effective in their management of conflicts of interest. They had conflict-of-interest policies and frameworks in place, but we found shortcomings in the implementation of those frameworks. Particularly, we found deficiencies around the documentation of consideration of conflicts and documentation of conflict-of-interest declarations and management actions for procurement, recruitment and grant activity. These findings were consistent with other audits that we've done in the conflict-of-interest space. As Rona mentioned, we've done a series of audits. We did one looking at conflicts of interest in the Australian Financial Security Authority and another one looking at conflicts of interest in corporate Commonwealth boards. We had similar findings across the series of audits.

Senator HUME: You said 'partly effective'. What does that mean? Is that an average rating that you've found? Is it a normal rating? Is it a poor rating? What does that mean in layman's terms?

Ms Mellor: There's no math or science in this. It's all about judgement of what you see in front of you as you're auditing. 'Not effective' is obvious: failing, not meeting compliance and not meeting outcomes. 'Fully effective' is doing the job according to a framework or rules et cetera. In between that you can have 'largely effective' where you might find really good processes and a few deficiencies. When we start moving into that 'partly' space, we're seeing more deficiencies than what you would expect to see if things were running well. For a board, for example, the declarations of interest at the beginning of meetings aren't happening; there isn't an ongoing register. You start to see things are a bit more embedded in deficiency than they are in goodness. Those are the simple layman's terms I could use as an auditor.

Senator HUME: Of the other audits that you've done on conflicts of interest, where on the scale do these entities sit?

Ms Mellor: We found the corporate Commonwealth entities to be largely effective. It sounds good and boring, but it's what we do It's a little bit more on the governance, record keeping, embedded procedures and alignment between board charters and activities—that kind of stuff. Everybody knew what they were supposed to be doing and were doing it. There were some small deficiencies when we started looking at the number of meetings and whether they did them consistently. In this audit, with the three entities, we saw more deficiencies than we did in the corporate Commonwealth entities audit.

Mr Whyte: It was similar to the Australian Financial Security Authority audit which also had a conclusion of partly effective.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 342 of 375

Senator HUME: On page 56 of the audit, you said that the declaration and management of conflicts of interest for Australian Hostels Limited and Aboriginal Investment NT were not effective. What do you mean by that? That's different from partly effective. The way you described it, Ms Mellor, sounded like quartiles. You've got effective, largely effective, partly effective and not effective.

Ms Mellor: Are you at table 3.1 in the audit?

Senator HUME: I am on page 56. Does that sound right?

Ms Mellor: At table 3.1?

Senator HUME: Yes.

Ms Mellor: That line with the red squares is around procurement. What we're seeing there is no real procedures and no real action in terms of the way procurement is managed and the declaring and managing of conflicts of interest. That's not the total story for the whole of the agency, but, when we look at the procurement policies and practices, we're not seeing effective management of conflict in procurement.

Senator HUME: I know that my colleague Senator Liddle has got some questions on this too, but did the audit that you did identify any matters that have subsequently been referred to the National Anti-Corruption Commission?

Ms Mellor: Not to our knowledge. We certainly see things in the press from time to time, but not to our knowledge.

CHAIR: Senator Liddle.

Senator LIDDLE: One page—almost the first page—says that the reason you did this audit was that conflicts of interest can be a source of internal fraud and corruption risks for those government entities. Were you randomly selecting those ones? Why did you select those organisations?

Ms Mellor: We're doing series of broad ethics and integrity, and we do try to cover as many of the 245 entities in the Commonwealth as we can. Sometimes we take a view of corporates or companies or departments. In this instance, we chose three entities—two companies and one corporate—just to get a view of what some of the practices were like in those. We've been in other entities doing these series—departments and non-corporate entities—and we're spreading across the service.

Senator LIDDLE: My question was: were they randomly selected, or were you alerted to those organisations because of whistleblower complaints or public commentary? You said you were aware of some public commentary.

Ms Mellor: No. I was aware of public commentary about some entities being referred to the NACC. Sometimes we use the findings in financial statements audits to inform us of risk. We're just trying to get a spread across the sector of different kinds of entities to test the different practices and actually look for practices that are good and also advise on practices that aren't so good. I don't know that we'd use the word 'randomly'. We put a lot of thought into getting that spread across the audit work program across the different topics. In this instance, we chose things because they weren't noncorporates. Noncorporates make up the bulk of the entities in the Commonwealth, and we get a lot of non-corporate work out of departments and statutory entities. In this instance, we were looking for some sort of company corporate stuff.

Senator LIDDLE: Your report refers to things like not addressing conflict-of-interest matters that were identified in three complaints, not having a complaints system, not undertaking controls assessment and not including declarations of interest in three out-of-session meetings. I'm assuming out-of-session meetings are unscheduled meetings.

Ms Mellor: Can be.

Senator LIDDLE: So they were urgently called meetings to deal with matters. Did it raise any red flags to you that, for meetings like that, conflicts weren't registered?

Ms Mellor: We've called them as findings of what happened. Our view would be that if you have a conflict-of-interest policy, whether the meeting is in session or out of session, you apply the same policy. In the course of this audit, what we've done is called out the things that we've seen that fell below the policies, where the policies weren't being implemented, and made recommendations to the entities to actually either review their policies or follow the policies.

Senator LIDDLE: These are government entities where the directors are appointed by ministers. Did you look at all at the process of the appointment of those directors?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 343 of 375

Mr Whyte: We did for this audit. We looked at the processes that were undertaken by the departments that were involved in providing advice to ministers for those appointments, and we didn't find any issues. They did have processes in place to assess potential conflicts of interest and advise government on it.

Senator LIDDLE: Did you look at the conflicts of interest that were raised as part of that process for the directors that were subsequently chosen to sit on those boards?

Mr Whyte: We did, yes.

Senator LIDDLE: And you were satisfied? Did you compare that to anything else, or did you just check that they were declared on there?

Mr Whyte: We checked the level of due diligence that the departments had undertaken on the board appointments and didn't see any issues. They did, from memory, undertake some searches to inform those appointment processes and provided that information to the decision-maker.

Senator LIDDLE: Who is accountable to ensure those actions are actually followed up? Is it those organisations themselves, is it you or is it the minister?

Ms Mellor: It's the accountable authority of the entity. Sometimes that will be a CEO, a board or a chair of a board, and the reports are provided so that you can inquire directly of them as well. They're not accountable to the Auditor-General.

Senator LIDDLE: In one of these examples, though, I think I saw that the CEO was not even required to provide a declaration of conflict of interest. Do you recall that one? It was in one of those tables.

Ms Mellor: We're just scrolling the report to see if we can help you.

Senator LIDDLE: I'm just trying to find mine, too. It has a couple of little Xs beside it for the CEO.

Ms Jago: I think it could be in relation to things around the grants rules and guidelines, where the companies are not required to comply with the Commonwealth grants rules and guidelines. I think that may be what you're referring to.

Senator LIDDLE: I think it's one of the only charts that has Xs against it as opposed to little squares. There it is. It's on page 24. For Outback Stores, there's a reference that board members are required to disclose, but next to where it says 'CEO required to disclose' it's got an X against it. What does that mean?

Ms Jago: That X is saying that that legislative policy requirement does not apply, and it's because they're companies. Both AHL and Outback Stores have got Xs because they're companies. Where Aboriginal Investment NT have a cross it's because they are not under the Corporations Act and they don't employ staff under the Public Service Act.

Senator LIDDLE: Sorry, I might have misunderstood you, but Outback Stores has an X for 'CEO required to disclose'.

Mr Whyte: That's just because there's no legislative requirement for that. With AHL, which are also a Commonwealth company, they are required to disclose, I believe, under the Public Service Act—although actually that may apply only to the other senior officials. I think the CEO requirement there could be a legislative one as well. We'd have to check that. This table was intended to be informative of the legislative requirements that applied rather than providing a judgement about whether they should have needed to do that.

Senator LIDDLE: I just draw your attention to specifically the Aboriginal Investment NT grants committee. You said:

There were instances of Aboriginal Investment NT Grants Committee members with declared conflicts of interest recommending grant applications for board approval.

So they had conflicts of interest related to decisions that they were actually making in that board meeting. Is that what you're saying?

Mr Whyte: That's correct, yes. That was something that the agency had found themselves through internal investigations and undertaken action to address.

Senator LIDDLE: Are you able to provide what they were?

Mr Whyte: I don't have the details of the actual conflicts. I believe they were relationships, though, with people in the organisations that were applying for grant funding.

Senator LIDDLE: Were they people in chair or deputy chair roles? Can you tell me that?

Mr Whyte: I don't know, sorry.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 344 of 375

Senator LIDDLE: What you're suggesting here is that there were people who had registered conflicts of interest who were making decisions about grant applications related to those conflicts of interest.

Mr Whyte: They were making recommendations to the board to make a decision.

Senator LIDDLE: So, based on good governance, they shouldn't have even been in those meetings making those recommendation, would that be correct—if you look at standard governance expectations?

Mr Whyte: That is correct, yes. The case study that we have in the audit, I think, on page—sorry.

Senator Wong: Which page are you referencing?

Senator LIDDLE: I haven't got an exact page number but it is a direct quote from that report. If you want to do a Google search for the electronic copy it should come up. The exact quote is:

There were instances of Aboriginal Investment NT grants committee members with declared conflicts of interest recommending grant applications for board approval.

Ms Mellor: And that is a problem.

Senator LIDDLE: Yes, it is a problem.

Mr Whyte: Case study 1 on page 38 of the report outlines more detail on that.

Ms Mellor: This is why it's going to 'partly effective', that the rules for declaring conflicts of interest in the circumstances—and we looked at that chart before, with red squares, for procurement and grants—is that we weren't seeing appropriate declaration and management of declared conflicts in those processes.

Senator LIDDLE: What I'm interested to understand, if you can give me any insight at all, is what level—it's bad enough that directors are doing this and that a chair or deputy chair hasn't removed those people from those recommendations and discussion of that—those people were who you identified, because the assumption somewhere in this data, not necessarily in the report, is about who they were. Were they the chair or the deputy chair?

Ms Mellor: We haven't included that in the report. Our practice is to not go beyond what the report says because we're not an investigator. They would be questions fairly asked of the entity who should tell you. What we're doing is using an auditing approach to call the problem. We're not calling out the person, if that makes sense. It's a distinction that we make between auditing and investigating.

Mr Whyte: For the decisions that we looked at, the report states that they were grant committee members. I think, if they had been a chair, we would have included that information.

Senator LIDDLE: Let me read you another quote. It says:

The Grants Committee was dissolved in April 2024 and the Grants Committee Chair was suspended pending further investigation. Aboriginal Investment NT advised the ANAO in October 2024 that this investigation was ongoing.

That makes reference, quite clearly, to the chair of that organisation.

Mr Whyte: That's correct. That wasn't one of the applications that we looked at in our sample. That was identified by the agency through their own internal processes. I think they had a complaint that was made and they undertook an internal audit.

Senator LIDDLE: They advised you in October 2024 that the investigation was ongoing. There was also this reference in your report:

The internal audit found that conflicts of interest were not effectively managed in five of the 15 applications sampled, with grants committee members voting on applications for which they had a conflict of interest.

That's a pretty significant number, five out of 15.

Mr Whyte: That's correct.

Senator LIDDLE: When did you provide the report of the ANAO to the minister's office?

Ms Mellor: We tabled in the parliament—the minister would have been provided a copy 48 hours in advance under embargo. The entity would have been provided a copy about six weeks before that. We provide a copy of the report to the entity to give a response as well. The response of the entity is included in the report, and then we tabled it in the parliament to enable committees such as yours to inquire into the agency.

Senator LIDDLE: But if you were the responsible minister for that appointment, you'd, pretty much, want to know that pretty quickly, wouldn't you?

Ms Mellor: I don't know. I've never been a minister.

Senator LIDDLE: On 10 February, some two weeks ago, the government announced a $71 million subsidy scheme to be delivered by Outback Stores. That would have been after they'd received your report. That doesn't

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 345 of 375

tell them, necessarily, exactly where those decisions have been made or with whom. I would have thought that was a red flag, in addition to your report, that the minister would have had an interest in this report and yet, still, money was transferred across to one of these entities that's named in your report.

Ms Mellor: We couldn't comment on what a minister was advised or what a minister did without auditing it.

Senator LIDDLE: I want to ask you about an entity that's not currently the subject of that report but has been the subject of others. If a Commonwealth entity has shareholders in private companies, would you expect that they be referenced in their annual reports—

Senator Wong: Senator—

Senator LIDDLE: if you were doing an audit on those organisations?

Senator Wong: I'm just reluctant for officials to be drawn on 'if'. That, by definition, is a hypothetical question. If you want to reference a specific set of facts, the officials can respond to that.

Senator LIDDLE: Okay. We'll go straight to that point, then. Let's talk about the Central Land Council's report of 2023-24. The Central Land Council has a 33 per cent stake in Centrecorp, and you can confirm that on, ironically, the government's transparency portal. The only reference to that shareholding in the CLC's annual report is on page 131, where it says:

CLC holds three fully paid ordinary shares issued at $1.00 each in Centrecorp Aboriginal Investment Corporation Pty Ltd … the trustee of two charitable trusts.

It does say:

Centrecorp itself does not have financial transactions or prepare financial statements. The Deeds of both charitable trusts exclude CLC as a shareholder to benefit from the trusts and precludes the Deeds from being amended to ever allow such a benefit. No member of CLC's key management personnel is on the Board of Centrecorp. As a result the CLC does not control or have Influence over these entities. The fair value of the three shares is $nil.

