



BUDGET ESTIMATES 2025–26

Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Heritage Portfolios

Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning and Environment

Answers to Supplementary Questions

Hearing: 4 December 2025

Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, Heritage Portfolios

Questions from Ms Sue Higginson MLC

EPA

Methane Emissions from Coal Mines

1	<p>What is the progress of the proposal to regulate methane emissions from coal mines?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>In August 2025, the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) released proposals to regulate methane emissions from coal mines for public consultation. The EPA is currently reviewing the submissions it has received.</p>
2	<p>What is the EPA doing to better deal with fugitive and unaccounted emissions?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>In mid-June 2023, the University of New South Wales conducted car-based greenhouse gas surveys to measure the concentrations of methane, carbon dioxide, and carbon monoxide along public roads in the vicinity of Eastern Creek. The summary, 'Greenhouse gas survey Western Sydney 2023', provides an overview of the methods and results. The report, 'Measurements of the Atmospheric Concentration of Methane, Carbon Dioxide, and Carbon Monoxide: Eastern Creek, Horsley Park, Minchinbury, and Arndell Park', provides detailed information about the survey.</p> <p>In 2024, the EPA commissioned the CSIRO to conduct a review of methane measurement technologies for fugitive methane emissions. The key findings of CSIRO's review are published on the EPA's 'Measurement of fugitive methane emissions' webpage.</p> <p>The NSW Government will establish a greenhouse gas monitoring network in the Upper Hunter region of NSW. The program will measure atmospheric concentrations of methane and other greenhouse gases, design and implement a data management and modelling framework for regional inventory verification, and plan for the ongoing operation and future expansion of the network across NSW.</p>
3	<p>How important is such action in meeting the State's climate targets?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>As methane warms the Earth much faster than carbon dioxide, reducing methane emissions is important for slowing the rate of atmospheric warming.</p> <p>Fugitive methane is difficult to measure due to the diffuse and unpredictable nature of its sources. Improving capacity to monitor methane emissions will</p>

	help support actions to mitigate or abate fugitive methane.
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Coal Fired Power Stations

4	<p>Given the importance of regulatory certainty for coal fired power stations in taking steps to meet Group 6 limits by 2030, when will EPA review the regulations?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Protection of the Environment Operations (Clean Air) Regulation 2022 is due to be remade on 1 September 2028. The EPA will review the regulation and conduct consultation with stakeholders prior to this date.</p>
5	<p>Will the EPA commit to the review of the regulations well ahead of 2028?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 4.</p>

Training & Staffing

6	<p>Has the EPA proactively inspected any ‘harvest sites operating under Western Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (IFOA): If not, why not? If so, where when with what results?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes. Since 1 January 2024 the EPA has proactively inspected harvest sites as detailed below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buckingham State Forest, compartments 224 and 225, were inspected on 20 August 2024, and no enforcement action was taken • Buckingham State Forest, compartment 228, was inspected on 20 August 2024, and no enforcement action was taken • Buckingham State Forest, compartment 247, was inspected on 20 August 2025, and no enforcement action was taken • Campbells Island State Forest, compartments 11 and 12, were inspected on 21 August 2024, and no enforcement action was taken • Clear Ridge State Forest, compartment 302, was inspected on 9 April 2024, and no enforcement action was taken • Cumbine State Forest, compartment 223, was inspected on 10 December 2024, and no enforcement action was taken • Doona State Forest, compartments 71, 74, 75, 76, were inspected on 9 April 2025, and no enforcement action was taken • Goran State Forest, compartments 101 and 102, were inspected on 8 April 2025, and no enforcement action was taken
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake Marimley South Western Land Lease was inspected on 9 September 2025, and no enforcement action was taken • Little Bull Western Land Lease was inspected on 9 September 2025, and no enforcement action was taken • Severn State Forest, compartments 590, 592, 593, were inspected on 07 April 2025, and no enforcement action was taken • Tammit Western Land Lease 521 was inspected on 19 March 2024, and no enforcement action was taken • Tammit Western Land Lease 436 was inspected on 20 March 2024 and 21 March 2024, and no enforcement action was taken • Tammit Western Land Lease 417 was inspected on 19 September 2024 and 19 March 2025, and no enforcement action was taken • Weddin State Forest, compartments 253 and 254, were inspected on 18 August 2025, and no enforcement action was taken. • Yarindury State Forest 93, 94, 95 was inspected on 12 December 2024, and no enforcement action was taken.
7 (a-f)	<p>Has the EPA formally assessed and documented its risk rating for forestry operations in Western IFOA regions? If not, why not? If so: Who conducted the formal assessment? When? How was it conducted? What were the results of the risk assessment? Who documented this assessment and when? How was it documented?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>In 2024, the EPA developed a formal risk assessment process to assess and assign a risk rating to forestry operations in the Western IFOA regions. The risk assessment outcomes are documented, and a case for each operation is created in the EPA’s investigation management system.</p>
8	<p>How has the decision to restructure the forestry branch of EPA, and rely on its general compliance staff affected the capacity of the EPA to inspect native forestry operations and respond to complaints of non-compliance from members of the public?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA does not have a forestry branch, nor does it have ‘general compliance’ officers. It has subject matter experienced Operations Officers who undertake forestry inspections and audits.</p>

9	<p>To date, how many members of EPA’s general compliance staff have completed ‘Introduction to Native Forestry Regulation’?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Twenty nine regionally based staff have completed it. Metropolitan staff (Parramatta, Wollongong and Newcastle) do not generally undertake forestry work.</p>
(a)	<p>What percentage is that of EPA’s general compliance staff?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>29% of regionally located Operations Officers.</p>
10	<p>To date, how many members of EPA’s general compliance staff have completed the ‘Forestry Skills and Capability Program’?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Twenty one Operations Officers have undertaken the course. Metropolitan and established forestry subject material experts were not required to undertake it.</p>
(a)	<p>What percentage is that of EPA’s general compliance staff?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>21% of regionally located Operations Officers.</p>
11	<p>Is the completion of any additional training required to enable EPA’s general compliance staff to lead, conduct or participate in criminal investigations into identified environmental offences? If so:</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>All EPA Authorised Officers can undertake investigatory roles. Some staff may be more suited to this work than others, and particularly complex investigations may be referred to the Compliance and Investigations Branch, which has a Specialised Investigations section.</p>
(a)	<p>What additional training is required?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Most Operations Officers are required to complete the EPA Authorised Officer Training Program as part of their development. An Operations Officer must be authorised to use statutory powers under the Acts that the EPA administers.</p>
(b)	<p>Who provides that training?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Authorised Officer training is provided by the EPA’s Learning and Capability, Priority Compliance and Investigations, and Regulatory Practice and</p>

	Coordination teams.
12	<p>To date, how many members of EPA’s general compliance staff have completed any additional training required to lead, conduct or participate in criminal investigations into offences committed before, during or after native forestry operations?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The ability to lead, conduct or participate in criminal investigations is not specific to native forestry regulation.</p>
(a)	<p>What percentage is that of EPA’s general compliance staff?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>As at 12 December 2025, the EPA has 374 Authorised Officers across all of its divisions. Authorised Officers have completed the Authorised Officer Training Program.</p>
13 (a-e)	<p>Has EPA’s general compliance section acquired the equipment necessary for EPA staff to undertake inspections of native forestry operations? Including:</p> <p>Internet enabled tablet with the correct program installed?</p> <p>Specialised tree diameter measuring tapes?</p> <p>Range finders?</p> <p>Dendrometers?</p> <p>Snake bite kits?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes.</p>
14	<p>Have EPA’s general compliance operations staff been trained in the use of the internet enabled tablet and programs necessary for undertaking inspections of native forestry operations? If so:</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes.</p>
(a)	<p>How were they trained?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This training is part of the ‘Forestry Skills and Capability Program’.</p>
(b)	<p>Who trained them?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Internal subject matter experts.</p>

(c)	<p>What percentage of the EPA’s general compliance staff have been trained?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The use of a tablet is not exclusive to forestry work; 100% of staff trained to do forestry work can use a tablet.</p>
15	<p>Have EPA’s general compliance staff been trained in the use of range finders, dendrometers and snake bite kits, being equipment required when inspecting native forestry operations? If so:</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes.</p>
(a)	<p>How were EPA staff trained?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This training is part of the ‘Forestry Skills and Capability Program’.</p>
(b)	<p>Who trained them?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Internal subject matter experts.</p>
(c)	<p>What number of EPA staff completed this training?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Twenty one Operations Officers have received training in the forestry-specific field tools. Snake bite treatment is covered in first aid training. At 16 December 2025, 166 officers are first aid qualified.</p>
16	<p>What further measures is EPA planning to take in 2026 to increase the number of staff available to conduct inspections?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA will assess its operational requirements and maintain sufficient staff trained in forestry to meet ongoing needs.</p>
17	<p>Have key targets for increasing the number of EPA staff available been adopted?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA does not have ‘targets’ but will maintain sufficient staff trained in forestry to meet ongoing needs.</p>
18	<p>What steps have you taken to fully implement the signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between EPA & FCNSW?</p>

	<p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA implements the existing MoU with FCNSW.</p>
19 (a-b)	<p>Are there any issues or approaches that are required to fully implement the MoU which remain outstanding and require resolution before they can be included? If so:</p> <p>What are these matters?</p> <p>How does EPA propose to progress these outstanding matters in 2026?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>

