

Media Release

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



Wednesday, 22 May 2024

ENHANCING ENERGY SAFE VICTORIA'S POWERS TO PROTECT

The Allan Labor Government has strengthened Energy Safe Victoria's powers so they can continue to protect Victorian customers and crack down on dodgy gas and electricity companies.

Minister for Energy and Resources Lily D'Ambrosio today announced new obligations on energy companies, increased penalties, and enhanced powers for Energy Safe Victoria are now in effect following changes to energy safety legislation last year.

These changes will protect all Victorians by ensuring the energy regulator has the right tools for preventing accidents, investigating incidents and ensuring safety compliance in the Victorian energy sector.

The amendments apply to the *Electricity Safety Act 1998*, *Gas Safety Act 1997* and *Pipelines Act 2005* and came into effect on 16 May 2024.

Major energy companies who breach general duties now face significantly larger penalties of up to \$1.66 million, while those found guilty of non-compliance with accepted Electricity Safety Management Schemes, Bushfire Mitigation Plans, and Gas Safety Cases can face fines of up to \$1.11 million.

An owner or operator of electrical installations, such as renewable energy generators including solar and wind farms and big batteries, will now also have duties and obligations in line with other major electricity companies.

Energy Safe Victoria and the Minister for Energy and Resources will also now have additional powers to force energy companies to rectify any breaking of energy safety laws without taking them to court by using enforceable undertakings.

Electricity suppliers and gas companies must preserve the sites of certain incidents until directed by Energy Safe Victoria and Energy Safe Victoria can now hold items seized under investigation for 60 days.

The changes also increase the period within which Energy Safe Victoria can commence prosecution, from three years from when an alleged offence occurred, to three years from when Energy Safe Victoria becomes aware of the alleged offence – ensuring no company can avoid being held to account due to a technicality.

This work follows on from the independent review of Victoria's electricity and gas network safety framework, which focused on strengthening the capabilities and regulatory approach of Victoria's energy safety regulator.

To see the Grimes Review's final implementation update visit, energy.vic.gov.au.

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

"We are leading the renewable energy transition here in Victoria when it comes to generation, transmission, and emissions reduction – and we're ensuring we get there safely for communities and workers."

"Energy Safe Victoria does an excellent job regulating the industry - so we've strengthened its powers so it has the right tools for the job to continue its great work."