What I'm interested in understanding from this is: if this is a Commonwealth entity, is that enough information for you to understand about the dealings of this organisation if they hold a majority shareholding in that entity?

Ms Mellor: Is the question about Centrecorp?

Senator LIDDLE: The question is: here is a Commonwealth entity—

Ms Mellor: I'm not sure Centrecorp is a Commonwealth entity.

Senator LIDDLE: No, I'm talking about the Central Land Council, which is a shareholder in Centrecorp. I'm asking: is it sufficient, from an audit perspective, that the CLC has, essentially, four words about Centrecorp in its entire annual report and nothing else?

Ms Mellor: It's a really hypothetical question. I don't know that the Audit Office has a view on your question. In the CLC audit, we comment on Centrecorp and the arrangement that was made in 1985. The CLC needs to meet the rules that are set for annual reports. I don't know that we have a view on how many words that would take.

Senator LIDDLE: It says that they don't appoint, but that's different to nominating directors of that board. Would that make a difference?

Ms Mellor: To?

Senator LIDDLE: This statement on page 131 says that they don't actually have a representative of the CLC on that board, but there's so little information in here; it's not even clear if they nominate an individual.

Senator Wong: I think Ms Mellor and Dr McLiesh are trying to be quite helpful. They can respond in relation to their audit work. If you're asking them broader questions that haven't formed the subject of the report they've engaged in, it's not a reasonable proposition.

Senator LIDDLE: It's certainly a previous ANAO report. What I'm trying to understand here is: what's the depth of inquiry that ANAO makes into some of the governance arrangements that sit within these organisations?

Ms Mellor: I'm not following your train on the CLC, Centrecorp and appointments of directors. But we do audit the financial statements of the Central Land Council, and we've had a clean opinion. In doing that, we do look at governance and at what they report publicly into the parliament through their annual report. In the audits of governance in the land councils, we acknowledge that Centrecorp exists under a very longstanding arrangement that's partly driven by what's allowable under the ALRA, the Aboriginal Land Rights Act. And we've looked at the governance of Central Land Council and how Centrecorp is used. We don't have a view other than what we've audited and what we've put in that report, and the opinions that we've given on CLC for some time in financials have been unqualified. So they're preparing their financial statements appropriately.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 346 of 375

Senator LIDDLE: So the ANAO has no interest in the reporting of an entity of which an organisation like the CLC is the majority shareholder?

Dr McLiesh: We would check through the audit of the CLC's adherence with standards and whether the CLC has adhered with all relevant laws and regulations. That is a part of the audit. What the deputy auditor-general is saying is that our finding in the audit was unmodified. That means that the financial report is, in all material respects, in accordance with the standards and laws that apply.

Senator LIDDLE: Thank you. I look forward to seeing that in the future.

CHAIR: Senator Hume.

Senator HUME: I have one more very brief line of questioning, I promise. The ANAO has identified the management of assets by the Department of Parliamentary Services as a potential performance audit for 2024-25 work program.

Ms Mellor: Correct.

Senator HUME: I'm just asking what the basis for that was.

Ms Mellor: Again, you look across the whole lot. You could do many things in many places. Asset management is a really big part of the Department of Parliamentary Services' work. This building, the collections, a whole range of—I think there are about $3 billion of assets in their financial statements. That's pretty big.

Senator HUME: That includes the art collection.

Ms Mellor: Yes. How we would scope it and when we would do it are all still in the course of a draft of the annual audit work program, which will be circulating shortly, publicly, for people to have a look at. So it's there.

Senator HUME: Terrific. When do you make a final decision on that audit?

Dr McLiesh: We're only undergoing a consultation program now for the annual audit work program. The intent would be to finalise the program by July this year. We typically select more potential audits on the annual audit work program than we then do. Usually, about double the number of potential audits is selected than what we actually do. And we will commission or commence the audits throughout the year.

Senator HUME: Okay. Can I just place on record my interest in the audit of this department and recommend that the management of the governance arrangements is also added to that potential audit, because of recent issues that that department's faced.

Dr McLiesh: Thank you, Senator. We note that.

Senator HUME: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Senator Colbeck.

Senator COLBECK: I'll just go to your answers to Senator Hume. You haven't finalised your program yet for this year?

Dr McLiesh: No, we have not.

Ms Mellor: For 2025-26.

Dr McLiesh: That's right.

Senator COLBECK: Another program that's been flagged as a possible determination to investigate is CHSP, the Commonwealth Home Support Program. Is that on the program or not?

Ms Jago: It is on the 2024-25 annual audit work program as a potential audit, but we haven't commenced that audit.

Senator COLBECK: Is there an intention to commence an audit on that program?

Ms Mellor: Typically we have about 100 potential topics, and typically we do between 40 and 48 performance audits. If we haven't started it by now, it's not moving until we settle the next program.

Senator COLBECK: So it's on the radar, but you haven't started an audit on it yet.

Dr McLiesh: That's correct.

Senator COLBECK: Do those projects that aren't picked up as part of your actual program get rolled across to the next cycle? What's the process for picking up something that's already on the radar but we haven't got there yet?

Dr McLiesh: They can roll forward to the next cycle. It's not an automatic process. Every year we'll take a look at a range of factors in determining what goes on to the potential audit list. We'll look at the risk that's involved in the topic, the impact—the potential to lead to improvements in public administration—as well as the

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 347 of 375

importance in terms of the priority that's placed on it by the parliament, materiality, and whether it's possible to audit; sometimes there are practical constraints that mean it's difficult to progress with an audit. All these things are taken into account. Then we also cast a lens to make sure there's a balance across the program by portfolio, by size of entity, by theme, just to make sure we are getting an adequate coverage across different issues. Depending on the outcome of that, often it is very possible that topics roll over from one year to the next. But it will be a matter of the outcome of that process.

Senator COLBECK: Given that it was on your program for this financial year, why would it not have started so far? What is it about this? You've effectively said that if it hasn't started now then it's not starting. So—

Ms Mellor: Well, it won't start this financial year, because we're running out of financial year!

Senator COLBECK: No, I get that, but why wouldn't you have started?

Ms Mellor: It's about competing priorities in a small office—as I said, 40 to 48, from about 100 topics. And even within the health portfolio we've been doing other things. We've been auditing the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, for example—a huge audit. We're in the Future Fit program at the moment—

Senator COLBECK: I'm coming to that.

Ms Mellor: which is a slice of the Home Support Program. To get on the program it's got to be something that we think is worth doing, but in spreading those 40-plus audits around 250 entities, it hasn't come up to the top yet.

Senator COLBECK: Looking at, say, Future Fit, which was due to be tabled this month and has now been punted down the road a bit, what's the reason for the delay on that program? I suppose the next question: as you said, Future Fit is a slice out of CHSP; does that inform the priorities for what you might do in respect of CHSP?

Ms Mellor: The audit of Future Fit is coming to its close. I think we're expecting to table that in April. How does that happen? Sometimes it's hard to get evidence. Sometimes it takes a bit longer than you forecast when you planned. Sometimes your staff have leave. So, that one we're sort of scheduling for April. Does it inform the Home Support Program to an extent? We're obviously having a look at how the department of health manages the Future Fit program as it stands and what its thinking is across home support. But when and if we get into Home Support it will be a deep dive into that very important program.

Senator COLBECK: You say 'when' you get to Home Support. So, it—

Ms Mellor: I said 'when and if'.

Senator COLBECK: Well, I'm just trying to work out whether it's a priority or not.

Ms Mellor: It's a priority because it's on the annual audit work program. Then it competes with other risks. Other risks are not just in Health. They're in Defence, in tax, in Services Australia and in DSS. They're right across the board. It's about having the availability of the right team at the right time to do the work and with those sorts of characteristics that Dr McLiesh has outlined. It's on the program. It's of interest. It's rolled forward onto the next draft. We haven't dropped it. We're interested in it.

Senator COLBECK: So you can't give me a specific reason for the delay of the Future Fit program report?

Ms Mellor: I think Future Fit was because of evidence, wasn't it? I'm told it was actually leave. These are very small teams that conduct these audits over the course of 10 to 11 months. One person going on leave could put a dent in it—unexpected leave, I might say. So that one's moving through for tabling in April.

Senator COLBECK: So it was a leave issue in relation to Future Fit?

Ms Mellor: Yes. It's mostly either the pace of evidence provisioned by the entity or staffing in our office.

Senator COLBECK: There are about 800,000 people on CHSP. It's a program that supports a lot of people and has been subject to a reasonable amount of scrutiny. Your answer is that it remains on the program, but your program for the next financial year is yet to be finalised.

Ms Mellor: It has rolled over onto the draft program. So we haven't dropped it for next year yet.

Senator COLBECK: But you haven't finalised the new program. It's still in draft form?

Ms Mellor: Yes. I think, with the size of the program and the impact it has—Dr McLiesh has run through the five or six key things that we think about—it's a good program to audit. It's got big impact. It's got a lot of providers involved in it. We always see issues around good management of providers who then on-serve. It's got all the characteristics of 'auditable' and 'interesting' and, so far, it's made it onto the draft. But we could not sit here and promise that it will be the next cab off the rank in Health.

Senator COLBECK: Okay.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 348 of 375

CHAIR: I do believe that concludes the questions for the Australian National Audit Office. I want to thank you for your work. I've certainly found it very valuable this year.

National Australia Day Council

[20:53]

CHAIR: I welcome the National Australia Day Council. Mr Fraser, do you have an opening statement this evening?

Mr Fraser: No, thank you.

CHAIR: Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: What was the total amount in funding provided to community groups and councils for the 2025 Australia Day activities?

Mr Fraser: This year, in 2025, the total approved budget for the community events grants program is $4,855,000.

Senator McGRATH: That was the total budget. Was that full amount provided to community groups and councils?

Mr Fraser: Yes, in essence it was. There have been a couple of those organisations that cancelled once funding had been approved, in the order of two or three out of 400 applications received.

Senator McGRATH: Of the 400 applications that were received, how many were approved?

Mr Fraser: There were actually 500 applications received and 400 were approved as a result of a merit based selection process.

Senator McGRATH: In relation to the community events grant program, which would be a component of that, what was the total amount of funding provided to organisations under the community events grant program for the 2025 Australia Day activities?

Mr Fraser: That's the entire program. It has an approved budget of $4.855 million for 2025.

Senator McGRATH: What about the iconic capital city events? Is that a separate program?

Mr Fraser: Yes, it is a separate program. That funding totalled $4,373,000 for 2025.

Senator McGRATH: Along a similar line, how many actual grants were supplied and how many applications were there for grants?

Mr Fraser: Is this in relation to the capital city funding?

Senator McGRATH: Yes.

Mr Fraser: These are our iconic capital city grants. There's one in each capital city. There were grants this year in all capital cities, barring Hobart. Seven of the eight capital cities had funding grants approved for this year.

Senator McGRATH: Do you know why Hobart didn't?

Mr Fraser: They didn't seek a grant. They were approached and provided the opportunity, like all states, and they didn't take it up.

CHAIR: Fancy that! How very unnationalistic and unpatriotic of the government.

Senator McGRATH: Very un-Tasmanian.

Senator Wong: Isn't that a Liberal government?

CHAIR: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: The Hobart City Council is certainly not run by the Liberal Party.

Senator Wong: I said the state Liberal government.

Senator McGRATH: It is a Liberal government and state. We're doing a very good job.

CHAIR: You can tell us, Mr Fraser. Did Commonwealth, local government or state government agencies put in for those?

Mr Fraser: They were state government grants, in large part. There are a couple of independent organisations that are part of our national network in three particular states. The others are state government entities.

Senator Wong: Maybe Senator Colbeck can explain why the Tasmanians—

Senator McGRATH: I have the call, with all due respect to everybody.

Senator Wong: Sorry.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 349 of 375

Senator McGRATH: Can you provide details, including the amount of each grant provided for these iconic capital city events? Because there are only seven of them, could you do that now if that's possible, please?

Mr Fraser: Certainly. The largest one was in Sydney, given the nature of the national events that take place at the Opera House for Australia Day Live and associated events, at $1.5 million. In Brisbane it was $298,000. In Adelaide it was $750,000. In Perth it was $475,000. In Darwin it was $650,000. In Melbourne it was $250,000. In Canberra it was $450,000.

Senator McGRATH: I think that's all the questions that I have in relation to the National Australia Day Council.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Fraser, for your attendance this evening, and thank you very much, Minister, for the day that you have spent with us.

Senator Wong: It's a great pleasure, Chair.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

FINANCE PORTFOLIO

In Attendance

Senator Farrell, Special Minister of State, Minister for Trade and Tourism

Department of Finance

Executive

Ms Jenny Wilkinson PSM, Secretary, Department of Finance

Outcome 1: Support sustainable Australian government finances through providing high quality policy advice and operational support to government and Commonwealth entities to maintain effective and efficient use of public resources.