Brigalow–Nandewar and South-Western Cypress IFOAs

20 (a-d)	<p>Why was an extension granted to both the Brigalow-Nandewar and South-Western Cypress IFOA's without a proper assessment of how continued logging will affect threatened species in forests already known to be ecologically vulnerable?</p> <p>What surveys, reports or assessments were relied upon for this decision?</p> <p>What reviews were undertaken to assess the effectiveness of fauna and flora surveys?</p> <p>Were all monitoring programs for threatened species completed and were the results applied to develop prescriptions for all those species?</p> <p>Was the required study of the sustainable yield for logs and other timber products undertaken to DECCW's [sic] satisfaction for Brigalow–Nandewar?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The decision to amend the Brigalow-Nandewar and South-Western Cypress Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals (IFOA) to extend until 31 December 2028 continues existing IFOA requirements and maintains the existing timber supply for the industry.</p> <p>A review of the Western IFOAs will be undertaken during the extension period, and this will include an assessment of the effectiveness of the existing threatened species protections. The EPA has a lead role in this process and supports a review that draws on current ecological evidence and addresses the suitability of existing prescriptions for threatened species.</p>
21	<p>What are you doing to address the serious ongoing pollution to Sydney's Drinking Water Catchment near Wallerawang, noting that the key EPA pollution licence that permits pollution discharges into Wangcol Creek, LDP1, has no salinity limit?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Coal mining has been occurring in the area around the Mount Piper power</p>

	<p>station for over 100 years, which has resulted in highly complex surface and groundwater interrelationships between Centennial Coal’s operations and the power station.</p> <p>Regulation by the EPA has resulted in detailed assessments and actions to address legacy environmental impacts from potential surface and groundwater pollution sources in the upper Wangcol Creek catchment, including the Mount Piper Ash Repository (MPAR) and Centennial Coal’s coal processing site, Western Coal Services.</p> <p>In June 2025, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure approved a development consent modification for the final capping of the MPAR, which will significantly reduce surface and groundwater impacts. The modification also requires the development of short-, medium-, and long-term solutions to control the migration of solutes from the entire MPAR into the receiving environment, including consideration of post-closure measures. Capping works on the MPAR have commenced and are projected to be completed by December 2026.</p> <p>The EPA has also imposed strict conditions on the environment protection licence for Western Coal Services, including the requirement to undertake assessments and works which will result in reduced water volumes and improved water discharge quality from the premises.</p>
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EPA Cuts

22	<p>Is your interpretation of the requirement for a 15% reduction in senior executives that a 15% reduction in the number of individual roles is required, that a 15% reduction in FTE is required, or both?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA will reduce to 27 Senior Executive Band (SEB) roles by 1 July 2026.</p>
23	<p>Can you please explain how the Government’s Core Work Policy has informed the restructure and the proposed cuts to frontline Operations staff, specifically its commitment to “rebuild internal capability”, “safeguarding institutional knowledge” and to “end the culture of outsourcing”?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Core Work policy was taken into account as part of developing the new operating model.</p>
24	<p>Can you please list each of the 6 senior executive positions that will be delimited and their FTE?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA has reduced the number of Senior Executive roles from 33 in July 2024 to 27 under the new operating model. This cohort now comprises 3%</p>

	<p>of the total workforce.</p> <p>Some of the roles have merged or have changed titles and responsibilities as part of the organisational changes.</p> <p>The delimited roles include Executive Director Strategy & Policy, Executive Director Programs and Innovation, Director Policy and Strategy, Director Major Programs, Director Digital, Data & Intelligence, Director Priority Compliance and Investigations, Director Major Projects, Director Risk & Governance and 6 Director Operations roles.</p>
25	<p>According to Union analysis, there are 7 vacant director positions in the Environmental Protection Authority, do you plan to fill those positions once the restructure has concluded?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Vacant roles will be filled in accordance with the EPA Change Management Plan.</p>
26	<p>Were any consultants engaged to inform the EPA restructure?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes.</p>
(a)	<p>If yes, please provide the names of the consultants and the total costs of their services.</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This information is available on the EPA website.</p>
27	<p>Can you please explain how previous consultants' reports (e.g. Ways of Working Operations, 2023 'Big Opportunity' restructure, 2020 restructure) informed this restructure?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The new operating model is designed to deliver current and future EPA and NSW Government priorities, whilst ensuring the organisation is financially sustainable. Aspects of previous organisational changes were included in the new operating model.</p>
28	<p>The Ways of Working Report recommended 8 additional unit heads, a reduction in span of control for Unit Heads (from avg 7 to 5), and an increase in span of control for Managers (from avg 2 to 3). Can you please explain how these recommendations have been addressed?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Ways of Working report recommended consistent spans of control between Directors, Managers and Unit Heads in the Operations Division. This</p>

	has been addressed in the new model.
29	<p>Can you please explain why there was a dramatic increase in expenditure on staff during the 2023-24 financial year?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Staff expenditure was impacted by multiple factors including resourcing to address bushfire and flood incident response along with Consumer Price Index (CPI) increases, salary increments, workers compensation, and superannuation and payroll tax increases.</p>
30	<p>Has the increased spend on staff during the 2023-24 financial year informed the need for cuts now?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
31 (a-e)	<p>Could you please explain how this restructure will impact specific investigations and areas of concern, including:</p> <p>Cleanaway fires?</p> <p>Snowy Hydro Kurri Kurri investigation?</p> <p>Prosecution of Forestry Corporation for charges in Tallaganda State Forest?</p> <p>Poo balls?</p> <p>Asbestos in mulch?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA has updated its operating model to meet new environment protection responsibilities and deliver strong regulatory and environmental outcomes for NSW communities.</p> <p>As the State's independent environmental regulator, the EPA has introduced specialised regulatory teams to its frontline workforce, enabling its field officers to focus on the essential functions of environmental protection.</p> <p>The important work of EPA employees in areas including waste, contaminated land, water, air and odour, noise, forestry, radiation, dangerous goods, pesticides, plastics, industrial chemicals, climate change and the circular economy continue to remain key priorities.</p>

DEPARTMENT OF CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

32	<p>Is the Department committed to ensuring rental properties are required to replace heating and hot water systems at their end of life with energy efficient electric systems, in accordance with the Consumer Energy Strategy?</p>
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	<p>Answer</p> <p>The Department is delivering Action 11 of the Consumer Energy Strategy to ‘Investigate introducing minimum energy efficiency performance standards for rental housing’ and is currently undertaking a stakeholder engagement plan and technical analysis. The NSW Government is also supporting the development of a national framework for minimum energy efficiency standards in rented homes, in collaboration with the Australian Government and other states and territories.</p> <p>Additionally, the NSW Government is also delivering other programs to support renters. Co-funded with the Australian Government, the NSW Social Housing Energy Performance Initiative is investing \$320.3 million to deliver energy efficiency upgrades to approximately 24,000 public and community housing properties by June 2027 and an additional 13,500 social housing properties by 2029.</p>
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Small-medium gas decarbonisation

33	<p>Why is the industrial sector, namely small-medium industries, not included within the scope of the NSW gas decarbonisation roadmap?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The industrial sector — including small and medium enterprises — is not excluded from the Gas Decarbonisation Roadmap.</p>
34 (a-c)	<p>Since the industrial sector is excluded from the committed gas decarbonisation roadmap, is DCCEEW developing a separate strategic plan to provide both financial and technical support for the industrial sector, namely small-medium industries, to decarbonise from gas? If so:</p> <p>When and how is this being developed?</p> <p>What will be the consultation process?</p> <p>When will it be released?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 33.</p>

NSW Bushfire Program Funding

35	<p>After Recommendation 15 of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry recommended to "roll out the most effective bush fire preparedness programs to all communities and at-risk cohorts in bush fire prone areas across NSW" - what additional funding has been made available to support this roll out?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>As per the ‘NSW Bushfire Inquiry 2020 - Final progress report’ (November 2025), Recommendation 15 was assigned to the NSW Rural Fire Service.</p>
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	As such, this question should be referred to the Minister for Emergency Services.
36	<p>What designated funding is being provided to the NSW Rural Fire Services and other fire management agencies to ensure that current practices are undertaken with environmental sustainability in mind?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>As the manager of lands dedicated to conservation in NSW, the National Parks and Wildlife Service ensures fire management activities are conducted in an environmentally sustainable manner. This has always been a core responsibility and is funded through recurrent budget allocations.</p>

Biodiversity Certification Extension Albury

37	<p>What empirical evidence are you aware of which demonstrates that biodiversity values have been maintained or improved in Albury LGA since certification began in 2011?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Consideration of improving or maintaining biodiversity values was a legislative requirement at the time of conferring biodiversity certification on the Albury Local Environmental Plan 2010.</p>
38	<p>Given the documented decline of Sloane's Froglet in Thurgoona since monitoring began in 2010 how can the Department claim the current certification is working?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Sloane's Froglet was not known to occur in the proposed development areas at the time of biodiversity certification of the Albury Local Environmental Plan in 2010.</p> <p>In considering development on biodiversity certified land, the consent authority may consider newly discovered or listed species that were not assessed as part of the original biodiversity certification.</p>
39	<p>What is the total quantified loss of critically endangered Box Gum Woodland on certified land since 2011?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The total developable area of the biodiversity certification is 7,669 hectares. Of this, 627 hectares were assessed as Box Gum Woodland. Not all developable land has been developed.</p>
40 (a-b)	<p>Has the Minister fulfilled their statutory duty under Schedule 7, Part 8 s27(2) of the repealed Threatened Species Conservation Act to review the EPI prior to this extension?</p>

