Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee

Inquiry: Inquiry into Climate Resilience

Hearing Date: 20 November 2024

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Department of Transport and Planning

Received Date: 6 January 2025

1. **Melina BATH, page 78**

Question Asked:
It is happening in Gippsland, so I am aware certainly of the VicGrid proposed corridor. But yes, I would be really interested if you could provide identified energy projects by LGA, which is probably reasonable, and a breakdown, of solar and wind if that is possible.
John BRADLEY: Do you mind, Ms Bath, if I just check with Andrew if he agrees with that?
Andrew McKEEGAN: I am happy to provide that.

Response:

Victoria has a range of renewable energy projects. This includes: 37 operating wind farms (~4,400MW), with another 3 under construction (~1,660 MW); 33 operating solar farms (~1,200 MW) with another 8 under construction (~200MW) and 4 operating batteries (~350 MW) with another 3 under construction (~1,600MW).

Victoria also has a strong pipeline of renewable energy projects. Some major projects recently approved include: the Mortlake Renewable Energy Hub (360MW) and Hazelwood North Solar Farm (450MW). Moreover, DTP is currently considering planning permissions for 20 new renewable projects valued at ~$8B that could generate ~4,200MW. This includes: 6 wind farms (~1,000 MW), 6 solar farms (~1,000 MW) and 5 batteries (~2,200 MW).

An interactive map of Victoria's renewable energy projects, by status, is available here:
https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/planningwebmaps/RenewablesSummary.html

Please note, a menu on the right-hand side of the page allows you to select a local government area layer.

Table 1. is attached which lists renewable energy projects by LGA and approval status.

2. **Sarah MANSFIELD, page 80**

Question Asked:
I might move on to some other issues that have come up. One is around the issue that the planning process has often been quite slow, lacking agility when it comes to responding to the rapid changes that are happening in our climate, the SBO process being one that is quite cumbersome. It has been suggested that perhaps when it comes to flood modelling, state government take over that function. I am wondering what your thoughts are on that.
Andrew McKEEGAN: That matter has been put in relation to the recent flood inquiry that you conducted within this committee as well, and we are currently looking at that and looking forward to coming back in response from a state government perspective...
...As you point out, though, things are rapidly changing at a rate much faster than what the planning system was initially able to keep up with. It is not an instant change that happens within those things. You need to get that data, you need to check it, you need to work through those implications. The speed with which it gets into the system is something that we are certainly looking at, and we will come back in response to how we might think of ways of addressing that or thinking about the state's role in that process.

Response:
Flood modelling is a function of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, floodplain and catchment management authorities and local government.

The Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) is responsible for the planning processes and programs funded by the Victorian Government to 'fast track' the implementation of flood studies into planning schemes. This includes the Flood-related amendments Standing Advisory Committee established by the Minister for Planning in May 2023 to provide Victorian councils with a targeted and streamlined alternative to a Planning Panel process for the review of community submissions about flood amendments.

DTP will be responsible for implementing any planning system related actions arising from the Victorian Government's future response to the Final Report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the 2022 flood event in Victoria.

3. **Gaelle BROAD, page 81**

Question Asked:
... I just want to know your thoughts on how resilient our public transport system is, particularly the train network in regional Victoria...
Gaelle BROAD: ...Right. Okay. My understanding is it was actually the gauges as well, not the stock itself. But I am happy for you to take it on notice if that is okay.
Natalie REITER: Yes, I will take that on notice. Back in the day they would frequently buckle. You do not hear that so much these days, but I will take that on notice and come back to you.

Response:

V/Line prepares ahead of time for the summer months, with maintenance crews working across the network to ensure tracks and other assets are ready for the hot weather.

During 2023/24, V/Line carried out more than $345 million of maintenance and renewal works, completing track renewals on key lines including between Bendigo and Swan Hill, and Donnybrook and Seymour.

Track improvements over recent years have allowed trains on the Geelong Line to run at 130km/h when temperatures are between 36 and 39 degrees. When temperatures reach 39 degrees or above, train speeds are reduced to 90km/h.

It's commonplace around the world for trains to slow down as a safety precaution on days of extreme heat. Slowing trains reduces dynamic forces that can initiate a misalignment on hot days.

As a safety precaution, V/Line enforces heat speed restrictions when the temperature hits 36 degrees or above. On these days, affected lines will run to an extreme heat timetable, which means journey times may be extended by a few minutes.

When temperatures are above 36 degrees in northern parts of the state, there may be flow on impacts to services in the same corridor closer to Melbourne.

On such hot days some services may be replaced by coaches for all or part of the journey.

V/Line closely monitors weather conditions during the warmer months to determine when extreme heat timetables will be activated.

On extreme heat days, extra crews are on standby to manage any issues and ensure there are minimal disruptions to passengers as they travel.

No V/Line train, scheduled coach or replacement coach services will operate in a fire district while a Catastrophic fire danger rating is in place for that district.

Background

We believe Ms Broad is referring to the partial extreme heat timetable between Bendigo and Swan Hill/Echuca on 6 November.

Temperatures were forecast to reach over 36 degrees at both locations with Swan Hill recording a top of 39.3 degrees and Echuca reaching 36.5 degrees.

For the passenger network, 90km/h at 36 degrees has been the benchmark since 1990s when first applied in Victoria.

4. **David ETTERSHANK, page 88**

Question Asked:
If I could, please, to DTP. Clearly the built environment AAP is pretty central to everything we are doing here, and I gather it is your gig, you are the responsible department. I went back through the PAEC questionnaire, and there was actually no mention in the DTP questionnaire response to the built environment AAP. I am wondering, by way of a question on notice, if you could provide the committee with basically the progress update on the implementation of the built environment AAP. Thank you very much.

Response:

The Built Environment Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan (2022–2026) is one of two sector plans led by the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP). It is a five-year plan to strengthen the planning and building system to better adapt to climate change.

Work underway on the action plan is available on DTP's website at https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/guides-and-resources/strategies-and-initiatives/built-environment-climate-change-adaptation-action-plan.

DTP is leading work funded by the Victorian Government to support councils to implement regional flood studies. These studies will ensure planning schemes reflect best available flood data and local coastal hazard assessments for priority areas. This will enable coastal adaptation planning

in partnership with local government and catchment and floodplain management authorities.

DTP will be responsible for implementing any planning system related actions arising from the Victorian Government's future response to the Final Report of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the 2022 flood event in Victoria.

DTP is also delivering the Environmentally sustainable development of buildings and subdivisions: A roadmap for Victoria's Planning System which includes preparation of cooling and greening measures to help reduce heat exposure for new urban developments.

In March 2024, DTP's Development Facilitation Program introduced energy projects into an accelerated assessment pathway cutting processing time to four months and removed third-party VCAT appeals.

Together with updated standards for building energy efficiency which commenced in Victoria on 1 May 2024, this work will contribute to reducing heat stress and operational energy costs for residents of new buildings.