Budget Group

Ms Cath Patterson, Deputy Secretary

Mr Paul Pfitzner, First Assistant Secretary Senator Farrell, Special Minister of State, Minister for Trade and Tourism

Ms Natasha Cole, First Assistant Secretary

Mr Stephen Sorbello, First Assistant Secretary

Ms Louise Sasaki, Assistant Secretary

Ms Hannah Lipshut, Assistant Secretary

Ms Gemma Cooper, Assistant Secretary

Mr Romesh Guneratne, Assistant Secretary

Ms Christine Duke, Assistant Secretary

Ms Donna Valenti, Assistant Secretary

Mr Martin Rocks, Assistant Secretary

Governance and Resource Management

Mr Nathan Williamson, Deputy Secretary

Ms Anna Harmer PSM, First Assistant Secretary

Ms Amy Fox, First Assistant Secretary

Mr Simon Writer PSM, First Assistant Secretary

Business Enabling Services

Mr Grant Lovelock PSM, Acting Deputy Secretary

Ms Laura Sham, Acting First Assistant Secretary

Mr Peter Qui, First Assistant Secretary

Mr Glen Casson, First Assistant Secretary

Ms Catherine McLachlan, Assistant Secretary

Ms Carolyn Driessen, Assistant Secretary

Mr Neil Dawson, Chief Financial Officer

Mr Patrick Roberts, Assistant Secretary

Ms Kelly Hoffmeister, Assistant Secretary

Outcome 2: Support an efficient and high-performing public sector through providing leadership to Commonwealth entities in ongoing improvements to public sector governance, including through systems, frameworks, policy, advice, and service delivery.

Commercial Group

Mr Richard Windeyer, Deputy Secretary

Mr Nick McClintock, First Assistant Secretary

Mr Libor Pelecky, First Assistant Secretary

Ms Louise Starr, Assistant Secretary

Mr Elliot Zwangobani, Assistant Secretary

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 351 of 375

Ms Suzanne Hinchcliffe, Assistant Secretary
Mr David Webster, First Assistant Secretary
Ms Amy Parry, Assistant Secretary
Mr Sacha de Re, Assistant Secretary
Mr Scott Thurbon, Assistant Secretary
Mr Cameron Jose Assistant Secretary
Mr Fotos Andreou, Assistant Secretary
Mr Andrew Danks, First Assistant Secretary
Mr Gareth Sebar, Assistant Secretary
Ms Sabrena King, Assistant Secretary
Ms Rachel Antone, First Assistant Secretary
Ms Meagan Wilson, Assistant Secretary
Mr Grant Stevens, Assistant Secretary
Mr Paul Hubbard, Assistant Secretary
Ms Lauren Le Cerf, Assistant Secretary
Ms Kelly Wood, Assistant Secretary

Governance and Resource Management

Mr Nathan Williamson, Deputy Secretary
Ms Amy Fox, First Assistant Secretary
Mr Simon Writer, First Assistant Secretary
Mr Sebastian Powney, Assistant Secretary
Ms Lucinda Atkinson, Assistant Secretary
Mr John Shepherd, First Assistant Secretary
Mr Andrew Lalor, Assistant Secretary

Office of the National Data Commissioner

Ms Gayle Milnes, National Data Commissioner
Mr Taylor Black, Assistant Secretary

Business Enabling Services

Mr Grant Lovelock PSM, Acting Deputy Secretary
Ms Laura Sham, Acting First Assistant Secretary
Mr Peter Qui, First Assistant Secretary
Mr Patrick Roberts, Assistant Secretary
Mr Glen Casson, First Assistant Secretary
Ms Catherine McLachlan, Assistant Secretary
Ms Carolyn Driessen, Assistant Secretary
Mr Neil Dawson, Chief Financial Officer
Ms Sally Harris, Assistant Secretary
Ms Kelly Hoffmeister, Assistant Secretary

Outcome 3: Support for parliamentarians and others as required by the Australian government through the delivery of, and advice on, entitlements and targeted assistance

Business Enabling Services

Mr Grant Lovelock PSM, Acting Deputy Secretary
Ms Shannon Frazer, First Assistant Secretary
Ms Laura Sham, Acting First Assistant Secretary
Ms Amanda Bruce, Assistant Secretary
Mr Alex McKellar, Assistant Secretary

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 352 of 375

Ms Sally Bektas, Assistant Secretary

General

Business Enabling Services

Ms Carolyn Driessen, Assistant Secretary

Australian Electoral Commission

Mr Jeff Pope, Acting Electoral Commissioner

Ms Kath Gleeson, Acting Deputy Electoral Commissioner

Mr Michael Lynch, First Assistant Commissioner, Electoral Integrity and Operations Group

Mr Thomas Ryan, First Assistant Commissioner, Enterprise Transformation Group

Ms Rachael Spalding, First Assistant Commissioner, Enabling and Regulation Group

Mr Andrew Johnson, Chief Legal Officer

Ms Joanne Reid, Assistant Commissioner, Disclosure, Party Registration and Redistribution Branch

Ms Sally So, Chief Financial Officer

Digital Transformation Agency

Mr Chris Fechner, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Wayne Poels, General Manager, Digital Investment Advice and Sourcing

Ms Lucy Poole, General Manager, Strategy, Planning and Performance

Mr Tom Gilmartin, Chief Operating Officer

Mr Jamie Whitcombe, Branch Manager, Portfolio Assurance

Ms Lauren Mills, Branch Manager, Strategy and Prioritisation

Mr Tom Marwick, Acting Branch Manager, Australian Government Architecture and Policy

Mr Chris Huang, Chief Financial Officer

Mr Simon Quarrell, Branch Manager, Investment Advice and Contestability, Investment Reforms

Ms Nicole Bain, Branch Manager, Whole-Government Contract Negotiations

Future Fund Management Agency

Dr Raphael Arndt, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Ben Samild, Chief Investment Officer

Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority

Ms Christina Grant, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Nicole Pearson, Branch Manager, Transparency, Assurance and Legal

Mr Marco Spaccavento, Branch Manager, Corporate, Governance and Strategy

Mr Michael Frost, Branch Manager, Travel, Education and Advice

Parliamentary Workplace Support Service

Ms Leonie McGregor, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Kate Wandmaker, Deputy Chief Executive Officer

Mr Scott Mischke, Chief People Officer

Ms Leanne Martens, Acting Chief Operations Officer

Ms Vivienne Thom, Chair Commissioner, Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission

ASC Pty Ltd

Mr Stuart Whiley, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director

Mr Ashley Menadue, Chief Financial Officer

Mr Paul Gay, Chief Operating Officer (Multi Class Sustainment)

Mr Alex Walsh, Chief Nuclear and Capability Officer

Mr Richard Windeyer, Deputy Secretary, Commercial Group, Department of Finance

Mr David Webster, First Assistant Secretary, Commercial Group, Department of Finance

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 353 of 375

Mr Sacha de Re, Assistant Secretary, Commercial Group, Department of Finance

Australian Naval Infrastructure Pty Ltd

Mr Andrew Seaton, Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director

Ms Jane Lavender-Baker, Executive General Manager Corporate Affairs and People

Mr Paul Bates, Chief Operating Officer

Mr Richard Windeyer, Deputy Secretary, Commercial Group, Department of Finance

Mr David Webster, First Assistant Secretary, Commercial Group, Department of Finance

Mr Sacha de Re, Assistant Secretary, Commercial Group, Department of Finance

Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation

Mr Damian Hill, Chief Executive Officer

Mr Andy Young, Chief Operation Officer

Ms Alana Scheiffers, General Counsel

Department of Finance

[21:01]

CHAIR: I welcome Senator the Hon. Don Farrell, Special Minister of State; Ms Jenny Wilkinson, Secretary to the Department of Finance; and other officers of the Department of Finance. Minister, do you have an opening statement this evening?

Senator Farrell: Thank you for the opportunity of making an opening statement, but, given the lateness of the hour and the fact that I think we are running a bit late, I'll choose not to make a statement.

CHAIR: Ms Wilkinson?

Ms Wilkinson: No, I don't have an opening statement.

CHAIR: We'll go straight to questions. Senator Hume.

Senator HUME: I want to ask some questions in relation to the pre-approval process for claims made by parliamentarians. But before I do that, I want a staffing table. Sorry, Minister, I almost forgot our regular rendezvous with the staffing table.

Senator Farrell: Yes. Here you are. I've got mine.

Senator HUME: Terrific. May I have a copy?

Senator McGRATH: I suspect that's not the first time you've seen it, Minister.

Senator Farrell: Well, Senator McGrath, in fact, it is.

Senator HUME: Just while everybody breathes in the staffing table, I might move on to some questions about the pre-approval process for claims by parliamentarians, if that's alright. Obviously, this is the process by which we might use the department to provide that initial view of a piece of communication or a claim for our expenditure before we commission it, to make sure that we don't make any mistakes and make sure it's within the business regulations. How long has the department been running this service for parliamentarians?

Ms Bektas: This service has been running for approximately 12 months now.

Senator HUME: Have there been issues identified with the service?

Ms Bektas: Not in terms of issues with the actual service. We are getting very positive feedback in terms of the assistance that staff are providing, but there may be some questions with regard to some of the specific information, working through and going back and forth for some clarification on some of the process—some of the information that's coming through that staff are assessing. In terms of actual positive signs—

Senator HUME: So the process is working well but the outcomes are occasionally—

Ms Bektas: We work through it case by case.

Senator HUME: When the department established the service, given that it's providing expert advice, did the department seek any legal advice on how to interpret PBR regulations and then advise parliamentarians how they can claim?

Ms Bektas: I'm not aware of specific—

Senator HUME: No legal advice?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 354 of 375

Ms Frazer: In terms of establishing the service, we have a number of employees who are very familiar with the act and the regulations and how they operate. So, there was in-house expertise.

Senator HUME: So, you've got in-house legal advice on how to interpret the rules?

Ms Frazer: We have a legal branch which we can refer to, and we often do through—

Senator HUME: Has been legal advice sought for interpreting those rules or is it on a case-by-case basis?

Ms Frazer: It would be on a case-by-case basis, yes. These regulations and rules have been in practice for a long time and we have a number of staff in the department who are very familiar with them.

Senator HUME: Are they lawyers?

Ms Frazer: Some have legal backgrounds.

Senator HUME: So, they are qualified to interpret those rules?

Ms Frazer: In my opinion, yes.

Senator HUME: Who has made the request for legal advice to interpret the rules?

Ms Frazer: Sorry, if you could just ask that question again?

Senator HUME: Who has made any requests for legal advice and how to interpret those rules?

Ms Frazer: We work quite closely with our legal branch and so there'd be—

Senator HUME: So, it's just a constant thing, you're constantly seeking advice with your legal branch on how to interpret those existing rules?

Ms Frazer: On a case-by-case basis, yes.

Senator HUME: There are other agencies that offer similar services for parliamentarians. Are you aware of any other similar agencies?

Ms Frazer: I'm not, no.

Senator HUME: Like the Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority, perhaps? IPEA does a similar task, it just does it with different kinds of expenditure, doesn't it? It provides advice on the viability of a claim and it has a safe harbour provision in its legislation. I'm wondering if you have a similar provision for the advice that you provide?

Ms Bektas: No, we don't.

Ms Frazer: We currently do not.

Senator HUME: Why is that?

Ms Frazer: It's just currently not in the framework.

Senator HUME: If you're constantly checking for legal advice, how do you ensure consistency in the message rather than just having one firm 'this is how we interpret the rules'?

Ms Bektas: To be clear, we're not constantly checking for legal advice on every matter that comes through. Finance's role, as you already know, is we are responsible for administering the PBR framework, where the obligations and finances role, as you know, is to ensure compliance within the act and we work through the dominant purpose and all the various aspects of those specifications and so forth. In terms of consistency of advice, the normal framework is what the team work through. The time where we do seek legal advice is if it's sometimes quite borderline, the team maybe unsure, it might be something different, the environment is constantly changing with technology evolving and so forth. If there's something different, we will get legal advice. But essentially, in terms of consistency of advice, the team capture all this information when we provide advice. If there's anything quite contentious, we have a risk register. There is a process that we undertake as a team. We spend a lot of time going through, as a team, where if the team member assessing is unsure, they will escalate that and we will do a peer review. We have a number of processes in place to be able to work through that.

Ms Frazer: Perhaps if I could just offer in addition to that, Senator. There are a number of common scenarios that the team are used to handling and so are very familiar with, and they would be your more business-as-usual type assessments. But then there are more complex and unique assessments and that's when you would seek additional help.

Senator HUME: I think it's the business-as-usual assessments are the ones I'm trying to draw you out on. So just for instance let me draw your attention to a number of recent decisions that have been made by the department on what could and could not be claimed. My understanding is in previous years it's been very

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 355 of 375

unremarkable for items that don't reference the claiming parliamentary to be claimed. Material could be provided to the office that isn't labelled Senator Jane Hume—provisions for the office, pen, paper, whatever it is—and that can still be the case, yes? You can still claim those things?

Ms Frazer: Sorry, Senator, could you repeat the question?

Senator HUME: Well, let me be very clear. There have been some claims relating to communications that have not been approved on the basis that they don't refer to the parliamentarian.

Ms Frazer: Who's claiming the expense—

Senator HUME: Yes. Is that right?

Ms Frazer: It would be difficult to go into specific circumstances, because—

Senator HUME: Alright. Well, booklets—

Ms Frazer: in these scenarios, context does matter, so it's difficult to give a generalised statement or assessment in relation to specific cases. I'm more than happy to talk to you about specific examples.

Senator HUME: I think my office in particular has raised these issues with you quite recently, and we still haven't got a necessarily satisfactory answer. Let's say a booklet that may be completely informational or a policy document from the parliamentarian's party: are these items not covered by the same provisions as those other items that might be listed? So, they have to have my name attached to them.

Ms Bektas: The team work through the overarching obligations, and in assessing whether it is for the dominant purpose of your conducting your parliamentary business, they look at the various aspects of that, dominant purpose being one of them, as well as things like the duty stream that it aligns to, such as parliamentary, electorate, party political or official duties. They go through each of these steps and assess whether that is for your, as in the parliamentarian's own, parliamentary business.