	<p>If so, when and what were the findings?</p> <p>If no Ministerial review occurred, what are the grounds for not suspending or revoking certification as required by the Act?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Minister for the Environment will review the Albury Local Environmental Plan 2010 prior to deciding whether to extend the certification.</p>
41	<p>Why is Albury permitted to operate a unique “hybrid” scheme that conflicts with both the repealed TSC Act and current Biodiversity Conservation Act requirements?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The savings and transitional regulations of the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> included provisions for some elements of the <i>Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995</i>, including biodiversity certification, to continue to operate.</p>
42	<p>How can certification be considered valid when it triggers the Biodiversity Offset Scheme on the same certified land (e.g., Thurgoona Link Road, Inland Rail)?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Biodiversity assessment for individual approvals can occur notwithstanding that a valid biodiversity certification is in place.</p>
43	<p>Why are only 27 additional species proposed for assessment when the Biodiversity Assessment Method generates far more threatened species predictions? What happened to the other 31 species identified at Terry Court?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This is a question for Albury City Council.</p>
44-45	<p>If an extension is granted, how will Serious and Irreversible Impact entities (Sloane's Froglet, Box Gum Woodland, Regent Honeyeater, Swift Parrot) be assessed on certified land?</p> <p>Given that s6.7 of the Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2017 requires refusal of Development Applications with significant Serious and Irreversible Impact impacts, how is this reconciled with certification that assumes no assessment?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Minister for the Environment is yet to consider an application for extending the existing biodiversity certification.</p>
46	<p>What is the total area of C2 and C3 zoned land lost to development since 2011</p>

	<p>in the Albury LGA?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This is a question for Albury City Council.</p>
47	<p>Are you concerned that Albury’s Local Environmental Plan has not been amended to protect C3 zoned land as recommended by the Department in February 2023?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This is a question for Albury City Council.</p>
48	<p>Can you explain why the Stage 1 Biodiversity Assessment Method for Thurgoona-Wirlinga was not completed through to Stage 2, which would establish a proper Biodiversity Certification Assessment Report for this precinct?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This is a question for Albury City Council.</p>
49	<p>What evidence exists that constructed frog ponds have been effective in maintaining Sloane's Froglet populations, given the species' ongoing decline?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Department’s monitoring has confirmed all constructed wetlands completed as part of new developments have been occupied by Sloane’s Froglet during the breeding season.</p>

Questions from Ms Cate Faehrmann MLC

Broken Hill

50 (a-f)	<p>For the following data provided in answer to Question on Notice 4725, please provide a breakdown of how many of the houses that were remediated were Aboriginal households and how many were non-Aboriginal households:</p> <p>31 homes remediated in 2020-2021; 22 homes and one community building remediated in 2021-2022; 21 homes remediated in 2022-2023; 38 homes remediated in 2023-2024; 29 homes remediated in 2024-2025; and 1 home remediated to date in 2025-2026 - to date.</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA does not hold data on which family members identify as Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal.</p> <p>Please note that the total number of houses remediated in 2025-26 has increased to three since the response to Legislative Council Question on Notice 4725 was provided on 4 December 2025. The revised figures are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 homes remediated in 2020-21 • 22 homes and one community building remediated in 2021-22 • 21 homes remediated in 2022-23 • 38 homes remediated in 2023-24 • 29 homes remediated in 2024-25 • 3 homes remediated to date in 2025-26 (as at 22 December 2025).
51	<p>For each of the years specified above in question 3, please provide the total cost of remediation.</p> <p>Answer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2020-21 = \$498,321.36 • 2021-22 = \$301,178.18 • 2022-23 = \$325,047.03 • 2023-24 = \$711,578.72 • 2024-25 = \$523,004.60 • 2025-26 = \$45,116.25 (Noting the total number of houses remediated has increased to three since the response to Legislative Council Question on Notice 4725)
52	<p>For each of the seven homes that were re-remediated in Broken Hill between 2022 and 2024, please provide the year the home was first remediated and</p>

detail the remediation actions undertaken, and then provide the year and remediation actions undertaken for all subsequent remediation works.

Answer

House 1

2019:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Fencing undertaken to restrict access to contaminated areas.
- Unstable paint removed and painted – external.
- Ingress points for dust replaced or otherwise addressed.
- Floor coverings cleaned or replaced.

2023:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Fencing undertaken to restrict access to contaminated areas.
- Unstable paint removed and painted – external and internal.
- Stormwater works to prevent erosion/recontamination.

House 2

2020:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Unstable paint removed and painted – external and internal.
- Ingress points for dust replaced or otherwise addressed.

2022:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Sand or sandpit and/or garden bed provided.
- Waste removal.

House 3

2020:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Unstable paint removed and painted – external and internal.
- Ingress points for dust replaced or otherwise addressed.

2022:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Sand or sandpit and/or garden bed provided.

House 4

2022:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Stormwater works to prevent erosion/recontamination.
- Waste removal.

2023:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Floor coverings cleaned or replaced.

House 5

2022:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Ingress points for dust replaced or otherwise addressed.
- Floor coverings cleaned or replaced.
- Stormwater works to prevent erosion/recontamination.
- Fencing undertaken to restrict access to contaminated areas.
- Waste removal.

2023:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Floor coverings cleaned or replaced.

House 6

2022:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Unstable paint removed and painted – external.
- Ingress points for dust replaced or otherwise addressed.
- Stormwater works to prevent erosion/recontamination.

2025:

- Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill.
- Unstable paint removed and painted – external.
- Stormwater works to prevent erosion/recontamination.

House 7

House 7 was remediated twice in 2024.

	<p>2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill. • Unstable paint removed and painted – external and internal. • Ingress points for dust replaced or otherwise addressed. • Floor coverings cleaned or replaced. • Stormwater works to prevent erosion/recontamination. • Unstable paint removed and painted – internal. • Sand or sandpit and/or garden bed provided. <p>2024:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contaminated soil either covered or removed and replaced with clean fill. • Unstable paint removed and painted – external and internal. • Ingress points for dust replaced or otherwise addressed. • Stormwater works to prevent erosion/recontamination. • Sand or sandpit and/or garden bed provided. • Floor coverings cleaned or replaced.
<p>53 (a-c)</p>	<p>Is a home assessment offered to all children in Broken Hill who have a blood lead level above 5ug/dL?</p> <p>If not, is there a blood lead level threshold at which home assessment is offered?</p> <p>What is the average wait time between a detection of an elevated blood lead level in a child and a home assessment?</p> <p>If no potential sources of lead exposure are identified at a child’s home are other potential places of exposure, such as daycare, kindergarten or a local playground, assessed?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Minister for Health.</p> <p>Home assessments are carried out by Far West Local Health District and Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation.</p>
<p>54</p>	<p>Is home remediation offered to all children in Broken Hill who have a blood lead level above 5ug/dL and whose home has been identified as a potential source of lead exposure?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
<p>(a)</p>	<p>If not, is there a blood lead level threshold at which home remediation is</p>

	<p>offered?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Home remediation is determined based on a clinical triaging system undertaken by NSW Health, which is informed by the significance of the contamination and the individual clinical and health circumstances of the children involved.</p>
(b)	<p>What is the average wait time between a detection of an elevated blood lead level in a child and home remediation (where their home has been identified as a potential source of lead exposure)?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Currently, the average time from the point at which the home is placed onto the remediation list (following detection of an elevated blood level in a child and a home assessment) to completion of work is 7.5 weeks.</p>
55 (a-f)	<p>For each of the following, when was the last time the EPA undertook any sampling in Broken Hill, and what were the results of that sampling, if any has occurred? Please provide copies of or links to reports wherever available:</p> <p>lead in surface water;</p> <p>lead in groundwater;</p> <p>lead in sediment;</p> <p>lead in stormwater run-off;</p> <p>lead in rainwater tanks; and</p> <p>lead in the vertical distribution of soil.</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA requires holders of Environment Protection Licences (EPLs) in Broken Hill to undertake a range of monitoring and sampling of surface waters, off-site discharge locations and groundwater for a range of pollutants. All relevant licences can be found on the EPA's Public Register by searching under the Broken Hill local government area. Sampling requirements for all EPLs fall to the responsibility of the licensee.</p>
56	<p>The environment protection licence for Perilya Broken Hill Limited, North Operations (EPL 2683) sets requirements for monitoring concentrations of pollutants discharged including through air monitoring (section M2), however it does not include limit conditions (under section 3 of the licence) in relation to air quality or dust emissions. What, if any, air quality or dust emissions limits are Perilya North Operations required to meet?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Ambient dust monitoring required by the licence is used to inform</p>

	<p>management actions, such as the Trigger Action Response Plan required by the relevant development consent. Ambient dust monitoring is assessed against the health-based criteria for particulates (PM2.5 and PM10) set under the <i>National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure 2021</i>.</p>
(a)	<p>Are Perilya North Operations required to meet any specific limit requirements in regards to lead emissions from their premises (including areas of active mining, processing, stockpiling, on-site haulage and tailings)?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Ambient dust monitoring is assessed against the annual health-based criteria for lead set under the <i>National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure 2021</i>.</p>
(b)	<p>The operating conditions include a requirement that “The premises must be maintained in a condition which minimises or prevents the emission of dust from the premises.” (O3.1) How is this enforced?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA enforces compliance with the conditions of EPL 2683. Under the <i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i>, authorised officers have powers to inspect licensed premises to assess compliance with any licence conditions, including operating condition O3.1.</p>
i.	<p>How is “minimises” defined for the purpose of this condition?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The term “minimises” means “to reduce to the smallest possible amount or degree”.</p>
57	<p>The environment protection licence for Perilya Broken Hill Limited, Southern Operations (EPL 2688) sets requirements for monitoring concentrations of pollutants discharged including through air monitoring (section M2), however it does not include limit conditions (under section 3 of the licence) in relation to air quality or dust emissions. What, if any, air quality or dust emissions limits are Perilya Southern Operations required to meet?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Ambient dust monitoring required by the licence is used to inform management actions, such as the Trigger Action Response Plan required by the relevant development consent. Ambient dust monitoring is assessed against the health based criteria for particulates (PM2.5 and PM10) set under the <i>National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure 2021</i>.</p>
(a)	<p>Are Perilya Southern Operations required to meet any specific limit requirements in regards to lead emissions to air from their premises (including areas of active mining, processing, stockpiling, on-site haulage and tailings)?</p>

