

Media Release

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



Tuesday, 27 February 2024

PUTTING CONSUMERS FIRST THROUGH NETWORK OUTAGE REVIEW

The Allan Labor Government has appointed an expert panel to lead the Network Outage Review – following a catastrophic storm event on 13 February 2024 that left over 530,000 electricity customers without power.

The expert panel will make recommendations on the operational response of transmission and distribution businesses, including contingency planning, timely and effective management of the incident, and restoration of supply, including distribution of temporary generators, following the storm event.

The expert panel will be chaired by Rosemary Sinclair, the former CEO of Energy Consumers Australia with more than 20 years experience in the corporate, government sectors including CPA Australia, the Communications Alliance and International Telecommunications User Group.

The expert panel will include Gerard Brody, the former chief executive of the Consumer Action Law Centre bringing more than a decade of experience in consumer advocacy and community law to the panel.

Kevin Kehl, former electrical engineer and executive leader at Powerlink Queensland and Energex will also sit on the panel, with more than 40 years experience in the distribution and transmission network sector.

The review will investigate the distribution and transmission companies process for enacting state emergency management restoration priorities in accordance with the Emergency Management Act. It will also consider the efficacy of control room operations and escalation models to manage and direct the response to the event.

It was also look into the availability and number of field crews and technical expertise and equipment, if there were opportunities to enable more rapid restoration of supply to customers and the extent of contingency planning for mutual aid, including surge capacity in an emergency response.

The review will also assess the businesses tools and systems to communicate proactively with customers and external authorities, including SMS, call centres, in person support for heavily impacted areas and effective information platforms and services, such as outage trackers.

It will look at their preparedness to administer the Prolonged Power Outage Payment program and other forms of Relief and Customer Support and the extent customers affected by the 13 February storms were adequately prioritised in subsequent outages.

Community and stakeholders will have opportunities to participate through Public Panel meetings or written submissions to the review. The Review will seek input from the Australian Energy Market Operator, Australian Energy Regulator, Energy Safe Victoria, the Essential Services Commission, and other regulators.

The expert panel will deliver an interim report to the Minister in June and final report in August 2024. For more information visit, energy.vic.gov.au/safety/power-outages.

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

“Extreme weather events like the 13 February storms are becoming more intense and frequent and its critical our electricity distribution and transmission businesses are equipped to reconnect Victorians as quickly as possible.”

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“Our expert panel has detailed operational knowledge of electricity distribution and transmission businesses and decades of experience in customer advocacy ensuring needs and expectations of Victorian are at the forefront.”