Senator HUME: Does a piece of communication need to refer to a claiming parliamentarian?

Ms Bektas: If the communication is clear that it is for the parliamentarian's own parliamentary business and that is quite overt, then yes, there are cases where we have had applications for assessment where it might be multiple parliamentarians. Cost sharing is another aspect of this, and we will look at the weighting of the information and look at value for money. But ultimately it's justifiable by the parliamentarians to ensure that what they've put forward meets all these criteria.

Senator HUME: So, only if it's for the dominant purpose—is that right?

Ms Frazer: Going back to the framework, members and parliamentarians need to be able to satisfy themselves that they meet all those obligations under the framework. The dominant purpose test is one of them, and value for money, as well as acting ethically and in good faith and being willing to publicly justify the expense. And the role of the preassessment team is to try to help senators and members to comply with those obligations under the framework.

Senator HUME: I'm advised that the department has previously taken a position that paper, for instance—something as basic as paper—provided for a single parliamentarian can be used only by that parliamentarian or that parliamentarian's staff, so that a single piece of paper used by another office might be a contravention of the PBR in the eyes of the department. Is that your view?

Ms Frazer: I'm not aware of the situation you're referring to and, as I've said, I don't think we can go into specific cases here without knowing all the detail of the situation. I'm happy to deal directly with your office on that.

Ms Wilkinson: If I could just jump in: we have, partly responding to feedback from parliamentarians, tried to provide some more assistance. As you know, Senator, the PBR framework is a principles based framework. Parliamentarians can make their own judgements about the things they think are for the dominant purpose of their business. We are trying—

Senator HUME: So it isn't a prior approval process? It isn't a pre-approval system?

Ms Wilkinson: You don't have to get preapproved, I do not believe—correct me if I'm wrong. I don't think you have to be preapproved. We're trying to provide assistance to those parliamentarians who are looking for more guidance. If it's not working, if you've got feedback about it, if you feel that you have a different view about the feedback you're getting from the department, we're very happy to hear that feedback and to work through those issues. But—

Senator HUME: Okay. It's the inconsistency I think that has been the problem here. For instance, let me give you an example. There was one item of communication that was initially denied because the communication

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 356 of 375

could have provided a commercial benefit through what was considered advertisement of a business. I want to understand what the threshold for providing a commercial benefit through an advertisement is. If there's a photograph of me standing outside a coffee shop saying, 'This is my favourite coffee shop in the morning in my electorate,' is that an advertisement?

Ms Frazer: As I've said, we're happy to work through the cases with you in detail. Part of the preassessment process—and it's not a preapproval process—is to help senators and members work through issues, if there are any, and to make any adjustments to ensure that obligations under the framework are met. I'll take your feedback in relation to consistency, and we will continue to work on that. We're happy to hear other feedback.

Senator HUME: The feedback is that we've tried to work with you through these things, but this seems to be a consistent problem, which is why it's being raised here rather than offline. Do you think that the service that you're providing now is consistent with the service that parliamentarians were receiving a year ago, 18 months ago or two years ago?

Ms Bektas: I believe there was always some form of preassessment service, but it's only in the last 12 months or so that we've been quite active in helping parliamentarians. It's almost more of a bookend, if you will. It's more to provide assistance and guidance before claims are submitted, because there was a bit of an issue of claims being submitted and then some contraventions being identified. The service in the last 12 months, as I highlighted, has been—we have invested more resources in there, in that context.

Senator HUME: So we've had preassessment for more than a decade, and this doesn't seem to have been a problem in the past. It seems to be a consistent problem now that we have raised over and over again. The example that I gave you about the advertisement, for instance, was a pub—

CHAIR: Senator Hume, I have always received the advice that that was outside the guidelines.

Senator HUME: Terrific.

CHAIR: I had presumed that that advice was indeed consistent, but—

Senator HUME: So I'll ask you some questions when you're sitting over there.

CHAIR: No, I'm just interested in the same answers, so—

Senator HUME: In the circumstance that I'm raising on this advertisement, the parliamentarian—it wasn't me—was accused of advertising a pub and was accused of doing this because the pub's address was listed on an invitation because that was the event's location. Somehow, that was considered an advertisement. Is it seriously the department's view that listing the address of where people should go cannot be done under the PBR without breaching it?

Ms Bektas: When the team are assessing claims that are coming through in the preassessment process and when they are looking at the submissions, there are a number of factors that are taken into consideration. Again, it is case by case. Not every case is similar, and I think I should factor that in when we talk about consistency. The issue in this particular scenario would not have been about the actual pub. It would have been about the size of the picture, how much the picture framing encompassed any commercial-advertising type material—if the focus were more on the picture—and also the narrative and how that was positioned. From a commercial purpose—

Senator HUME: There was no picture of the pub on the invitation.

Ms Frazer: Senator, this is the difficulty with trying to provide advice without having all the circumstances and details. As I've said previously, I am happy to—

Senator HUME: I think that's what's causing the confusion with parliamentarians: the things that they have always done in the past somehow seem to be a breach of the rules now. If I want to hold a community forum at a cafe and I name that cafe on the invitation for a community forum—it's not a fundraiser; I am not charging anybody anything—is that advertisement? Would that pass the PBR test for you?

Ms Bektas: That would pass the PBR test. If the—

Senator HUME: But a pub doesn't?

Ms Bektas: Well, with a pub picture, if there's—

Senator HUME: There wasn't a picture. It was just the name of the pub.

Ms Bektas: I'm happy to take this offline and we can talk it through. But, Senator, a lot of the feedback that we have received over a period of time, both positive and negative, has been constructive in terms of how this is working. We did develop some 'commercial purpose' guidance and material, which is also on the website. That does also provide a checklist you can work through. We did in that guidance provide some examples of photos as

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 357 of 375

well in terms of what does qualify as a derivation of financial gain or reward, which is ultimately the definition of 'commercial purpose' and how the team are interpreting that.

Senator HUME: How would a parliamentarian get commercial gain or reward from holding a community forum at a pub?

Mr Lovelock: We're not saying that listing the address, the venue location, would be interpreted as giving commercial benefit. I hear that you are aware of advice that may have suggested that, on that basis, the preassessment service suggested that that artefact wouldn't be compliant. We'll take on notice the way that teams interpret commercial purpose and dominant purpose in these contexts.

I think part of what witnesses are trying to highlight is that there will be a range of factors on any one piece of material that's produced that may be considered, and it will be that range of factors on any given piece of material that influence the outcome of that preassessment. The preassessment has been put in place to support members and senators to comply. What we are aware has occurred since the preassessment service has existed is that often what is provided as part of the preassessment service naturally shifts a little as documents are produced, and the final version of a document may shift. But we will take on notice how it is that we consider commercial purpose and dominant purpose in the context of making that preassessment.

Senator HUME: Has there been a change of practice? Forget taking it on notice. Has there been a change of practice?

Mr Lovelock: Not that I'm aware of. But we will take on notice whether the guidance that has been considered in the past and what is now being considered has changed.

Senator McGRATH: Does the department really think that a commercial benefit is provided to a business being mentioned in whatever form, in a publication that is within the terms that my colleague is talking about? I tell you what; no cafe or pub is going to have lots of people come to it because they've ended up in James McGrath's newsletter. I think you need a reality check here. This doesn't happen. If anything, my experience is that, because of the ugly nature of Australian politics at the moment, businesses that appear in politicians' publications actually are targeted by trolls and damage is caused to them. So does the department take that into account?

Ms Bektas: We do look at incidental references as well. As Mr Lovelock and Ms Frazer mentioned, there are various nuances that are taken into consideration. Incidental references absolutely are permissible. It's not something that we will cross out. It's when it's repetitive or it's prominent. As I said, there are factors that the team work through—

Senator McGRATH: That's not our experience. I can tell you it's not the experience of politicians across this parliament. If there was a publication that effectively was a newsletter that publicised my local pub on every page, I would get that. But, as my colleague was referring to, if Senator Hume is having a 'politics in the pub' meeting, it gets refused because of the approach taken by the department. We don't think you're being reasonable. That's why this question is being asked here—because we're not getting satisfaction through the other mechanisms.

Senator HUME: Perhaps we just ask the minister whether he'll undertake to fix this problem as soon as possible.

Senator Farrell: I'm happy to undertake that task. But I have to say the issues have been around for a long time. The issues that you refer to are not new issues, and they were issues that I personally encountered under previous administrations. But I understand the problems and I'm happy to—

Senator HUME: You are absolutely, then, the man to fix them.

Senator Farrell: Well, I inherited lots of problems in this job, and I've tried to do my best to fix all of them.

Senator HUME: You're the Harvey Keitel; you're like the cleaner of the parliament.

Senator Farrell: Is that *Reservoir Dogs*?

Senator HUME: Thank you. I have some questions about PEMS's implementation. The last time we were here, you said that the department had undertaken a benefits realisation review of PEMS following the ANAO report into the system but that that report hadn't been completed. Has it been completed now?

Ms Frazer: Yes, the benefits realisation review has been completed.

Senator HUME: Great. It was supposed to be completed at the end of 2024, so we can tick that one off. You've undertaken to the committee to provide us a copy of that report as well. That was at the last estimates.

Ms Frazer: Yes. We're happy to provide a copy of that report.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 358 of 375

Mr McKellar: Last session you asked if we'd provide it to the minister for consideration. We've done that, but we are certainly happy to take it on notice to provide it to the committee.

Senator HUME: So you can't table it today?

Mr McKellar: I don't have it here today.

Senator HUME: Is it available online? Is it publicly available?

Mr McKellar: It's not publicly available at this time, but we can take it on notice to provide it to the committee.

Senator HUME: Yes, please, if you could, because you did undertake to table it last time when it was ready. Let me then ask what you found as part of the process.

Mr McKellar: The PEMS project benefits review responds to the ANAO recommendation, as you said. The review documents the extent to which each of the project benefits that were defined at the start of the project and their respective measures have been realised. The overall benefits realisation result was that of 'realised partially', which we think was a fair representation of how PEMS went in the context.

Senator HUME: Partially? I'm not entirely sure what that means.

Mr McKellar: If you put it in the context of some of the other external reviews like the ANAO report, it's certainly not a glowing review or a glowing result. It was the sum total of how the measurements were taken, and it was partially achieved, not fully realised or anything like that.

Senator HUME: What's the recommendation? What is being done to implement change to improve it?

Mr Lovelock: As part of the changing governance and way of working that was introduced ahead of the release of milestone 8—that different way of working—a commitment to identifying the benefits to be released through future releases of PEMS is the focus. The focus is also for the governance committees to be clear how it is that benefits will be realised through this next phase of PEMS's enhancement. We will be tracking those benefits, going back to the commencement of PEMS and the closure of that first delivery, as we now focus—post several reviews of the platform—on what it is that we now prioritise and focus on in ensuring we're able to deliver for and support parliamentarians in conducting their work and that those benefits are identified and tracked from this point forward.

Senator HUME: So they're the recommendations. Is there a timeframe for delivery? Are there specific KPIs? What do I ask you next time I see you to see how you're going?

Mr Lovelock: We now have a clear picture of the range of releases we will do to deliver enhancements to the platform, and that is what we would track in terms of benefits. Do you want to talk that through, Mr McKellar?

Mr McKellar: Sure. We have a project that was stood up at the start of this financial year and is to run for two years. As part of that project we will have a number of measures against the enhancements that will be delivered in that project, and at the conclusion of the project there'll be another assessment based on those measures as to how effective those enhancements have been and the success of the project.

Senator HUME: Okay. Can you give me an indication of what those enhancements might be?

Mr McKellar: I can take on notice the specific details. We have 17 grouped work packages of a number of enhancements to deliver over the two-year period. As an indication—

Senator HUME: What will a user see that will make it different for them?

Ms Frazer: Those enhancements are actually about making sure we prioritise that end-user client experience. That's the overarching intent behind the work packages. In terms of specifics—Mr McKellar?

Mr McKellar: As a learning from the original PEMS project, we took on board the need for greater consultation about what was required and what would reap the most return. So far, to January 2025, we've delivered six of the work packages. Examples of what we've delivered so far include improvements to the bulk certification of claims, which enables parliamentarians to certify multiple office claims at one time and, with their office managers, then progress those claims in PEMS. We've introduced the automatic removal of staff authorisations when staff cease employment. That reduces the risk of security issues. And we've made improvements to the level of automation of the processing of overseas travel. Those are some examples of what's already in play.

Senator HUME: And what's coming next?

Mr McKellar: For example, we've got efficiencies, particularly for office managers and parliamentarians, in accessing information and processing claims. There'll be a lot of front-end changes that'll be visible to office managers to support them to more efficiently and effectively process their claims. In the reporting space and the

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 359 of 375

reporting tile for budgets, there will be additional information and fills within the office budget usage report to support the identification and reconciliation of office expenses. We've had a lot of feedback around making that capability more user friendly. That's something that we've got coming up. In fact, that's due to be deployed this month.

In terms of office claims and transactions, we have improvements to office claims processing, including the ability to make amendments more easily, to reduce the number of returned claims that are seeking correction. So, instead of just returning a claim and bouncing it back, there'll be better capability to amend that claim.

Senator HUME: Excellent. When we meet at the next estimates, if I say, 'Have the changes been made to the front end, to the user end of phase 2—office expense reconciliation and improvements and amendments to office claims?' they will be done?