	<p>Answer</p> <p>Ambient dust monitoring is assessed against the annual health-based criteria for lead set under the <i>National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure 2021</i>.</p>
(b)	<p>The operating conditions include a requirement that “The premises must be maintained in a condition which minimises or prevents the emission of dust from the premises.” (O3.1) How is this enforced?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA enforces compliance with the conditions of EPL 2688. Under the <i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i>, authorised officers have powers to inspect licensed premises to assess compliance with any licence conditions, including operating condition O3.1.</p>
i.	<p>How is “minimises” defined for the purpose of this condition?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The term “minimises” means “to reduce to the smallest possible amount or degree”.</p>
ii.	<p>How is “minimises” defined for the purpose of this condition?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 57(b) i.</p>
(c)	<p>Section L2 of the licence sets concentration limits for pollutants discharged at specified points. These limits only apply to one of the two water and/or land monitoring points. Why are there no concentration limits applied at monitoring point 2?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Point 2 discharges into an internal drainage line that runs to Point 1. All water discharges leaving the premises go via Point 1. Limit conditions are on Point 1, as this is the location where discharge off the licensed premises is occurring.</p>
i.	<p>What and where is monitoring Point 2?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Point 2 is located within an internal drainage line at the location where water discharges from the Polo Dam. Point 2 acts as an overflow discharge and can only discharge following a rain event as per condition M2.4. Discharged waters enter the drainage line, and in the event of a discharge water quality sampling is required daily in accordance with condition M2.3.</p>
(d)	<p>Section M2.4 of the licence specifies “A discharge to waters from Point 2 must not occur unless more than 75 millimetres of rain falls in Broken Hill within the</p>

	<p>previous three (3) days).” What waters are being referred to?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Point 2 discharges from the Polo Dam located onsite into the drainage line located within the boundary of the premises. ‘Waters’ refers to the internal drainage line where the discharge occurs.</p>
58	<p>The environment protection licence for Broken Hill Operations (EPL 12559) sets requirements for monitoring concentrations of pollutants discharged including through air monitoring (section M2), however it does not include limit conditions (under section 3 of the licence) in relation to lead emissions. Are Broken Hill Operations required to meet any specific limit requirements in regards to lead emissions from their premises (including areas of active mining, processing, stockpiling, on-site haulage and tailings)?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Condition L2.2 of the environment protection licence sets the limits for Type 1 and Type 2 substances at monitoring points 1 and 2. <i>Type 1 substances</i> mean the elements antimony, arsenic, cadmium, lead or mercury, or a compound containing one or more of those elements. Other Ambient dust monitoring is assessed against the annual health-based criteria for lead set under the <i>National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure 2021</i>.</p>
(a)	<p>The operating conditions include a requirement that “All operations and activities occurring at the premises must be carried out in a manner that will minimise the emission of dust from the premises.” (O3.1) How is this enforced?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA enforces compliance with the conditions of EPL 12559. Under the <i>Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997</i>, authorised officers have powers to inspect licensed premises to assess compliance with any licence conditions, including operating condition O3.1.</p>
i.	<p>How is “minimises” defined for the purpose of this condition?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The term “minimises” means “to reduce to the smallest possible amount or degree”.</p>
ii.	<p>Why are Broken Hill Operations not required to “minimise” or “prevent” emissions, unlike the two Perilya mining operations?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Licence conditions are drafted specifically for each licence and may use slightly different terms.</p>
(b)	<p>Has Broken Hill Operations ever exceeded the air concentration limits</p>

	<p>specified in section L2.2 of their licence?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes.</p>
i.	<p>If so, when, by how much and for what pollutants?</p> <p>Answer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 February 2024 – Type 1 and 2 Substances (Limit 1mg/m³) – level was 1.124mg/m³. • 9 December 2020 – Total suspended particulates (TSP) (Limit 20mg/m³) – level was 58.9mg/m³. • 9 December 2020 – Type 1 and 2 Substances (Limit 1mg/m³) – level was 4.32mg/m³.
ii.	<p>If so, what was the EPA’s response to each exceedance event?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p><u>15 February 2024</u></p> <p>The licensee self-notified and identified the cause of non-compliance as the jaw crusher. The licensee was required to complete works to fix the issue, which included replacing the jaw crusher. Follow-up sampling indicated compliance with limits. No further action was required.</p> <p><u>9 December 2020</u></p> <p>The matter was self-reported to the EPA at the time of the incident. The EPA investigated and required new practices and procedures to be introduced to ensure no recurrence. Appropriate action was taken by the licensee. Dye testing was increased to a monthly schedule, and the EPA continued to monitor for further compliance.</p>

Bowdens Air Monitoring

59	<p>What is the EPA’s role, if any, in setting a trigger level within Bowdens Silver’s Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Machine Plan, as required to be developed under a condition of consent?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA provides advice to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure on draft management plans when requested. The EPA does not have an approval role for management plans.</p>
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Air monitoring compliance for mines

60	<p>How many infringement notices has the EPA issued to mines in NSW in relation to breaches of air monitoring conditions or air emissions limits in environmental protection licences in each of the following years:</p>
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(a)	2021-2022; Answer One.
(b)	2022-2023; Answer One, and another one related to blast fume emissions.
(c)	2023-2024; and Answer Zero.
(d)	2024-2025? Answer Zero.
61	How many prosecutions have there been for breaches of air monitoring conditions or air emissions limits on environmental protection licences for the same years. Answer 2021-2022: Zero. 2022-2023: 8 (related to blast fume emissions). 2023-2024: 5 (related to air emissions). 2024-2025: Zero.

Review of Clean Air Regulations

62 (a)	Has recommendation 6 of the inquiry into Current and potential impacts of gold, silver, lead and zinc mining on human health, land, air and water quality in New South Wales been progressed? If yes, what were the results of the review? Answer The EPA is currently undertaking the review in line with the Government's commitment in response to Recommendation 6 of the Inquiry.
i.	When will this review be made public? Answer The EPA expects to provide its advice for the Government's consideration in the first half of 2026.

Pesticide regulation

63	<p>How many complaints has the EPA received regarding the potential misuse of pesticides between 2015-2025, breaking data down by year?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>2015: 309 2016: 301 2017: 283 2018: 301 2019: 336 2020: 360 2021: 465 2022: 336 2023: 399 2024: 398 2025: 395 Total: 3883</p>
(a)	<p>How many complaints has the EPA followed up with an onsite compliance visit?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>367.</p>
64	<p>Between 2015-2025:</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Please see responses below.</p>
(a)	<p>How many advisory letters has the EPA issued in relation to the potential misuse of pesticides?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>243.</p>
i.	<p>How many of these were issued to the blueberry industry?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>One.</p>
(b)	<p>How many formal warnings have been issued?</p>

	<p>Answer 240.</p>
i.	<p>How many of these were issued to the blueberry industry? Answer 2.</p>
(c)	<p>How many official cautions have been issued? Answer 182.</p>
i.	<p>How many of these were issued to the blueberry industry? Answer 2.</p>
(d)	<p>How many clean-up actions have been issued? Answer 13.</p>
i.	<p>How many of these were issued to the blueberry industry? Answer Zero.</p>
(e)	<p>How many prevention notices have been issued? Answer 40.</p>
i.	<p>How many of these were issued to the blueberry industry? Answer Zero.</p>
(f)	<p>How many penalty notices have been issued? Answer 148.</p>
i.	<p>How many of these were issued to the blueberry industry? Answer 3.</p>
ii.	<p>What was the associated fine for each penalty notice issued?</p>

	<p>Answer</p> <p>\$500, \$1,000, \$1,500.</p>
(g)	<p>How many prosecutions have been commenced under the Pesticides Act 1999?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>43.</p>
i.	<p>How many of these relate to the blueberry industry?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>None.</p>
ii.	<p>How many prosecutions have been successful under the Pesticides Act 1999?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>35 of 38 completed prosecutions.</p>

Blueberry industry

65	<p>A joint statement from the EPA and NSW Food Authority on 3 October 2025 referred to the testing of blueberries for thiometin and concluded that blueberries are safe to eat. Were blueberries washed before testing?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
(a)	<p>How many farms did the blueberries that were tested originate from?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>5.</p>
(b)	<p>Were blueberries tested for any other common pesticides?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes.</p>
(c) i-ii	<p>Were blueberries tested for dimethoate?</p> <p>If yes, what were the results of the testing?</p> <p>If not, will testing be repeated in light of the AVPMA's decision to suspend specific dimethoate substances?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes. Dimethoate was detected on samples obtained by the EPA. However, there were no indications of unlawful use of Dimethoate.</p>

66	<p>What were the results of the compliance campaign that the EPA undertook in early November 2025 targeting pesticide use on blueberry farms in Coffs Harbour, Clarence Valley and Nambucca local government areas?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Overall outcomes of the inspection campaign continue to be assessed, and some matters remain under investigation or are yet to be finalised. The campaign saw a generally improved level of compliance from previous compliance campaigns undertaken by the EPA in the region.</p>
(a)	<p>How many farms were site visits conducted at?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>19.</p>
(b)	<p>How many, if any, advisory letters, formal warnings or official cautions have been issued as a result of the campaign?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>As at 15 December 2025, 7 advisory letters, zero formal warnings and zero official cautions.</p>
(c)	<p>How many, if any, clean-up actions, prevention notices or penalty notices have been issued?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>As at 15 December 2025, zero notices issued.</p>
(d)	<p>Were any farms found to be using dimethoate? If so, how many?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Samples from 3 farms detected Dimethoate.</p>
(e)	<p>Were all farms that are or have been the subject of complaints to the EPA visited as part of the campaign?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No. The campaign looked to inspect a range of farms, from some already known to the EPA, to those which had never been inspected or subject to complaint.</p>
67	<p>Has the EPA completed any testing undertaken as part of the pesticide water quality monitoring program in Coffs Harbour and Nambucca Valley?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes.</p>
(a)	<p>When are the results from this testing going to be made publicly available?</p>

