

Media Release

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



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WORLD-LEADING BUSHFIRE SAFETY TECH READY FOR SUMMER

The Andrews Labor Government is delivering the state's single biggest investment in powerline bushfire safety, reducing the risk of bushfires caused by powerlines to better protect Victorians in the face of accelerating climate change.

Minister for Energy and Resources Lily D'Ambrosio announced the completion of 44 cutting-edge Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiters (REFCLS).

A REFCL is a giant safety switch that shuts off power when the powerline comes into contact with vegetation, significantly reducing the chance of ignition.

The use of REFCLS for bushfire prevention is a world first – now countries across the globe are taking Victoria's lead with trials of the technology now underway in fire prone parts of California.

During the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires, REFCLS activated 57 times on total fire ban days, and of these activations 33 were triggered by faults that could have ignited catastrophic bushfires.

In response to the *Royal Commission into the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires*, REFCLS were proposed as the most efficient and cost-effective way to reduce the risk of fires caused by powerlines.

Once complete, the program will reduce powerline bushfire risk by up to 70 per cent along 31,000km of high voltage (22 kilovolt) powerlines. As climate change continues to drive an increase in the frequency and intensity of catastrophic bushfires, REFCLS will play a critical role in reducing the risk to communities across the state.

The final REFCL, in the Australian Energy Regulator-approved \$682 million program, will be complete ahead of summer 2023.

The Labor Government's Powerline Bushfire Safety Program has worked closely with the Victorian energy safety regulator, Energy Safe Victoria, to ensure compliance and successful operation.

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

"This has been the single biggest powerline bushfire safety investment in Victoria. It will save lives by preventing what could otherwise have been catastrophic bushfires."

"The Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiter technology is proven technology and will increase public safety and power reliability while driving Victorian and international innovation in powerline fault mitigation."

"We live in one of the most bushfire prone regions of the world and we know climate change is driving greater bushfire risk – investment in REFCL technology will reduce bushfire risk and keep communities safe."