Mr McKellar: We have a schedule to complete, as I said, all 17 work packages through to June 2026. I can provide dates around individual items that we have locked in so far. If you'd like me to take that on notice, I can provide you—

Senator HUME: I'm guessing next estimates—and I'm only guessing—will be probably be in about October.

Mr McKellar: In addition to the six that have already been delivered, we're planning to have another seven done by December this year. Between now and then, yes, we'll be able to provide you with an update of how we're progressing.

Senator HUME: Terrific. Thank you for that. Finally, I have a very brief question, probably for the minister, on the government staff committee. Minister, in previous hearings you provided some confirmation that the government has a staffing committee and confirmed its membership. Can I confirm that the membership hasn't changed.

Senator Farrell: Correct.

Senator HUME: Can I also confirm that this body still performs the role that's linked to the statement of standards for ministerial staff.

Senator Farrell: Yes, that's correct.

Senator HUME: At a previous estimates hearing I asked you how that statement of standards for ministerial staff applies to government staff and asked if the management of these standards would transfer to the PWSS for management. You've said that they won't.

Senator Farrell: Correct.

Senator HUME: Will the standards then be enforced by the new IPSC?

Senator Farrell: I don't believe so.

Senator HUME: Okay. How then will the IPSC, if at all, interact with the new government staffing committee?

Senator Farrell: That's a subject for discussion.

Senator HUME: That's why I asked.

Senator Farrell: And I'll be discussing that with my colleagues and the Prime Minister.

Senator HUME: So there hasn't been any consideration of how it will interact with the government staffing committee?

Senator Farrell: Not with me yet, Senator.

Senator HUME: Can you envisage a situation, then, where an issue might arise that both the IPSC and the government staffing committee might seek to deal with it? If that's the case, how would that work?

Senator Farrell: I'm hoping the behaviour of the ministers is such that we never get into that situation.

Senator HUME: Wow. If that were the case, then we wouldn't need a government staffing committee or standards for ministerial staff or an IPSC even.

CHAIR: Senator Waters.

Senator WATERS: I'm not quite sure if I'm asking this in the right spot, but I'll give it a crack. I'm interested in whether or not free legal advice is captured in the current definition of 'gift' under the Electoral Act.

Senator Farrell: I'd be more inclined to think that that would be a topic for the Electoral Commission, unless somebody at the table thinks that could be—

CHAIR: I think that might be best a question for the Electoral Commission. They're up next.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 360 of 375

Senator WATERS: Great. I have some other questions for them as well.

Senator Farrell: Generally speaking, the Electoral Commissioner will bring their lawyer—and I'm assuming that is the case on this occasion—and they are full bottle on all of these topics.

Senator WATERS: Hopefully this is in the right spot. Is free legal advice required to be disclosed under House Register of Members' Interests rules? I only know about the Senate rules, because I'm a senator, but I'm asking about the House rules, which I presume they have.

Ms Wilkinson: We're not responsible for the House rules.

Senator WATERS: Who would know the answer to that? I know for the Senate it's $300 and above. I don't know what it is for the House. Who's in charge of that?

Mr Lovelock: I think it would be the parliamentary departments and probably the chamber department responsible who are responsible.

Senator WATERS: Okay. I can go no further, then, I'm afraid. I'll try to get some help out of the AEC.

CHAIR: Senator Colbeck.

Senator COLBECK: I want to ask some questions about the new online documentation for the employment of staff, which is part of that whole new system that is being implemented. I'll acknowledge upfront that we're still learning the system. My question relates to the accessibility of the forms. Having had a very stable staff and not having employed anybody new until a few weeks ago, when I went to access the form to sign up a new staff member, it was all online, and it was password protected behind a password that only I, as the member of parliament, could access. On that form, there are a number of declarations that staff have to make—so I can't fill the stuff out—like: what are your preferences for your superannuation? And there are a number of declarations on that form that the staff member has to fill out. There's clearly a desire to protect the data and the information but protecting the form from anybody else I actually don't get. I can't fill out declarations on behalf of my staff. I'll say I'm old fashioned. I like to sit down and sign the contract and retain a copy of the contract in the file. I get we're in a digital world, and all of that's different now, but the fact that I get an email from the system that says, 'Create a new passcode,' to get into the documentation to employ a person and 'Here's a nine-page form,' which includes declarations the staff member has to make that only I can access through a protected password process, I don't get. I seriously don't get it.

I did send a grumpy email back through to MOPS, MAPS or somebody. I didn't get a response. I'm not sure if anyone actually read it. The way the system is working just doesn't make sense to me. It's certainly not there to help me. I made the system work. I had to sit down with the new prospective employee sitting beside me and ask him the questions. But I fail to understand how I can verify or certify an employee's declarations on a document that only I can access.

Mr Lovelock: That not making sense makes sense to me. I'll just see whether we're able to answer that now.

Ms Frazer: I've not been made aware of those issues. Obviously you and the chair have had issues. I think the best I can do there is to take that on notice and come back to you. It does not sound like an official process. We'll just make sure that operates effectively. The best I can do is just take that on notice.

Senator COLBECK: Employing a new person is something where both parties have to input into the documentation, but both parties have to be able to access it to be able to do that and transmit it to be able to do that.

Ms Frazer: Your comments sound reasonable, Senator, and I'll undertake to look into it.

Mr Lovelock: We'll come back on the correspondence you've had directly with us to explain what's going on there and how we can support you.

Senator COLBECK: I've expressed very similar views to the ones I expressed—perhaps even more succinctly—in the email. I would have thought that access to the document would be relatively free so I can say to any of my staff or a prospective staff member: 'Go to the website. Access the form. Email it to the prospective person, and then it can be transmitted through the system to me.'

Ms Frazer: Without knowing the detail, I can't comment, but there are probably privacy concerns in there that people are trying to manage.

Senator COLBECK: I suspected as much.

Ms Frazer: But it seems to be inhibiting the process as opposed to helping.

Senator COLBECK: It was pretty deep. To access the form, I had to create a new password to get into the system. It was a couple of steps too far to achieve what people are trying to achieve.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 361 of 375

Mr Lovelock: We'll take that on notice and, for the benefit of the committee, come back and come back specifically on your correspondence with us.

Senator COLBECK: The person is safely employed, I might add, now. We fixed it, but I didn't need the process.

CHAIR: We would like to thank the Department of Finance for their attendance this evening. Thank you for your support to our officers. I will now ask the Australian Electoral Commission to come to the table.

Proceedings suspended from 21:44 to 21:53

Australian Electoral Commission

CHAIR: I now welcome Mr Pope, the Acting Electoral Commissioner, and other officers of the Australian Electoral Commission. When's the election going to be, Mr Pope? If you knew, you couldn't tell us anyway! I was just joking when I said that, other than to say that we're all looking forward to it, I'm sure. Do you have an opening statement this evening, Mr Pope?

Mr Pope: No, I don't, other than to say I have no answer to your opening question. I have no clue.

CHAIR: I was not expecting that you would. But I'm sure you're ready, in any case.

Mr Pope: Indeed.

CHAIR: Senator Hume.

Senator HUME: In relation to questions 49 and 50, which I had on notice, which were regarding Mr Rogers's announcement that he would see out the end of his term and on what that date would be, he came back and said 16 August. Minister, my question's probably for you—or, potentially, Acting Commissioner, you might correct me. How long is the process to officially appoint a new commissioner, and what are the steps involved in doing that? Am I directing that to you, Acting Commissioner, or to the minister?

Senator Farrell: I think the acting commissioner would know a lot more about that process than I do, and I'm happy to defer to him.

Mr Pope: I think, based on past processes, it's advertised openly, a selection panel is formed with very senior members of the Australian Public Service. The selection process is undertaken, and then it goes through the normal approval process to get through to Executive Council. I think normally it's four to six months.

Senator HUME: Four to six months.

Mr Pope: From start to finish.

Senator HUME: If Mr Rogers gave his notice on 16 August 2024, that's nearly a full four months' warning, Minister. Is there a reason why the government didn't use this time to complete the appropriate processes to make a new appointment?

Senator Farrell: We followed the pattern of previous conservative governments in terms of the processes that we've followed in the way in which Mr Pope was appointed. The proximity to the election was obviously an issue, as, of course, was not knowing exactly when the election was going to be. The government has the greatest confidence in Mr Pope's ability to conduct this election at the very highest standards of the Australian Electoral Commission. The process of the replacement will get fully underway as soon as the election's out of the way. I'm sure that we will, later this year, be reporting on the completion of that process in a timely fashion.

Senator HUME: Thank you, Minister.

Senator Farrell: I suppose the point I'm making is: the Australian people have nothing to worry about in the way in which this process was conducted and, as I said, the government and I have got the highest confidence in Mr Pope and his team to conduct an election at the highest standards of Australian Electoral Commission elections.

Senator HUME: As do the opposition.

Senator Farrell: Excellent.

Senator HUME: Mr Pope, at the last estimates you stated that you were hiring 130,000 temporary election workers in the new system. Is that 130,000 the total number of workers that you'll be looking to hire ahead of the election?

Mr Pope: I think that may have been the number of workers that we actually had in the system at the time.

Senator HUME: Right.

Mr Pope: We are looking to fill 100,000 positions and hire 100,000 people to fill those positions. We're making very good progress against that.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 362 of 375

Senator HUME: Of the 100,000 people, have they pretty much got a standard job? What is it that they'll be doing? Are these the people who work literally in each one of the booths on election day?

Mr Pope: They'll be doing a whole range of activities, from working in a polling place and doing all the different roles that occur in a polling place to working on mobile polling teams, remote mobile polling teams or as our count staff. There's a whole range of activities right across the country, and we are actively recruiting. Once the election is announced, our advertising and recruitment will escalate even further, and we look forward to filling those 100,000 positions with very high-quality people.

Senator HUME: At the last estimates, you referred to a new system that you were using to hire temporary workers. How is that currently operating?

Mr Pope: Really well. We've been fortunate enough to be able to, in a limited way, put it to the test with the Torres Strait Regional Authority election, which we ran late last year. The system is performing incredibly well. We've had 130,000 people, if not more now, register in the system.

Senator HUME: That's the 130,000 that you're referring to—registering in the system?

Mr Pope: That's right. And I hope that we actually get around 250,000 to 300,000 people registering in the system to help us fill those 100,000 positions.

Senator HUME: Is this new system a QR code, then a 'come and work for us for the election'—is that what that is?

Mr Pope: Yes, and there's a registration process on our website. Anyone who wants to work for us can go straight to our website and follow the steps.

Senator HUME: What stage are you at in developing the materials relating to an election?

Mr Pope: Everything's done.

Senator HUME: That's organised! Have you completed the identification of all polling booths and prepoll locations?

Mr Pope: Pretty much. We're going to have 7,000 polling places and I think about 570 or 580 early voting centres, which is a huge undertaking. Whilst we may have identified where we'd like those polling places to be—and we will have had initial contact with them—until we actually know the date, we can't lock them in.

Senator HUME: That was my next question. I wondered what date you had booked all those venues for.

Mr Pope: We have not; I wish we could. But we do, effectively, what we call soft contact—if I can put it that way: 'Are you interested in a being a polling place? Do you think you'll be available between March and May? What's the likely fee going to be?' We go through all those sorts of processes, but no offers are made and no leases are signed until a date is known and announced.

Senator HUME: Mr Pope, you would be aware of recent media reports of up to 12,500 new Australians being created as part of a rush of citizenship ceremonies conducted by the government. Are you aware of this?

Mr Pope: Yes.

Senator HUME: Having worked on a number of elections in the past, can you recall an instance where there was such a significant number of new citizens created on the eve of an election?

CHAIR: What's wrong with that?

Senator Farrell: Surely, you must support as many people as possible to get—

Senator HUME: It's a shame that *Hansard* doesn't pick up a tone of voice.

CHAIR: If they've applied for citizenship and they're going to get it granted, why would you want to preclude them?

Senator HUME: I wasn't asking Mr Pope whether he objected to it.

CHAIR: I'm confused by your question.

Senator HUME: Chair, I'll ask you the questions when you're on that side. I wasn't asking Mr Pope whether he objected to it. I was asking whether it had ever happened before, in his many years of experience running elections.

Mr Pope: Not in the 12 years of my experience.

Senator HUME: How does the AEC manage an influx of new voters like that? Do you have materials or programs for new citizens to help them vote for the first time?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 363 of 375

Mr Pope: We have a range of things. For new citizens, there are two ways in which we go about this. For standard citizenship ceremonies, we have a range of material that is available for people to enrol—QR codes and fact sheets in up to 37 languages. Home Affairs and councils provide that information at citizenship ceremonies for people to enrol. For those that don't enrol at that time, we get the data from Home Affairs and we put them through the Federal Direct Enrolment and Update process. So, if we don't pick them up on the day, then we pick them up in the following months and we get them on the roll that way. That's for your standard citizenship ceremony. Then we have a policy position around attending iconic citizenship ceremonies where we will actually send staff to those larger ceremonies, and our staff do exactly that. Effectively, they promote enrolment: 'Here's the material and here's the QR code. If you've got any questions about how to enrol, come and ask us.'

Senator HUME: I went to a citizenship ceremony in Frankston on Australia Day, which was lovely, and I spoke to the AEC workers that were there. They were sitting at a desk in the corner. I went up and said hello, and asked them how they were going about their business. They were doing a terrific job. In the stories that we are hearing about the recent citizenship ceremonies, there is an active recruitment process and there are AEC staff wandering around the room getting people to sign up.