	<p>Answer</p> <p>Results were placed on the EPA webpage, and the media was informed on 9 December 2025. Results from each round of sampling will be updated on the webpage.</p>
(b)	<p>How many locations will sampling be undertaken at?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>33 sites.</p>
i.	<p>Are any of these sites located on blueberry farms?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
(c)	<p>Will testing occur on an ongoing basis? If so, how regularly?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes. Quarterly samples will be collected from 10 priority sites in the Coffs Harbour local government area and 10 priority sites in the Nambucca Valley local government area.</p> <p>Annual samples will be collected from an additional 11 sites in Coffs Harbour and 2 sites in Nambucca Valley</p>
(d)	<p>Will testing be expanded in the future to cover soil sampling?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
68	<p>Recommendation 5 in the NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner’s 2024-25 Annual Report is to further strengthen training for frontline workers... to identify and address modern slavery. Have frontline workers at the EPA undergone any training to identify modern slavery within the industries they regulate?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>

EPA job cuts

69	<p>How many compliance officer positions (FTE) does the EPA currently have?</p>
(a-b)	<p>How many of these positions are filled?</p> <p>How many compliance officers are based in the Coffs Harbour City Council and Nambucca Valley Council areas?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Details on employment figures can be found in the EPA Annual Report 2024-</p>

	25, at www.epa.nsw.gov.au/About-us/Strategy-and-reporting/annual-reports .
(c) i-ii	<p>Are any compliance officer positions focussed exclusively on regulation of horticulture and/or agriculture?</p> <p>If so, how many across NSW</p> <p>How many in the Coffs Harbour City Council and Nambucca Valley Council areas?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA will continue to be a strong independent regulator with compliance capability across multiple sectors, including horticulture and agriculture.</p>
70 (a)	<p>How many, if any, compliance officer positions will be lost under the restructure?</p> <p>If any, are any of these positions located in the Coffs Harbour City Council and Nambucca Valley Council areas</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>As outlined in the EPA Change Management Plan, placement processes are still being worked through.</p>
71	<p>Which areas of the EPA will be subject to job cuts?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA estimates a net reduction of 57 ongoing roles from its current structure. The roles and resourcing for the future structure are outlined in the EPA Change Management Plan.</p>
(a)	<p>Can the EPA confirm that no frontline workers will be affected by the job cuts?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>A key design feature of the new operating model is improving the EPA's frontline regulatory capabilities.</p>

Independent review of Cadia's environmental monitoring program design and data

72	<p>Did the independent review of Cadia's environmental monitoring program design and data, commissioned by the EPA, utilise any external datasets or did it rely solely on Cadia Valley Operations' monitoring data? Were any of the following datasets provided to the reviewers?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The project scope focused on assessing Cadia's environmental monitoring programs, and the independent review utilised the extensive data and associated reports produced by these programs and provided by Cadia. Cadia engaged external consultants to collect the data and prepare these reports.</p>
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	The independent review did not use other datasets.
(a)	Any groundwater, surface water or aquatic systems data collected by the EPA? Answer No.
(b)	Any groundwater, surface water or aquatic systems data collected by or for the Cadia Community Sustainability Network? Answer No.
(c)	Any groundwater, surface water, aquatic systems or rainwater tank data collected by Dr Ian Wright? Answer No.
(d)	Any groundwater, surface water or aquatic systems data collected or analysed by GHD? Answer Yes, GHD is engaged by Cadia to collect monitoring data and prepare the annual reports for their environmental monitoring programs.
73	Were potential impacts to any of the following waterways considered by the reviewers, and if not, why not:
(a)	Flyers Creek? Answer Yes.
(b)	Belubula River? Answer Yes.
(c)	Swallow Creek? Answer Yes.
74	Were the role of fault lines in contributing or exacerbating potential impacts to surface water, groundwater or aquatic ecosystems considered by the reviewers?

	Answer Yes.
(a)	If not, why not? Answer Not applicable.

Questions from Ms Abigail Boyd MLC

DEPARTMENT OF CLIMATE CHANGE, ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

75	<p>What specific modelling shows Eraring must remain open beyond the revised date, and why wasn't that modelling made public when the original closure extension was justified?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Forecasts and analysis regarding energy reliability and system security are published in the Australian Energy Market Operator's Electricity Statement of Opportunities and 2025 Transition Plan for System Security, and in the Energy Security Target Monitor's reports.</p>
76	<p>What assumptions about data-centre growth, electrification, and peak demand have changed since your last public forecast – and why weren't these included in your previous scenario planning?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The 2024 Energy Security Target Monitor (ESTM) report was released in December 2024 and was informed by AEMO's 2024 Electricity Statement of Opportunities (ESOO). Since then, the 2025 ESOO has provided updated forecasts on electrification, data centre growth, and peak demand. These updates have been incorporated into the 2025 ESTM report.</p>
77	<p>Did EnergyCo provide advice to the government warning that extending Eraring would suppress wholesale prices and deter new renewable investment? If so, where is that advice?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
78	<p>What is the forecast delay to new renewable, storage or firming projects caused by keeping Eraring online?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>On 6 August 2024, the Minister for Energy tabled in Parliament modelling showing Eraring's delayed closure to 2028 has minimal impact on investment in solar and wind projects. Further details can be found at: www.energy.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-07/NSW-2024-Endgame-Economics-Electricity-Market-Modelling.PDF.</p>
79	<p>What is the status of the NSW Renewables workforce plan?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education.</p>

80	<p>What is the reason for the Peak Demand Reduction Scheme target for 2026-27 being revised downward to 0.5%?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Following the commencement of the Australian Government's Cheaper Home Batteries Program, the 2026-27 Peak Demand Reduction Scheme (PDRS) target was reduced to help avoid scheme participants paying penalties from the shortage of scheme certificates as a result of the suspension of the PDRS battery installation activity.</p>
(a)	<p>Does this decision indicate a reduced appetite for demand reduction?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No. The PDRS is legislated to 2050. In December 2025, the NSW Government published a consultation paper on introducing new activities to the PDRS to help meet future targets.</p>
81	<p>For each of the State Significant data-centre projects approved since 2021, can the Department tell the Committee what their forecast annual electricity consumption is? If not, why does the Department approve 24/7 industrial loads without knowing how much electricity they will use?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Questions about specific development applications should be referred to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.</p>
82	<p>What is the combined megawatt load of all data-centre projects approved or in the SSD pipeline in Greater Sydney? Has the Department ever attempted to calculate this number?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>As at December 2025, the total maximum electricity demand of all state significant development data centres in NSW seeking or with planning approval in NSW (excluding those that are already operational) is 4,994 megawatts.</p> <p>However, not all of these projects are expected to be built and may not operate at their maximum approved electricity demand. Taking this into account, forecasts prepared for the Australian Energy Market Operator estimate that NSW average data centre electricity demand could be between 618 and 1,221 megawatts in 2030.</p>
83 (a-b) (i)	<p>During the hearing, we were told that the Department had conducted modelling on the wholesale price impacts of data centres.</p> <p>Can you please provide that modelling?</p> <p>What were the scenarios that were modelled?</p>

	<p>What was the wholesale price impact of each of those scenarios?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Modelling is underway. The release of any modelling is a decision for Government.</p>
84	<p>Can the Department state the total expected electricity load of all proposed and approved data centres in NSW, and the total expected water consumption? If not, how is the Department able to plan for either system?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Infrastructure NSW Data Centre Strategy currently under development will consider future requirements for power and water.</p> <p>Also refer to answer to supplementary question 82.</p>
85	<p>What modelling has the department conducted on the combined energy and water footprint of NSW's growing data-centre sector? If no modelling has been done, why not?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is developing a NSW data centre strategy. Additionally, refer to the answer to supplementary question 83.</p>
86	<p>Does the Department accept that data centres are effectively becoming one of the largest new industrial loads in NSW? If so, why is there still no whole-of-government strategy governing their energy and water requirements?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the development of a NSW data centre strategy. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is providing input to this strategy.</p>
87	<p>Has the Department modelled how projected data-centre load growth affects NSW's ability to meet its legislated emissions targets? If not, how does the department know the targets remain achievable?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 83.</p>
88	<p>Does the Department accept expert warnings that data-centre electricity demand may grow faster than NSW's renewable generation pipeline? What contingency has the Department prepared?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 86.</p>
89	<p>Can the Department guarantee that new data-centre load will not force NSW</p>

	<p>to rely more heavily on gas generation during peak periods?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
90	<p>Does the Department support requiring hyperscale data centres to be directly transmission-connected so that augmentation costs are not pushed onto residential customers?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the development of a NSW data centre strategy, which will consider these matters. They are also being considered by the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council.</p>
91	<p>Does the Department require proponents to demonstrate that their data centres will be supplied by renewable energy? If not, how does the Department ensure these large loads do not drive up emissions?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 86.</p>
92	<p>How much of NSW's remaining "carbon budget" does DEEW [sic] estimate will be consumed by data-centre electricity demand by 2035? Has the Department done this calculation?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>NSW does not have a legislated carbon budget.</p>
93	<p>Has the department advised the Minister that uncontrolled data-centre growth could jeopardise NSW's legislated 2035 emissions target?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes.</p>
94	<p>Does the Department support mandatory renewable-matching or firming requirements for large 24/7 loads? If not, why is the burden shifted to the rest of the system?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 86.</p>
95	<p>What analysis has the department conducted on the impact of data-centre cooling water demand during a drought or under Level 2/3 water restrictions?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Minister for Water.</p>
96	<p>Does the Department believe Sydney's water system can absorb up to 9.6</p>

