

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Climate Action
Minister for Energy and Resources
Minister for the State Electricity Commission



Tuesday, 20 February 2024

INDEPENDENT REVIEW TO EXAMINE FEBRUARY 2024 STORMS

The Allan Labor Government will commission a supplementary independent review into the distribution system response to the February 2024 storms, led by a panel of independent experts, not politicians.

The independent review will focus on the operational arrangements and preparedness of energy distribution companies to respond to these extreme weather events.

This will include the distribution businesses management of the incident as well as the timely and effective restoration of supply. It will also compare the operating models of energy network companies.

It will also investigate if there were any material opportunities that could have enabled a more rapid reconnection of customers, such as the availability of field crews and technical expertise through the use of mutual aid agreements and resource sharing within Victoria, or from interstate resources.

The panel will investigate communications with customers, the effectiveness of information platforms and services, such as outage trackers, and preparedness to administer relief to impacted communities.

The Victorian Government will also be seeking assistance from the Australian Energy Regulator for information regarding the energy resilience requirements of energy infrastructure companies.

The final scope of the independent review will be given detailed consideration and it will build on the work of the Electricity Distribution Network Resilience Review that followed two storm events in 2021 and focused on the resilience of physical grid infrastructure.

On February 13, 2024, Victoria experienced a catastrophic storm event that damaged 12,000 km of powerlines and poles across the state's electricity distribution businesses, causing power outages that impacted more than 500,000 homes and businesses.

As the climate changes catastrophic events and destructive weather patterns will become more frequent and more extreme and it is critical electricity distribution networks are able to mitigate, manage and recover quickly from these events.

This review will be undertaken in addition to investigations from Energy Safe Victoria into the tower collapse and the Australia Energy Market Operator into system response and security.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Energy and Resources Lily D'Ambrosio

"For many Victorians this emergency situation is still live, we are working closely with distribution companies to connect the remaining Victorians to power as our first priority, after reconnecting 90 percent of customers in the first 48 hours."

"We want to get to the bottom of exactly what has occurred, and an independent review will ensure that private distribution companies learn valuable lessons from what happened as climate change leads to more extreme and destructive weather events."

"This review will be conducted by experts – not politicians – and complement the work done following the 2021 storms to make sure our energy network can handle extreme weather events."

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