CHAIR: What a good idea!

Senator HUME: Is that a different approach?

Mr Pope: Not really. We attended 217 Australia Day ceremonies all over the country, for about 16,000 electors. And I think it just depends on the size of the crowd. In large crowds we'd be asking and expecting our staff to be mingling among the crowd and trying to promote our resources to get as many people as possible to enrol on the day.

Senator HUME: Do you have a ratio—you know how many citizens are going to be sworn in on a particular day—

Mr Pope: Yes.

Senator HUME: so you send a certain number of staff?

Mr Pope: I don't know the ratio off the top of my head, but that would be a discussion and a decision that we would make in consultation with our state managers, who generally manage those staff.

Senator HUME: How do you find out about the ceremonies? Is that through the Department of Home Affairs or is it another way?

Mr Pope: Through Home Affairs.

Senator HUME: Do AEC staff attend all citizenship ceremonies? Is it standard practice? Or is it really only the ones of a certain size?

Mr Pope: It's more the latter there—it's more the iconic ones and the larger ones that we attend.

Senator HUME: What's the threshold?

Mr Pope: There isn't really a prescriptive threshold, but you could probably take the description of 'iconic' relatively broadly.

Senator HUME: I'm advised that at least one of these ceremonies—one conducted in Adelaide—attendees were allegedly approached by AEC staff, not seeking for them to sign up on the electoral roll but seeking expressions of interest to work at the upcoming election. Does that sound accurate?

Mr Pope: That's news to me. No, I'm not aware of that.

Senator HUME: I've been provided with photographs of the material that was provided to the attendees. It's a business card and it appears to be authorised under your name. On one side it says 'Federal election jobs', and the other side has a QR code and a webpage saying 'aec.gov.au/election jobs'. Are you aware of that material?

Mr Pope: That material does exist; there's no question about that. We are looking, as I said, for probably 250,000 to 300,000 people, and we are looking for people who also speak foreign languages, to come and work in polling places. So it is quite possible that—

Senator HUME: So, hawking for jobs at citizenship ceremonies is standard practice?

Mr Pope: It could well be. I'm actually—

Senator HUME: Could you take on notice whether that's occurred before?

Mr Pope: I'm happy to take it on notice, but I'm actually quite happy that that's been occurring. We do need more people who speak foreign languages to work in our polling places. These are new citizens. They're eligible to vote, assuming they're on the roll. They're eligible to work for us. So, it's a good practice.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 364 of 375

Senator HUME: How do you think you'll go about that process of educating new citizens about how to go about voting and then, at the same time, having them working on the polling places?

Mr Pope: Well, in a number of different ways. At the moment we are running community education sessions for culturally and linguistically diverse communities and also Indigenous communities. In fact, depending on the timing of the election, we're hoping to run up to 500 of those community education sessions, and we've already delivered more than 300. We are doing community education in many different languages right across the country, both CALD languages and Indigenous. But in addition to that of course, for anyone who works for us, training is provided. There is training in our system, depending on the position that you're in, and there's also training provided on the day. So, it would depend on the role. We're very confident in our ability to not only recruit but also train people to do the work that we ask them to do.

Senator HUME: I want to ask some questions about the Remote Area Mobile Polling program for the upcoming election. Obviously you engage with communities to determine the locations you visit as part of that program. That's correct, isn't it?

Mr Pope: Yes.

Senator HUME: And the locations have to be at least 20 kilometres from a polling place. Is that right?

Mr Pope: Generally, yes.

Senator HUME: Has the AEC identified the locations that you'll be visiting as part of the RAMP program?

Mr Pope: Once again, we've certainly got a good sense of where we'd like to go, and my understanding is that we are looking at and hoping to attend potentially up to around 480 different locations, which is actually an increase since the referendum.

Senator HUME: Is it an increase since the 2022 election?

Mr Pope: Yes. It's quite an increase since the 2022 federal election, by probably more than a hundred.

Senator HUME: Wow! Okay.

Mr Pope: But, as you'd also appreciate, Senator, we're currently dealing with the late onset of the wet season in the far north, we've got a potential cyclone off the Queensland coast, we've got an extraordinary heatwave in Central Australia—we don't know exactly what sort of weather conditions we're going to be dealing with during that two-week polling period. One of the most challenging elements of election delivery is trying to navigate through those things that we just simply cannot control.

Senator HUME: Is that why RAMP runs for more than just the prepoll period?

Mr Pope: It did for the referendum. The legislation allowed for it to go for three weeks. But, for the election, it'll be back to two weeks. So we're actually doing more in less time, which is a bold and challenging undertaking, but we are going to give it our best shot. But the one thing we cannot control, of course, is the weather, and access to communities, and we are concerned at the moment. If the election was to be held soon, we're concerned at the moment about challenging access to a number of communities in northern Australia.

Senator HUME: As part of the RAMP program, you engaged some staff on the ground. How does it occur? Is it ad hoc, or is it prearranged? Do you have set staff you normally call on if you're going to take it up by another hundred polling places?

Mr Pope: It's a little bit of both. Our RAMP delivery is done in partnership with Services Australia. We would not be able to deliver this without them. We employ some Services Australia people. We have AEC people who are core parts of the team. We have 90 community electoral participation officers, who are all Indigenous officers that we are employing. I think up to around about half of those have been employed. They are local people from communities who speak language and can help not just with education and awareness but also in identifying other people that can come and work with us. I think we're also going to be looking for around about 270 local assistants.

Senator HUME: So they're ad hoc. There are some that are prearranged and there are some that are ad hoc.

Mr Pope: That's right.

Senator HUME: If you have some that are ad hoc, how do you make sure that those staff, particularly if they're gathered together at the last minute, understand the non-partisan nature of the work that they're doing?

Mr Pope: That's a critical part of the recruitment. In fact, we don't recruit anybody who can't give us and can't sign an undertaking with respect to their impartiality. Then, of course, we provide them with appropriate training to reinforce those principles.

Senator HUME: How do you access all the locations? Do you charter transport for that?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 365 of 375

Mr Pope: It's a combination. We'll be using boats, planes, helicopters—whatever we require to get into these communities. So, yes, some of it is chartered flights, some of it is helicopters, and a lot of it is four-wheel drives. During the referendum period I think we travelled over 200,000 kilometres to deliver the remote service. It's a huge undertaking—incredibly logistically difficult.

Senator HUME: How many staff do you send to a typical RAMP location?

Mr Pope: Again, that will probably depend on the size of the community that we're trying to service, because some of these are actually very small and in others you've got 200, 300 or 400 people. So we send enough polling teams to try and service the communities that we're looking at.

Senator HUME: So, if you had 200, 300 or 400 people, how many AEC staff would you send, compared to a community of say 50?

Mr Pope: I'm going to say probably—

Senator HUME: Just approximately.

Mr Pope: six or seven. Probably six.

Senator HUME: For a larger community?

Mr Pope: I might ask the deputy to correct me on this.

Ms Gleeson: On a standard remote voter services team, we have four staff. That is the number of staff that can fit reasonably comfortably in vehicles with all of the material that they have to carry. Then, to deal with larger communities, we would poll there for a longer duration. So we may end up staying there overnight and polling into the second day, for example. But, as a general rule, it's a team of four.

Senator HUME: I know this sounds very strange, but, first of all, how do you secure the ballot boxes, or are ballots counted on site?

Ms Gleeson: They can be counted on site or counted back at a central location in a counting centre, depending on the team and where they're operating. They are secured in the same manner that ballot boxes are secured in polling places, with seals and seal records and scrutineers viewing opening.

Senator HUME: How do you have scrutineers in a remote community?

Ms Gleeson: We do have scrutineers that attend remote polling and have in the past. If a scrutineer isn't present then we have the seal opening witnessed by a member of the community, for example, or a member of the public, and those records are signed in the same manner that they are for polling places.

Senator HUME: So you actively do a call-out for scrutineers. How does that work?

Ms Gleeson: If we needed to break a seal, we would typically look for someone who is independent—preferably a scrutineer. If there's not a scrutineer available then they'd ask someone who is in line to vote or someone from the community who's willing to do it.

Senator HUME: One of the AEC workers asks somebody in the line to witness—

Ms Gleeson: Yes; potentially, that could be a scenario.

Mr Pope: We also publish a schedule in advance so that parties and candidates have the opportunity to try and plan to have a presence where that's required.

CHAIR: Senator Waters.

Senator WATERS: Good evening. Thanks for staying so late—quarter past 10—to answer our questions and also for a very busy time coming up for you and your team. I wish you all the best. I have a series of questions. Firstly, under the Electoral Act, how is free legal advice treated? Is that captured in the current definition of 'gift'?

Mr Pope: It would possibly depend on the circumstances. Do you have any more circumstances or facts that you're able to share?

Senator WATERS: Yes; the Leader of the Opposition has been getting free legal advice, I'm informed, from Arnold Bloch Liebler. I'm interested in knowing whether the Electoral Act has any views on that.

Mr Pope: I think it's going to depend on the facts, but my sense is that, as a broad principle, it's likely to be considered a gift.

Senator WATERS: Okay. So it would be required to be disclosed by the Leader of the Opposition and by the law firm?

Mr Pope: At the appropriate disclosure time, yes. That would be my sense at the moment, but, again, I'd need to know the exact nature of the legal advice.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 366 of 375

Senator WATERS: Would the content or the topic of the legal advice change your answer?

Mr Pope: It could, yes.

Senator WATERS: Oh, okay. Can you elaborate on that for me?

Mr Pope: Well, I'm assuming it's not personal legal advice.

Senator WATERS: I don't know, but I also assume that would be outside of the realms of the Electoral Act.

Mr Pope: That's right. They're the sort of circumstances that we'd need to be aware of.

Senator WATERS: Okay. Is there anything in the recent changes that were passed by the parliament that would change that scenario?

Mr Pope: I've memorised that there are 25 exclusions to the definition of a 'gift' from the new legislation, but I can't say I have actually memorised all 25 of those just yet.

Senator WATERS: You'll have to do better next time!

Mr Pope: So I wouldn't mind a little bit more time to come back to you on that.

Senator WATERS: Thank you. Could you take on notice whether the changed definition changes your view on whether the legal advice would need to be disclosed.

I've got just one other quick question. Under the current laws but also the recent reforms changing the position, should free modelling by, for example, Frontier Economics on nuclear be captured as an in-kind donation?

Mr Pope: Once again, I think I'm going to need to understand the full facts of what's being provided there to be able to answer that question.

Senator WATERS: I understand it's modelling on nuclear by Frontier Economics that the coalition frequently refer to. I don't know the detail of the modelling. I'm not sure how detailed it is, to be honest, but it's provided for free, so would that need to be disclosed?

Mr Pope: Possibly—again, subject to the circumstances, which we would need to understand, it may well be a gift that needs to be disclosed at the appropriate time.

Senator WATERS: And what would be the circumstances that would require disclosure?

Mr Pope: I might ask my chief legal officer—oh, I think he's already delegated that to Ms Reid.

Ms Reid: As the commissioner has explained, it really does depend on the circumstances, what the legal advice or advice is being procured for and who has obtained the advice. A political party has to disclose all gifts. For a party, a gift is anything received for no or less-than-adequate consideration. If it's an individual, say a parliamentarian or an MP, they're required to disclose gifts for a federal purpose and 'federal purpose' has a definition in the act which is related to electoral expenditure or communicating electoral matter. It really does depend on who's doing the giving and the receiving and what the specific nature of the advice is as to whether it's related to that parliamentary purpose.

Senator WATERS: That's helpful. Are you aware whether either the coalition as a party or, more specifically, the LNP, or any particular parliamentarian, perhaps in the opposition, and whatever Ted O'Brien's portfolio is—I can't remember the name, but I think he's the guy that keeps banging on about nukes—are you aware whether those disclosures have been made?

Ms Reid: I'm not aware, no.

Senator WATERS: What time—

Ms Reid: In February we published the disclosures for the 2023-24 year.

Senator WATERS: Anything after that, obviously, is not coming until next February. Minister, do you have a view on whether this modelling should instead have been done by the independent Parliamentary Budget Office?

Senator Farrell: Which modelling?

Senator WATERS: Frontier Economics' modelling of the coalition's nuclear policy?

Senator Farrell: Surely, it's an issue for the coalition as to how they seek to model their crazy programs.

Senator WATERS: You don't think that's something that the Parliamentary Budget Office should have oversight of, given that they cost pre-election commitments?

Senator Farrell: I wouldn't have them wasting their time on a policy like that.

Senator WATERS: I will move on to my final lot of questions. There was an article published in the *Klaxon* recently which catalogues in some detail the change in what's disclosed on the transparency register. The article contends that the AEC has pulled tens of thousands of donor returns from its transparency portal and is now

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 367 of 375

providing only what it says are highly redacted versions of the once-public documents from which it has blacked out key information. It goes on to contend that the reason for this was that apparently a five-year-old error saw the postal addresses of a handful of electoral candidates who were silent voters disclosed. In fixing that error, it contends that the AEC pulled all disclosure forms from the register and has now essentially redacted all address information from every donor, even where it's a PO box or a company's registered address. Mr Pope—or perhaps yourself, Mr Reid, I'm not sure who—can you run us through whether that is correct? Why the overcautious approach, which this author contends means that there's far less transparency of who's paying what to whom?