	<p>GL/year of new data-centre demand – equivalent to nearly 2% of system capacity – without consequences for other users?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is developing a data centre strategy to guide sustainable growth and ensure the sector’s infrastructure needs are met with consideration to household bills, energy and water security, and the environment.</p>
97	<p>Does the department support requiring all new data centres in water-stressed regions to use recycled or non-potable water for cooling? If not, why?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is developing a data centre strategy to guide sustainable growth and ensure the sector’s infrastructure needs are met with consideration to household bills, energy and water security, and the environment.</p>
98	<p>Can the Department point to any data-centre project where it required a binding, enforceable cap on potable water use?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.</p>
99	<p>Has the department assessed the risk that data centres could outcompete housing, hospitals, manufacturing or agriculture for limited water supplies during drought?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 96.</p>
100	<p>Does the department have a position on whether evaporative cooling – using millions of litres of potable water per day – should be allowed in new data-centre developments in Sydney?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 96.</p>
101	<p>Has the Department considered mandating zero-water cooling or hybrid cooling systems for hyperscale centres? If not, why not, given widely available alternatives?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 86.</p>
102	<p>Why does NSW have no minimum performance standards for cooling efficiency (e.g., maximum WUE) when industry and academia consider such</p>

	<p>metrics standard?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 86.</p>
103	<p>Is the department routinely notified when Planning approves a data-centre project with substantial water or energy implications? If not, how can the department fulfil its responsibilities for system stewardship?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water provides advice and recommendations to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) on water, energy and environment matters throughout the planning approval process for data centres and other major infrastructure projects prior to their approval. All advice is published on the DPHI major projects portal at www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects.</p>
104	<p>What environmental safeguards does the department apply to large data-centre clusters regarding heat rejection, noise, or cumulative microclimate impacts?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the relevant consent authority.</p> <p>Development consents are published on the NSW Planning Portal at www2.planning.nsw.gov.au.</p>
105	<p>Does the Department agree that multiple hyperscale centres in one corridor (e.g., Macquarie Park) could create significant localised environmental harm?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is developing a data centre strategy to guide sustainable growth and ensure the sector's infrastructure needs are met with consideration to household bills, energy and water security, and the environment.</p>
106	<p>Can the department identify any environmental condition it has imposed – rather than Planning – on any data-centre project in the past five years?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure is the consent authority.</p>
107	<p>What formal mechanism exists for the department to coordinate with the Department of Planning on data-centre approvals? Can DEEW [sic] provide evidence that this mechanism has worked?</p>

	<p>Answer</p> <p>The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water’s advice to the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure on planning matters is facilitated through a formal interagency engagement protocol.</p>
108	<p>Has the department provided any advice to Planning recommending refusal, redesign, or staging of a data-centre project due to water or energy constraints? If not, why not?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 103.</p>
109	<p>Does the department agree that the current system has no clear “gatekeeper” ensuring data-centre growth is environmentally or energy-system sustainable?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
110	<p>What evidence can DEEW [sic] provide today that NSW can absorb the next decade of data-centre growth without compromising water security, grid stability, emissions targets, or environmental outcomes?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 86.</p>
111	<p>If the Department cannot provide modelling, does it accept that NSW is approving multi-billion-dollar, multi-decade baseload users without a science-based assessment of their resource impact?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
112	<p>Does the department agree that without a coordinated strategy, data centres could become the single most environmentally and energetically significant industry in NSW – yet the least regulated?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 86.</p>

ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY

113	<p>What is the projected increase in PM2.5, NOx and mercury emissions if Eraring remains operational beyond its current timeframe, and why hasn’t the EPA published that impact assessment?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA has a comprehensive and robust framework for regulating power</p>
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	<p>stations in NSW, including the Eraring power station. Air Emissions limits in the environment protection licence are designed to protect the environment and health of the community and are in-line with the health-based National Environment Protection (Ambient Air Quality) Measure 2021 (NEMP).</p> <p>The EPA requires a significant amount of air emissions monitoring from the Eraring power station, including for NOx, particulate matter 2.5 and mercury. The EPA’s website contains further details.</p> <p>The EPA continues to engage with Origin Energy, operator of the Eraring power station, about feasible measures that can be implemented to further reduce air emissions. This is part of the EPA’s approach to continuous improvement for all coal-fired power stations in NSW.</p>
114	<p>What updated public health modelling has the EPA done on Lake Macquarie communities if Eraring runs for an extra three to five years – and why hasn’t that been publicly consulted on?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Eraring power station operates under an environment protection licence with limits based on current health standards and contemporary environmental guidance and policy.</p>
115	<p>Has the EPA assessed the additional ash dam, water discharge or cooling water impacts from extended operation – and does the operator meet today’s standards or legacy grandfathered standards?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Eraring power station operates under an environment protection licence with limits based on current health standards and contemporary environmental guidance and policy.</p>
116	<p>How many diesel generators have been approved across all NSW data-centre consents since 2021, and what is their combined potential emissions profile?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the relevant consent authorities.</p> <p>Development consents are published on the NSW Planning Portal at www2.planning.nsw.gov.au/.</p>
117	<p>Does the EPA acknowledge that a single hyperscale data centre can have diesel generation capacity equivalent to a small power station? If so, why isn’t it licensed as one?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>A significant difference between a power station and a data centre is that the generators are used for short periods and infrequently, not continuously. The</p>

	<p>current environment protection licensing triggers of ‘electricity generation’ and ‘fuel storage’ are most applicable to data centres.</p> <p>The electricity generation trigger provides an exemption for generators that run for less than 200 hours per year, which recognises the role that standby generators play in providing backup power for critical infrastructure. Data centres are required to prepare environmental impact assessments as part of the planning process, including modelling to demonstrate that they will meet health-based air criteria.</p>
118	<p>Why does the EPA allow data centres to operate diesel generators during heatwaves or grid stress – the exact times when air quality harms are highest?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The environmental impacts of data centre proposals are assessed through the planning process. Data centres are required to prepare environmental impact assessments as part of the planning process, including modelling to demonstrate that they will meet health-based air criteria. This modelling informs the measures needed to ensure the community is protected from the impacts of air pollution.</p>
119	<p>Has the EPA ever measured or required monitoring of heat rejected from data-centre cooling systems? If not, how does it assess microclimate impacts?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This is a consideration for the consent authority.</p>
120	<p>Does the EPA have any framework for assessing the cumulative heat island effects of multiple large data centres in the same precinct?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This is a consideration for the consent authority.</p>
121	<p>Please identify all instances where the imposed enforceable noise limits on data-centre cooling or generator farms beyond generic industrial conditions?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA’s Noise Policy for Industry sets assessment noise levels, consistent methods, and best practice measures to manage industrial noise.</p>
122	<p>Has the EPA conducted any analysis of the chemical composition of cooling fluids used by data centres, and their potential impacts in spill, leak, or treatment scenarios?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Potential environmental impacts of a proposal requiring approval under the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> can be managed through</p>

	tailored consent conditions issued by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure with input from partner agencies, including the EPA.
123	<p>Do data centres require an EPA licence for wastewater discharge from cooling systems? If not, why not?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Environmental impacts of data centres, including wastewater, are considered through the planning and assessment process under the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i>. As part of this process, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure seeks advice from agencies that will later regulate the development if consent is granted. Data centres discharging wastewater into sewerage systems need to obtain approval from the relevant local council or water authority as a trade waste agreement.</p>
124	<p>Can the EPA point to where in current policy water-intensive cooling systems are regulated for environmental impact?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the development of a policy framework, in collaboration with relevant agencies, to ensure that the environmental impacts of data centres are appropriately considered and addressed to support the sustainable growth of the sector.</p>
125	<p>Does the EPA consider data centres to be “industrial facilities” for the purposes of environmental regulation, or merely “commercial buildings”? Why?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The EPA’s regulatory regime focuses on the activities being carried out, rather than whether a facility is commercial or industrial per se. The current environment protection licensing triggers of ‘electricity generation’ and ‘fuel storage’ are most applicable to data centres.</p>
126	<p>If an industry proposed 30–170, or even up to 400MW of continuous load with diesel-plant backup, would the EPA normally treat it as a scheduled activity requiring licensing? Why do data centres escape that scrutiny?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 117.</p> <p>Data centre proposals with a total power consumption of more than 15 megawatts are classified as state significant development and are assessed by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure with input from other government agencies, including the EPA, where appropriate.</p>
127	Does the EPA accept that the current system leaves a regulatory void in which high-pollution emergency systems are effectively self-regulated by

proponents?

Answer

Infrastructure NSW is developing a data centre strategy to guide sustainable growth and ensure the sector's infrastructure needs are met with consideration to household bills, energy and water security, and the environment. The data centre strategy is due to be completed in 2026.

NET ZERO COMMISSION

128	<p>Where in your decarbonisation pathway does a further Eraring extension fit – and what is the emissions budget impact? Please quantify the additional CO₂ load to 2030.</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Net Zero Commission is developing decarbonisation pathways for NSW. These are not yet available.</p>
129	<p>If the Commission agrees to an Eraring extension, how does that reconcile with your legislated duty to keep NSW on track for the 2030 and 2050 targets?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The role of the Net Zero Commission is outlined in the <i>Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023</i>. The Commission has legislated functions to review progress towards and advise on the actions of the NSW Government to achieve the State’s emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective, amongst other functions. The Commission does not have a legislated duty to keep NSW on track for the 2030 and 2035 targets.</p> <p>Decisions about the future of Eraring power station are a matter for Origin Energy.</p>
130	<p>What modelling shows NSW can still meet its 2030 target if the state’s largest coal generator continues to run well beyond the original revised closure date?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water has not completed any modelling for this scenario.</p>
131	<p>Did the government ask the Commission to re-run scenarios that assume prolonged coal generation, and if so, why were those scenarios never released publicly?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
132	<p>Is the Commission comfortable that repeated extensions undermine investor confidence in NSW’s energy transition, and have you quantified this investment delay risk?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>That is not a matter the Net Zero Commission has considered in depth at this stage.</p>
133	<p>If emissions rise due to an extension, what sectors or communities must absorb the additional reductions? Who pays for the extra abatement?</p>

	<p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 128.</p>
134	<p>Has the Commission modelled the impact of current and proposed data centres on NSW’s legislated emissions pathway? If not, how is it discharging its statutory obligations?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is responsible for modelling emissions projections and the likely impact on legislated targets. The Net Zero Commission does not have a statutory obligation to undertake this modelling.</p>
135	<p>Does the Commission accept that the increasing prevalence of LIBL projects, such as data centres, could force NSW to burn more gas/coal to meet demand, thereby undermining the state’s net-zero trajectory?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Net Zero Commission will consider the impact of data centres on emissions from the electricity and energy sector in its next Annual Progress Report, due to be delivered by 1 July 2026.</p>
136	<p>Has the Commission estimated what proportion of NSW’s remaining “carbon budget” could be consumed by data-centre growth?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>NSW does not have a legislated carbon budget.</p>
137	<p>Can the Commission point to any requirement ensuring that new LIBL data-centre load is accompanied by equivalent new renewable generation and firming?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No. However, the Commission advises loads should use renewable energy for their electricity needs wherever possible.</p>
138	<p>Does the Commission agree that data-centre demand is growing faster than the rate of renewable build-out?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 135.</p>
139	<p>Does the Commission accept that high constant loads increase the need for firming, raising the risk of gas-peaker utilisation?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 135.</p>

140	<p>Has the Commission been consulted by the Department of Planning on any recent data-centre SSD approvals?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
141	<p>Does the Commission have any mechanism to veto, condition, or advise on developments that create major new emissions sources indirectly through electricity demand?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The role of the Net Zero Commission is outlined in the <i>Climate Change (Net Zero Future) Act 2023</i>. The Commission has legislated functions to review progress towards and advise on the actions of the NSW Government to achieve the State’s emissions reduction targets and adaptation objective, amongst other functions.</p> <p>It is the role of the NSW Government to determine its policy response to advice from the Commission.</p>
142	<p>Will the Commission publish an annual assessment of data-centre electricity demand and its impact on NSW emissions? If not, why not?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 135.</p>
143	<p>Does the Commission believe current reporting standards allow the public to understand how much electricity new data centres actually use?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>That is not a matter the Net Zero Commission has considered.</p>
144	<p>Does the Commission agree that without binding renewable-matching requirements, data centres may become the single largest new driver of NSW emissions?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 135.</p>

ENERGY CO

145	<p>What specific modelling shows Eraring must remain open beyond the revised date, and why wasn’t that modelling made public when the original closure extension was justified?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 75.</p>
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146	<p>What assumptions about data-centre growth, electrification, and peak demand have changed since your last public forecast – and why weren't these included in your previous scenario planning?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 76.</p>
147	<p>Did EnergyCo provide advice to the government warning that extending Eraring would suppress wholesale prices and deter new renewable investment? If so, where is that advice?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 77.</p>
148	<p>What is the forecast delay to new renewable, storage or firming projects caused by keeping Eraring online?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 78.</p>
149	<p>What is the total forecast load from data centres seeking to connect in Greater Sydney and Western Sydney? Has EnergyCo calculated this number?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the whole-of-government approach to data centre management, and EnergyCo will collaborate with all relevant NSW Government agencies in delivering this work where appropriate.</p>
150	<p>Has EnergyCo modelled whether the proposed data-centre cluster growth is compatible with NSW's planned transmission build-out and REZ timelines?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No. The jurisdictional planning function currently rests with Transgrid, which is responsible for undertaking planning in collaboration with Distribution Network Service Providers.</p>
151	<p>Will EnergyCo support a rule requiring hyperscale data centres to connect directly to transmission infrastructure, as occurs in other jurisdictions?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 149.</p>
152	<p>Has EnergyCo calculated the additional future network augmentation burden – substations, feeders, transmission links – costs due to data-centre growth?</p>

	<p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 149.</p>
153	<p>Does EnergyCo think it is fair that data centres externalise their grid costs onto every other NSW electricity consumer?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 149.</p>
154	<p>Has EnergyCo assessed the system-strength implications of multiple large “block loads” engaging at once?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No. Jurisdictional planning and NSW system strength service provider responsibilities currently rest with Transgrid.</p>
155	<p>What analysis has EnergyCo done on the interaction between data-centre demand and heatwaves, when NSW’s reliability margin is narrowest?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 149.</p>
156	<p>Can EnergyCo confirm that data centres will not reduce NSW’s reserve plant margin below reliability standards?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 149.</p>
157	<p>Has EnergyCo provided any advice to Planning indicating that cumulative data-centre load is not sustainable without significant new infrastructure?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 149.</p>
158	<p>Why is there no coordinated NSW strategy on where data centres should or shouldn’t connect, given their multi-decade baseload profile?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the whole of government approach to data centre management.</p>
159	<p>Does EnergyCo accept that NSW risks replicating Ireland’s experience, where data centres absorbed 18% of national electricity?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 149.</p>
160	<p>EnergyCo has signed a commitment deed with Ausgrid to deliver the network</p>

	<p>infrastructure needed for the Hunter-Central Coast Renewable Energy Zone (REZ). What role does EnergyCo maintain in ensuring the highest levels of safety and quality standards on these sites?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>EnergyCo maintains oversight and review of the Hunter-Central Coast REZ Network Infrastructure Project. This includes but is not limited to oversight of safety and quality standards. EnergyCo also has oversight of any safety investigations and associated corrective actions.</p>
161	<p>We've seen really concerning reports about Ausgrid's cavalier attitude towards safety and quality, which has resulted in them slashing nearly 70% of their electrical inspector roles. Ausgrid has said blackouts as a result of faulty and unsafe installations are just a nuisance but not a real issue. Do you agree with that characterisation?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Ausgrid is required to adhere to appropriate safety and quality requirements when delivering the project and EnergyCo will have oversight of its performance delivery on the Hunter-Central Coast REZ Network Infrastructure Project.</p>
162	<p>What responsibility does EnergyCo take in directing Ausgrid to ensure higher levels of safety on their projects?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>EnergyCo maintains oversight and review of Ausgrid's Hunter-Central Coast REZ Network Infrastructure Project. This includes but is not limited to review of Safety Management Plans, monthly site inspections, and regular safety leadership walks. EnergyCo has oversight of any safety investigations and associated corrective actions.</p>

Questions from the Opposition

Sydney Ring (South)

163	<p>Has the government taken any steps to secure the land corridor for the Sydney Ring South including the Greendale Area to South Creek Corridor, highlighted teal in Transgrid’s submission to the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO)¹, where they note that delaying development introduces the risk that the preferred solution “becomes no longer viable in its current form”?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Transgrid is leading the Sydney Ring South project, including the Power Flow Control option, as required under the National Electricity Rules, which include the Australian Energy Market Operator’s Integrated System Plan.</p>
164	<p>Was the NSW government consulted by the Australian Energy Regulator, prior to their approval of Transgrid’s request to delay their response to the Sydney Ring South PADR in the 2024 IASR?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>EnergyCo is not aware of any consultation prior to the Australian Energy Regulator’s decision.</p>
165	<p>Did Transgrid at any stage request the NSW government to progress Sydney Ring South via the EII framework, and if so, what was the NSW government’s response?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>EnergyCo has not received any formal request to progress Sydney Ring South via the <i>Electricity Infrastructure Investment Act 2020</i> framework.</p>
166	<p>Given that AEMO’s 2025 IASR workbook identified the transfer capacity from CNSW-SNW-South is only 2,540MW in peak demand, how does the NSW government propose that up to 2.2GW of power from Snowy 2.0 (or any other generation arriving on HumeLink when it is complete, including from South Australia or the South West REZ), would enter Sydney when AEMO already identifies the Bannaby-Sydney West line as the most limiting element?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>AEMO’s Final 2024 Integrated System Plan (ISP) and Draft 2026 ISP publications set out the need for the Sydney Ring South project.</p> <p>In accordance with the National Electricity Rules, further to these two ISP publications, Transgrid’s planned Project Assessment Draft Report (PADR) publication will identify its approach to address the Bannaby-Sydney West constraint and to expand Southern NSW and South West Renewable Energy Zone generation development.</p>