Mr Pope: In May of last year, we had a very unfortunate discovery of a privacy breach, which we took very seriously. How that came about, effectively, was addresses had been provided to us that at the time weren't attached to a silent elector. The elector has since become a silent elector, and that change of silent status has not been able to flow through our transparency register because of the age of that system and also the retrospective nature. There were tens of thousands of pdf documents sitting in the transparency register which went back to the late 1990s. We had this IT challenge and privacy challenge with respect to trying to tidy that up. We had an independent report done by Mr Tony Sheehan. He has made a number of recommendations, and we're well progressed in implementing those recommendations, one of which was to try to address this issue and to protect the privacy of individuals, as well as, particularly, the privacy and security of those that have got silent elector status, by removing addresses from the information that we publish. That was codified in the technical amendments that were passed by parliament and went to Executive Council last week.

Senator WATERS: Is it just silent electors now that don't have their addresses published? I've got no problem with that, but the article seems to imply that every single donor disclosure form, even if you're a company and therefore don't have a home address as such and you're clearly not an elector—this article is saying it's actually a very broad-reaching redaction. Is that correct or not?

Mr Pope: I think the best way to put it is we are publishing all of that information that we receive on the transparency register but for the address.

Senator WATERS: Even if it's a PO box of a company?

Mr Pope: I think the easiest way for us to manage this is actually not to have an address field on the transparency register.

Senator WATERS: Is that because it's technologically easier for you to manage? Why do you say it's the easiest way for you to manage?

Mr Pope: I just think it's for all donors, and I'm happy for you to correct me here.

Ms Reid: The commissioner has explained the decision we took when the issue happened. But, as the commissioner has explained, the recent legislation passed by the parliament means that the AEC is not required to publish any addresses. We are required to publish information from returns, other than an address. That came into effect immediately on royal assent. Most of those reforms don't come into effect for some time, but that came into effect immediately. So AEC is now no longer required, and our understanding is that does have retrospective effect. So no returns, those PDF forms, will be published.

Senator WATERS: Thank you. I'm not sure if the minister's been following the discussion that we've just had. I can certainly see the policy reason behind redacting individual donor addresses and, certainly, silent elector addresses. But when a donor is a corporation or some other kind of body corporate structure, I don't see the harm in publicising the company's registered address or the PO box. It's not identifying where anybody lives, and it's not identifying the individual. Minister, can you perhaps run through the policy reason for redacting absolutely every donor's address, even when they're a corporate or an organisation.

Senator Farrell: I'd have to take that question on notice.

Mr Pope: From our perspective, we just didn't discriminate; it was just no addresses. Much of that information that you're referring to, in terms of corporate addresses, is readily available through a range of other sources. So I'm not sure that it actually leaves a really big gaping hole in terms of transparency, in people understanding who has provided the donation from a corporate perspective.

Senator WATERS: Okay. So you think they could just search and find the address anyway to work out who's who in the zoo.

Mr Pope: For corporations, yes. There are a range of other resources that are readily available for people to ascertain that information.

Senator WATERS: I'll think on that and may come back in future. I think that's all I've got. Thank you. Good luck for the election.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 368 of 375

CHAIR: Senator Hume.

Senator HUME: Mr Pope, we've discussed authorisations an awful lot at previous estimates. I promise we won't go over old ground other than to ask you for an undertaking that all content that the Electoral Commission issues will be properly authorised at this election.

Mr Pope: Yes. We've reflected on the feedback, and we are working very hard to achieve that outcome.

Senator HUME: Terrific. That means, then, that other participants will be safe when looking at the AEC as a model of how to properly authorise their own materials.

Mr Pope: That is absolutely what we're aiming for.

Senator HUME: Excellent. That's exactly what I wanted to hear. It's also my understanding that corporate entities that are in receipt of donations on behalf of a candidate are required to register as an associated entity or a significant third party under the Commonwealth Electoral Act. Is that correct?

Mr Pope: Yes.

Senator HUME: Thank you. Could you explain to the committee why it's important for these entities to register if they're in receipt of donations for a third party?

Mr Pope: It's to enable transparency.

Senator HUME: Where would these entities be registered?

Mr Pope: On the transparency register—once we were satisfied that they are required to be registered as such.

Senator HUME: Is it a requirement of the Electoral Act that that transparency register be kept up to date?

Mr Pope: Yes.

Senator HUME: Is it correct that the penalty for failing to register an entity on the transparency register is a civil penalty of $66,000, or three times any amount these corporate entities have fundraised or electoral expenditure that they have incurred, whichever is higher? Is that your understanding?

Mr Pope: That's my understanding at this stage of the penalty in the act, yes.

Senator HUME: I've written to you regarding four entities that I'm advised have been established specifically for the purpose of benefiting candidates at the upcoming election but have avoided registration as they are required to under the Commonwealth Electoral Act. Those four entities are Erchana Murray-Bartlett Independent Pty Ltd, which was established 16 December 2024 and is operating for the benefit of Erchana Murray-Bartlett, the Independent candidate for McPherson; Monash Independent Pty Ltd that was established on 11 December 2024, operating for the benefit of Deb Leonard, who is the Independent candidate for Monash; Wannon Independent Pty Ltd, established on 16 December 2024, operating for the benefit of Alex Dyson, Independent candidate for Wannon; and Forrest Independent Pty Ltd, established 22 August 2024, operating for Susan Chapman, the Independent candidate for Forrest.

It would be correct that, on the face of it, these entities are established—I'm using the phrase very specifically—wholly or to a significant extent for the benefit of one or more disclosure entities and the benefit relates to one or more electoral activities, which would then define them as an associated entity. Is that correct?

Mr Pope: On the face of it, it would seem that that's a reasonable starting proposition.

Senator HUME: Well it's not as if they've been set up to benefit anyone other than the candidate that has declared—they are in their names, yes?

Mr Pope: Yes, that's right.

Senator HUME: Can I confirm that you have commenced looking into the arrangements for these entities?

Mr Pope: We've started to look into those, and I appreciate you bringing those to our attention. We had already initiated some inquiries with respect to a few of those, but I will be able to come back to you with a bit more once we've completed our inquiries.

Senator HUME: Terrific. Is it right that they have to immediately cease accepting donations or incurring electoral expenditure until they've been added to the transparency register?

Mr Pope: Yes, that's correct.

Senator HUME: That might come as a shock. In relation to incurring electoral expenditure, for the benefit of the hearing I can say that as of 7 February 2025 Meta shows the following expenditure: Erchana Murray-Bartlett from McPherson, $57,184; Deb Leonard from Monash, $24,670; Alex Dyson for Wannon, $43,571; and Susan Chapman from Forrest, $11,955. Is it also correct that the law will require the entities to provide a retrospective annual return for the previous financial year within 30 days of registering?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Mr Pope: If that's a lateral expenditure, yes.

Senator HUME: What else do you think it might be?

Mr Pope: Sometimes we see these entities advertising their own entity, and sometimes we see them promoting that entity or also promoting meetings. So it will depend on the nature of the advertising. That's what we'll need to examine.

Senator HUME: Where do you think it's going to leave people that have donated to these entities, should the entities not register? What happens?

Mr Pope: As in they've donated money believing that it's for a particular candidate?

Senator HUME: But then that organisation hasn't registered.

Mr Pope: Well I imagine they're going to be reasonably disappointed, particularly as we get more deeply involved. Also those that have donated may also have a requirement to submit a donor return.

Senator HUME: So those donors may also potentially suffer penalties?

Mr Pope: Potentially, if they've donated above the threshold.

Senator HUME: What are the penalties for people who donate illegally to illegally established electoral entities that have done it specifically to avoid transparency?

Mr Pope: As you know, we generally take an approach of actually trying to achieve disclosures, so we would be working with those donors to try and get them do their declaration at the right time. Those declarations aren't going to be due for some time, so there's a bit of time for us and for them to try and—

Senator HUME: To get their house in order.

Mr Pope: achieve that disclosure.

Senator HUME: Let that be a warning from the AEC. I have one more line of questioning, Chair. I want to ask some questions in relation to the failure to disclose a donation or a gift to the AEC, which, obviously, would be a serious contravention of the Electoral Act. Am I correct that the penalty for failing to disclose is a civil penalty of up to three times any amount that was not disclosed?

Mr Pope: Yes.

Senator HUME: What's the penalty for receiving a donation from a foreign donor?

Mr Pope: I haven't got that off the top of my head. I might have to ask one of my subject matter experts.

Senator HUME: What are the standard procedures that you would recommend candidates and political parties undertake, at a minimum, to ensure that they're checking on whether they have received money from a foreign donor?

Mr Pope: They are required to have an acknowledgement from the donor that the donor is not a foreign donor. They ought to be checking the addresses of those who are donating to try and make sure that those addresses are not from a foreign country and that they are Australian addresses. Through those checks, the parties and candidates ought to be assuring themselves that donors are coming from Australia.

Senator HUME: I ask because I note that Tina Brown, a candidate for Berowra, and Nicolette Boele, a candidate for Bradfield, have similar websites that look to solicit donations, and I note that there appears to be no obvious mechanism that would prevent a foreign citizen donating on those websites. Donors are asked for their personal details; country is a field that is a drop-down option that does not prevent people from nominating a country other than Australia. I note there appears to be no verification that the information provided is consistent with an individual on the electoral roll. For example, someone could nominate their details to be Vladimir Putin from Moscow and they wouldn't be prevented from donating. It's been put to me by a member of the public that this may actually have occurred. Should we be concerned about auditing of these types of donation schemes that have no checks or balances?

Mr Pope: These are the sorts of matters that we also pick up in our compliance reviews from time to time. I thank you for sharing that information with us, and that's something we'll inquire into, but my recommendation for anyone who is receiving donations would be to have adequate controls in place to make sure that they're not receiving foreign donations.

Senator HUME: Acting Commissioner, as you know, I've written to you in relation to another matter. It was in relation to more entities that appear to have failed to disclose donations and may have inappropriately taken donations from foreign entities through a deliberate scheme. I refer specifically to two organisations, the Sunrise

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth)

Project and GetUp, who both appear to have failed to disclose relevant donations and may have facilitated and received foreign donations. Would this be of concern to the commission?

Mr Pope: Once again, thank you for writing to us and bringing that to our attention, and I concur with your language that they 'may' have, and that's something that we're going to have to inquire into. I can't draw any conclusions on the face of the information that you've provided. The only thing I would say is that occasionally we do get returns or situations where donors are required to provide all of the amount that they've received, and they put it into two buckets: the donation that they've received for electoral expenditure and other receipts, which is not anything to do with electoral expenditure. Occasionally we do get situations where there are large amounts of money declared in other receipts, because they are required to declare it, but it has nothing to do with electoral expenditure. That is an avenue of inquiry that we'd need to examine.

Senator HUME: I note that the founder and executive director of the Sunrise Project, a Mr John Hepburn, has previously outlined efforts that he has undertaken to avoid disclosing overseas sources of funds. In an email sent to a foreign funder and Hillary Clinton's campaign chairperson, Mr Hepburn wrote:

We have a strategy session with our lawyers and board on Thursday to plan out our response. As part of this we are seeking advice on steps we might take to avoid disclosure, challenge and limit disclosure, or to ensure that any disclosure is limited to the committee members and is not made public.

… I do have concerns about the potential PR impact of disclosure of both our funding and grantees …

Now, I find this concerning—and I'm sure you do too—that an individual and an organisation directed by Mr Hepburn are potentially facilitating foreign donations and intentionally designing a scheme to avoid transparency in Australia. Will the AEC commit to looking into this matter?

Mr Pope: We will look into this matter.

Senator HUME: Thank you very much, Mr Pope. I have one very brief question and then I will hand to my colleague. Can the AEC provide an update on the preparations for the electoral integrity taskforce to prevent foreign interference in the electoral system.

Mr Pope: As always, in the lead-up to an election, and for every election since 2018, the Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce is active. It has come together, it's escalating its level of meetings and activity and it's poised and ready to go. All of the agencies that make up that taskforce have, through their statutory responsibilities and powers, access to relevant information and material—and a few of those agencies with respect to foreign interference in particular—and that will be shared amongst the taskforce for us to monitor very closely.

Senator HUME: I know you and I have had this conversation before, and we also had the conversation with your predecessor, Mr Rogers. This is going to be an election conducted in the context of artificial intelligence, and the use of AI by foreign actors is a potential risk that has been identified. What are the measures that you've put in place to keep the system protected from that influence?

Mr Pope: With respect to artificial intelligence, we continue to work closely with the social media companies and the Electoral Integrity Assurance Taskforce, and our Defending Democracy Unit is also engaging very closely with social media companies. We're in the process of undergoing a number of exercises with those social media companies. I've also written to those social media companies to seek their commitment to uphold the Munich accord that they all signed in 2024—last year—with respect to artificial intelligence and making sure that they are addressing those issues on their platforms.

Senator HUME: Terrific. Thank you, Mr Pope—exciting times ahead. I know Senator McGrath has some questions.

Senator McGRATH: Can you explain what happens if an election is called before the Northern Territory redistribution is finalised?

Mr Pope: The redistribution for the Northern Territory will be gazetted on Tuesday 4 March. If the election is called prior to that then the election will be conducted on its current boundaries. If the election is called after 4 March then it will be conducted on the new boundaries that have been redistributed.

Senator McGRATH: So if the Prime Minister goes to the Governor-General a week today it's on the current boundaries, but if he goes a week tomorrow it's on the new boundaries.

Mr Pope: Yes.

Senator McGRATH: Okay. In relation to the federal direct enrolment updates, FDUs, can I get a copy of the breakdown of self-enrolments and FDUs by electorate from the 2022 federal election to the most recent date that you have the information for?

Mr Pope: Yes. Just so I'm clear, did you say from the 2022 federal election?

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 371 of 375

Senator McGRATH: Yes. I did write to you on 5 December. I don't think I've received a response yet. You may have sent it. You might want to just check the records there. Obviously this one is on notice: how many people have been added to the electoral roll, to the FDU, who did not have a home address? If you could answer that too. As I said, I did write to you, so you may be able to respond to my letter, rather than responding on notice, because it may not go through the minister's office. Do you have to put your questions on notice to the minister's office?

Mr Pope: Questions on notice, yes.

Senator McGRATH: If I get a response to the letter or an update to the letter, that would get around any delays there. What is the practical escalation process for non-violent voter intimidation?

Mr Pope: I'll say at the outset that 99 per cent of all Australians do the right thing and behave incredibly well and appropriately and celebrate Australia's wonderful democracy, but we do get the occasional person that does not. We will be briefing our staff with respect to how to manage security incidents, and we have an escalation process and an incident management framework within the AEC. Our staff will be instructed to call the local police in most instances, particularly for matters that occur outside of six metres from a polling place.

I wrote last week to the commissioners of all police forces, raising with them the security environment in which the election may well be delivered and also outlining to them a number of electoral offences. One of those is section 327 of the Electoral Act, which is interfering with political liberty, whereby:

A person shall not hinder or interfere with the free exercise or performance, by any other person, of any political right or duty that is relevant to an election under this Act.

That's a Commonwealth offence, so we'd be looking to work with the Australian Federal Police with respect to that. It's going to largely depend on the circumstances. We would hope that, in most instances, any incident, as rare as that is, can be defused and managed locally, but I'm not going to ask my staff to put themselves in harm's way and be heroes. I'm going to ask them to call the police in the first instance.

Senator McGRATH: Good. Thank you. What is the greatest risk to the smooth running of the upcoming federal election?

Mr Pope: I think there are a few. Firstly, we can't control the weather. Floods, cyclones, the late onset of the wet season, extraordinary heatwaves and those sorts of things could still be occurring in the next month or two months, whenever the election is likely to occur. We're going to have to try and negotiate our way through whatever's served up from a weather perspective. Then, of course, there is the security backdrop against which the election is being delivered. I think the director-general of ASIO publicly outlined that last week, and I don't have anything else to add. I think he very clearly outlined some of the security challenges that we're all facing.

Senator McGRATH: The weather and security challenges would be the greatest risks?

Mr Pope: They're two of the greatest risks that are very difficult for us to influence or control. Most other things we're able to try to, in some degree, influence and control.

Senator McGRATH: So you believe the AEC is ready for the upcoming federal election?

Mr Pope: We've been ready for quite a while. We were ready late last year, just in case there was an early election. We've been maintaining that heightened state of readiness, and we are absolutely ready.

Senator HUME: So are we!

Senator McGRATH: Thank you for that answer. Going back to when there's non-violent voter intimidation—what would I tell my booth captains? What should we tell booth captains and people who are participating in the democratic process outside polling stations if a person is intimidating voters and is not harming anyone? So it's outside of the purview of the AFP and it's not within the six-metre radius of the polling station. For example, if they're circling the booth in a car making heinous statements, what would your advice be?

Mr Pope: It would probably be the same as my advice to my staff: try and call the police to come and defuse the situation as best as possible.

Senator McGRATH: I've got one question for you, Minister, before the AEC goes. I see that Zali Steggall has an additional staffer compared to the staffing table that you tabled so kindly.

CHAIR: Technically, we're not in that timeslot right now, Senator McGrath.

Senator McGRATH: I know, but the minister is a very generous minister. In October, Ms Steggall had one adviser, and now she has two advisers. You decided to double the member for Warringah's staffing?

Senator Farrell: I don't personally make those decisions. Those decisions are made by the Prime Minister, and, for particular reasons, individual members of parliament do get extra allocations. On that occasion, the Prime

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 372 of 375

Minister decided. As you know, I've got a close relationship with Ms Steggall after recent discussions about electoral reform, and I understand that a decision was made to increase her staff by the Prime Minister.

Senator McGRATH: What other—

Senator Farrell: I'm happy to inquire as to what the reason for that was.

Senator McGRATH: Why don't you take it on notice?

Senator Farrell: I'll take it on notice. If that is the last question, I might ask Mr Pope to tell us how many Australians are on the roll for this election.

Mr Pope: As at the end of January, 17,965,000 electors are on the electoral roll, which is an enrolment rate of 97.9 per cent. I think that is our greatest and largest enrolment rate ever in Australia's history. We would love to see that hit 18 million by close of rolls. It's going to be a bit of a challenge, but we very much hope that that's the case.

Senator HUME: Repeat the number again for me, Mr Pope?

Mr Pope: There are 17,965,000 electors.

Senator HUME: How many more super citizenship ceremonies will it take?

Mr Pope: I don't know, Senator. We're working our way through the ones that we've been asked to assist with.

Senator Farrell: We'll do our best to get it up to 18 million.

CHAIR: Thank you. I've just got one last question. I don't know yet if this will be my last estimates. It depends on whether we have another estimates before the middle of the year, but I want to thank the AEC. My last question is about major risks to the election. I'm still somewhat scarred by my experience in 2013-14 when the Electoral Commission lost 1,500 votes. So I'm asking you on the record: when you're looking at potential risks to the election, what preparations have you made to ensure that such events don't occur?

Mr Pope: That's entirely reasonable given what you went through in 2013. We've completely and fundamentally overhauled the way in which we secure, manage, track and trace our ballot papers since 2013. We did that very quickly coming out of the 2013 election for the 2014 re-run, and we've further matured that every election since. We have comprehensive ballot paper tracking and monitoring from the time the blank ballot paper hits the printer all the way through to the time it goes into long-term storage; we track and monitor every ballot paper through a whole range of different controls and measures.

CHAIR: So you'll know if any are missing?

Mr Pope: We will know.

CHAIR: Well, the AEC did know last time that they were missing; they just could not find them.

Mr Pope: That's right.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for that overview and for your evidence this evening, and best wishes with the upcoming election.

Mr Pope: Thank you.

CHAIR: Did we dismiss IPEA? We've still got PWSS and IPEA. How about I call them to the table together—if that's okay.

Independent Parliamentary Expenses Authority
Parliamentary Workplace Support Service

[22:55]

CHAIR: Good evening. I welcome Ms Leonie McGregor, CEO, and other officers of the Parliamentary Workplace Support Service, as well as Ms Christina Grant, CEO of IPEA. Welcome to your very first estimates. As you can tell by the time, we won't have much time for questioning, but it's really important that you have a chance to introduce yourself to the committee. Under normal circumstances, it being your first estimates, you might have provided an opening statement in person, to warm yourself up, but we will be adjourning at 11 o'clock or not long after. Do any of you have an opening statement you want to give or table?

Ms McGregor: Not from us.

Ms Grant: No.

CHAIR: Great. Thank you. Senator Hume.

Senator HUME: I'm going to start with the PWSS. Welcome, Ms Grant, by the way. But I'll start with PWSS. I just want to confirm that PWSS is a confidential service, Ms McGregor.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 373 of 375

Ms McGregor: Yes, Senator, it is a confidential service.

Senator HUME: What training do your staff undertake to ensure that they appreciate the confidentiality in conducting their role?

Ms McGregor: I might pass that question on to Kate. I think we do quite a bit.

Ms Wandmaker: Staff are regularly reminded of their obligations in relation to confidentiality. They also sign a conflict-of-interest document which talks about that, and they provide an undertaking, before they're engaged, in relation to complying with confidentiality. They are, as I said, regularly reminded, and we do constantly talk about the very significant importance of confidentiality in the service.

Senator HUME: Do you engage with other Commonwealth agencies or organisations on how to manage risks to confidentiality when it comes to handling documents or exchanging documents with external parties, or providing information to participants?

Ms Wandmaker: We do, and we certainly do with the Department of Parliamentary Services, which provides our ICT. So we talk about that with them in relation to the exchange of material.

Senator HUME: What you do if there is an inadvertent breach of confidentiality?

Ms Wandmaker: Yes, unfortunately, we are all human, and there is the possibility of human error, despite how seriously we take confidentiality. We have a data breach plan which we activate immediately once we become aware something has happened.

Senator HUME: How quickly do you inform a participant of a breach and how would you go about that?

Ms Wandmaker: As quickly as possible. We sometimes would take advice on it—potentially from an external law firm in relation to the matter—and the best way to approach it. But we would personally ring them first if we have their number and contact details.

Senator HUME: So it's a call; it's not an email?

Ms Wandmaker: No, it's a call from one of our counselling and support officers, particularly if we have that contact detail. If we're able to obtain that contact detail, we would do that.

Senator HUME: How do you go about remediating any breach so that you can be sure that third parties didn't inappropriately use information that they might have been given?

Ms Wandmaker: Our data breach response plan has four phases, as they usually do—and I should say that this has been drafted by an external firm—and we contain the breach as much as possible. So we contact the person where we understand that there has been a breach and ask them to delete the material and confirm that they have deleted it. That happens as quickly as possible. Then we assess the situation and whether people need to be notified of the breach and whether it's a possible notifiable data breach which needs to be assessed as well. And then we notify affected people, and we will continue to engage with those people, explain what is happening and what we've done in relation to the breach. And, then, obviously the final step is reviewing our processes to, as much as possible, reduce the chance of it occurring again.

Senator HUME: Is there any form of redress that's available to individuals where their privacy or their confidentiality has been breached by the PWSS?

Ms McGregor: We would follow the protocols in relation to the breach. Unfortunately, there would be some circumstances, I'm sure, where, once the breach has occurred, it has occurred. There's no taking it back. I think it would depend on the circumstances around recourse, probably, on the particular context.

Senator HUME: How can you assure the committee that breaches of confidentiality and privacy will be minimised in the future?

Ms McGregor: We do everything we can to minimise breaches of confidentiality. I think, as Ms Wandmaker has said, we can never eliminate that risk. We can do many, many things to mitigate the risk, which is what we do. Whilst we have that privacy breach plan in place, we also regularly assess our risks. We have a risk assessment framework, and every fortnight we look at that framework to see what our particular risks are. That is one of our highest risks—the risk of confidentiality being breached—so it is constantly in our minds, and we just have to continue to work on making sure that, as much as possible, we have reduced that risk. We can never eliminate it. Unfortunately, there are situations where people may inadvertently and without any intention of doing so make a mistake.

Senator HUME: Right.

Ms McGregor: I can't promise that will never happen.

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 374 of 375

Senator HUME: I want to quickly ask about the IPSC. My understanding is that it's now fully established within the PWSS.

Ms McGregor: Yes.

Senator HUME: I want to know that, in establishing the IPSC, the commission has been provided with appropriate staff and administrative support.

Ms McGregor: Yes, we are continuing to assess that as well. As you know, when it was first established, it was a little bit of a guess around how much work or how little work it may have. So, as it becomes more firmly established and progresses with work, we're continually assessing how it is that commission is supported. It has become clear, I think, that the complexity of the framework that we are dealing with, both the IPSC and the PWSS, perhaps was not appreciated at the time the organisations were established. So I think that we and the IPSC will be looking to adjust our resourcing in the future, in some ways. Many of the matters that we're dealing with are very complex and so need the appropriate response and appropriate staff to do that well.

Senator HUME: Thank you, Ms McGregor. I will have more questions on this for you at the next estimates.

I have one question for IPEA. I don't want to make you feel left out, Ms Grant! That would be very unfair. Obviously, IPEA sees considerable travel and expenditure claims during elections. I want to know whether work has commenced on providing guidance to parliamentarians and staff on their travel and expenditure during an election period, and, if it has been started, when it will be finalised.

Ms Grant: Work has definitely commenced to prepare us for the election travel and to make sure we are well-placed to provide advice to parliamentarians and their staff. I would point out that there are no special travel provisions for the election. The normal travel provisions apply, just like they do on any other parliamentary arrangements. The principles continue to apply to parliamentarians, and the requirements of the MOPS Act continue to apply to staff. But the advice we have prepared for the election takes into account the unique circumstances that are around and makes sure that staff and parliamentarians are well-placed to make good decisions around the travel. We are always here to provide advice. Call us. Email us. We're happy to provide advice if there is any confusion or if anybody is unsure about their travel arrangements.

Senator HUME: In your opinion, do you think the advice is going to be consistent with the advice provided in previous elections, particularly during the last election?

Ms Grant: Largely, it's the same. We did a lessons learnt at the end of the last election process, and there were some minimal insights, and obviously there were some changes to the determinations, and those have all been taken into account. But we'll be emailing all parliamentarians with some guidelines, some guidance material, and making sure they are aware of the advice function of IPEA should they require it.

Senator HUME: Thank you, Ms Grant. What a good first hit out. I sure all the journalists will write it up!

CHAIR: Thank you, senators, and thank you everyone for your involvement.

Senator Farrell: Senator, you jumped the gun a little bit earlier in referring to this perhaps being your last chairing of the committee, but I want to thank you for the professional way in which you have conducted these meetings. If it is, in fact, your last—

CHAIR: I've got a whole week to go, but I'll miss you terribly, Senator Farrell.

Senator Farrell: I'm talking SMOS, in particular. I wish you all the very best for your future career.

CHAIR: Thank you, Minister. That's deeply appreciated. I thank everyone who has given evidence today and over many preceding years.

Committee adjourned at 23:05

This document has been released by the Net Zero Economy Authority under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Cth) Page 375 of 375