167	<p>Does the NSW government assess the impact of counter-price flows and the potential cost impact of negative residuals when assessing approvals of wind farms?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces</p>
168	<p>Will the NSW government delay planning approval for wind farms in Southern NSW who will likely contribute excessive counterprice flows into Victoria until transmission constraints between Southern NSW and the Sydney Newcastle Wollongong load centre are resolved?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces .</p>
169	<p>What information has the NSW government received from Transgrid about possible options, timing and capability for the “switching station and modular power flow controllers” that were made actionable in the 2024 ISP?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Information has been received from the following publications.</p> <p>The Sydney Ring South power flow control option (involving the installation of new modular power flow control equipment in the Transgrid 330 kV network) was identified as an actionable Integrated System Plan (ISP) project in the Final 2024 and Draft 2026 ISPs.</p> <p>Further the Sydney Ring South 500 kV option (involving the establishment of a new 500 kV link between Bannaby and south-western Sydney) was identified as a future project in the Draft 2026 ISP – to be completed subsequent to the power flow control option.</p> <p>Both Sydney Ring South project scopes note Transgrid as the Regulatory Investment Test for Transmission proponent under the National Electricity Rules.</p> <p>EnergyCo is aware that on 30 May 2025, the Australian Energy Regulator agreed to an extension to the date by which Transgrid must publish the PADR for the Sydney Ring South project to 30 April 2026. This provides Transgrid further time to assess the power flow control and other options.</p>
170	<p>Is the NSW government satisfied that the solution involving “switching station and modular power flow controllers” that will have the Project Assessment Draft Report (PADR) delivered in June 2026 will allow a timely and effective relief of the network congestion that is causing increasing instances of counterprice flows into Victoria, and allow sufficient flow into SNW load</p>

	<p>centres from Southern NSW to allow coal stations in the Hunter to close in 2027 or 2029?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Sydney Ring South options are still being developed by Transgrid under the National Electricity Rules process and will be considered by the Australian Energy Regulator as part of that process.</p>
171	<p>Has the NSW government been in consultations with AEMO in the development of the Draft 2026 ISP, and if so, what was discussed regarding the actionable status of solutions for Sydney Ring South?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The NSW Government received briefings on the development of the draft 2026 ISP as part of regular engagement with AEMO. Through this process, there was no specific discussion on the status of the Sydney Ring South project.</p>

Data centres

172	<p>Has the Minister requested a briefing on data centres and energy use from the Department?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
173 (a)	<p>Has the Minister requested that the Net Zero Commission undertake work on the potential impacts of data centre development on energy in NSW?</p> <p>What are the terms for this work?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>No.</p>
174	<p>How is the Minister evaluating the carbon footprint of AI-related data centre loads?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 86.</p>
175	<p>What proportion of NSW's total electricity demand is currently consumed by data centres?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>NSW data centres (primarily located in Sydney) currently consume around 2.6 terawatt hours of electricity per annum or 4% of NSW's grid-supplied electricity.</p>

<p>176 (a-c)</p>	<p>What is the projected increase in data centre electricity demand over the next: 5 years, 10 years, 20 years?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the Australian Energy Market Operator’s 2025 Electricity Statement of Opportunities.</p>
<p>177</p>	<p>Will the government release modelling on the cumulative grid impact of multiple data centres in the same region?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The release of any modelling is a decision for Government.</p>
<p>178</p>	<p>What is the risk that data centre load could crowd out residential or industrial demand during peak periods?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the whole-of-government approach to data centre management.</p>
<p>179</p>	<p>What contingency planning is being done for grid stability as high-load facilities cluster in Sydney’s west?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the whole-of-government approach to data centre management.</p>
<p>180</p>	<p>Will the government publish annual data centre energy-use to improve transparency?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Australian Energy Market Operator publishes annual forecasts of current and expected future data centre demand in NSW.</p>
<p>181 (a-c)</p>	<p>What percentage of electricity used by NSW data centres comes from renewable sources in: 2022-23, 2023-24, 2024-25?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water does not have access to this information. This is usually commercially sensitive</p>

	contract information held by private companies.
182	<p>Does the government require new data centres to procure renewables or invest in local clean-energy generation?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 86.</p>
183	<p>What requirements for energy generation is the department considering for inclusion in data centre development pathways?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 86.</p>
(a-d)	<p>How will data centre expansion affect NSW's emissions reduction targets in: 2030, 2035, 2050?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Modelling of NSW's emissions projects is generally updated and published annually.</p>
184	<p>Is there a plan to mandate Power Purchase Agreements for data centres?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the whole-of-government approach to data centre management.</p>
185	<p>Will the government set emissions-intensity benchmarks for the sector?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the answer to supplementary question 86.</p>
186	<p>Is the Minister or the Department consulted when Infrastructure NSW considers the location of data centre developments?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Yes.</p>
187	<p>Is the Minister or the Department consulted when the Infrastructure Delivery Authority considers the location of data centre developments?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) was consulted and asked to review all expression of interest (EOI) proposals in the first round of EOIs considered by the IDA.</p>

	DCCEE staff were asked to consider the selection criteria for assessing EOI proposals for fast-tracking by the IDA – this included consideration of location.
188	<p>Is the Minister or the Department consulted when the Department of Planning considers the location of data centre developments?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Please refer to the answer to supplementary question 103.</p>
189	<p>Is NSW reconsidering zoning rules to avoid over-concentration and load stress in LGAs?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.</p>
190	<p>How does the state ensure data centre developments are aligned with long-term grid-expansion planning?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Long-term electricity network plans, like Transgrid’s Transmission Annual Planning Review and the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) Integrated System Plan, consider the impact that data centres may have on the grid. Transgrid, distribution network service providers and AEMO develop estimates on the expected volume of data centres set to connect to the system as part of their individual planning processes.</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the development of a NSW data centre strategy.</p>
191	<p>What role does local community impact play in approval decisions?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.</p>
192	<p>How is the government managing land-use conflicts with industrial, residential, or environmental priorities?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.</p>
193	<p>What measurable economic benefits do data centres bring to NSW beyond construction jobs?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Treasurer.</p>

194	<p>What modelling has the Department undertaken on the contribution of data centres to productivity and digital-economy growth?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>None.</p>
195	<p>How does the government ensure the public receives a return on the infrastructure upgrades they require?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>In NSW, in respect of electricity, new development projects like data centres are required to pay for the cost of local dedicated connection assets in line with the 'causer pays' principle.</p>
196	<p>Are there incentives for companies that use high-efficiency cooling and electrical systems?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Energy Savings Scheme is NSW's largest energy-efficiency program.</p>
197	<p>Does NSW have a plan to become a national or Asia-Pacific data centre hub?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Treasurer.</p>
198	<p>How is the state balancing economic opportunities with environmental constraints?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The planning system considers environmental impacts and economic opportunities during the assessment process under the planning system.</p>
199	<p>How much additional electricity demand is expected from AI-specific infrastructure such as GPU clusters?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water does not currently have access to a data centre electricity demand projections for AI-specific infrastructure.</p>
200	<p>Has the government conducted scenario modelling for "high-growth AI" energy demand?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the whole-of-government approach to data centre management, with input from Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.</p>

201	<p>Are planning rules keeping pace with the rapid scaling of AI workloads?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.</p>
202	<p>Will the government publish a map of all operational, approved, and proposed data centre sites?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This will be considered as part of the data centre strategy Infrastructure NSW is leading.</p>
203	<p>Why is detailed energy-use data not publicly available on a per-facility basis?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Detailed or aggregate energy use data is generally not published for any commercial electricity customer.</p>
204	<p>Will the Minister require mandatory disclosure of Power Usage Effectiveness ratings from data centre operators?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the whole-of-government approach to data centre management.</p>
205	<p>How is the government verifying self-reported sustainability claims from operators?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>This question should be referred to the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces.</p>
206	<p>Will NSW introduce an environmental-performance star rating for data centres?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the whole-of-government approach to data centre management.</p>
207	<p>What transmission upgrades are being expedited specifically because of new data centre demand?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is not aware of any transmission upgrades that are being expedited specifically because of new data centre demand.</p>

208	<p>How many dedicated substations have been constructed or planned for data centre precincts?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water does not have this information. Network service providers are responsible for planning and constructing substations.</p>
209	<p>Has the government assessed whether current connection-assessment processes are fit for purpose?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is developing a NSW data centre strategy.</p> <p>In addition to this work, the Energy and Climate Change Ministerial Council has tasked officials to review arrangements regarding data centre grid integration.</p>
210	<p>What is being done to prevent speculative development that banks grid capacity without delivering public benefit?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the development of a NSW data centre strategy.</p>
211	<p>Does NSW need a specific regulatory framework for high-energy-use digital infrastructure?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the development of a NSW data centre strategy.</p>
212 (a)	<p>Is the Department considering caps or moratoriums in over-burdened grid areas?</p> <p>Where are these areas?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is leading the development of a NSW data centre strategy.</p>
213	<p>What steps has the government taken to ensure that data centre growth does not compromise residential energy affordability?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Infrastructure NSW is developing a data centre strategy.</p> <p>More broadly, the NSW Government has implemented multiple initiatives to safeguard residential energy affordability through the NSW Consumer Energy Strategy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$30 million, in partnership with the Australian Government, to help apartment residents reduce their bills by investing in solar systems

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$435.4 million in 2024–25 for annual energy bill rebates and debt relief to reduce financial distress for low-income households • \$175 million in energy efficiency upgrades, in partnership with the Australian Government, for 24,000 social housing homes by 2027 • a range of financial incentives for households and small businesses to install energy-efficient equipment and appliances, including lighting, air conditioning, water heating, pool pumps, motors, fans, and furnaces • incentives for purchasing solar batteries and a \$250 incentive for signing up to a virtual power plant • \$238.9 million to design and deliver a new Home Energy Saver program to help lower energy bills and emissions across NSW • \$5 million to support community energy projects, which will help communities participate in the energy transition, lowering bills and emissions.
214	<p>What steps has the government taken to ensure that data centre growth does not compromise environmental objectives?</p> <p>Answer</p> <p>Refer to the response to supplementary question 198.</p>