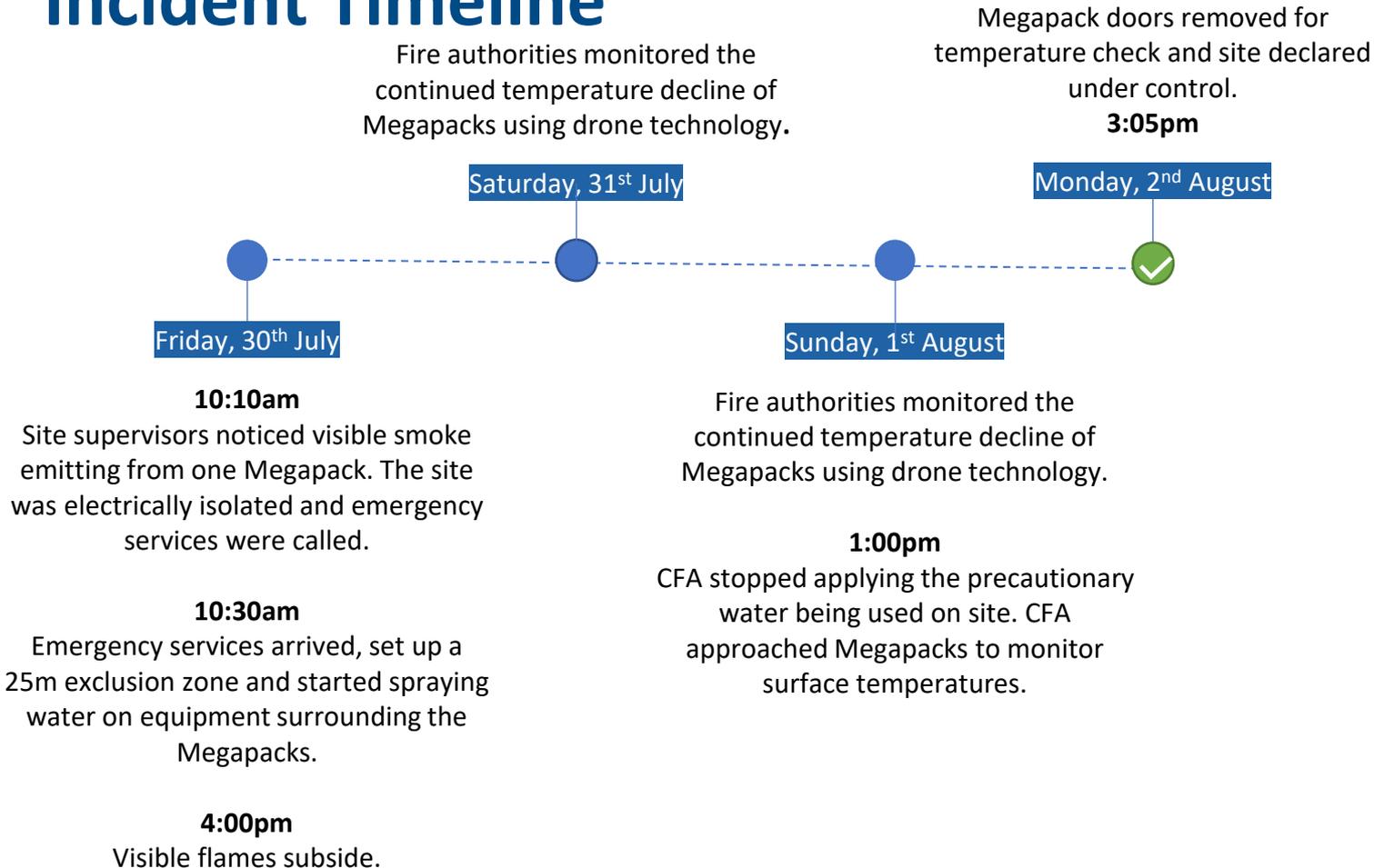


Case Study: Victorian Big Battery

Blake Matich
Editor | pv magazine



Incident Timeline



Incident Timeline | 1

Friday, 30th July

- A fire involving **two Tesla Megapacks** occurred at the Victorian Big Battery (VBB) during commissioning.
- **150** firefighters responded to the incident.
- Authorities issue **Watch and Act Warning** for **toxic smoke** in the nearby areas of Batesford, Bell Post Hill, Lovely Banks and Moorabool.



Unlike at the Vatican, white smoke is not a good sign.

Incident Timeline | 2

Saturday, 31st July

- Containment and monitoring of temperature decrease.

Sunday, 1st August:

- Fire services cease precautionary water.
- Watch and Act Warning for toxic smoke downgraded.





Room to spread out?

Incident Timeline | 3

Monday, 2nd August:

- Firefighters successfully open all container doors.
- Incident declared under control.
- Fire crews remained on site for the next 24 hours “as a precaution in case of reignition,” taking temperature readings every two hours, said the CFA.

Investigation

- **A multi-agency investigation** was launched into the VBB blaze.
- **“Statement of Technical Findings”** published at the end of September, 2021.
- Full independent report published in November, 2021.
- VBB was “switched on” in December 2021, by Victorian Energy Minister Lily D’Ambrosio.



Conclusion

- The fire could likely have been mitigated had monitoring services not been switched to an "off-line mode".
- This error and other lessons learned have been compiled into a list of undertaken actions to prevent "a recurrence".

Case Study: AER charges Hornsdale Power Reserve, shouldn't it be the other way round?

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Federal Court Proceedings

In September 2020, not long after the blaze at the Victorian Big Battery, Neoen's original big battery, The Hornsdale Power Reserve (HPR) in South Australia, was sued by the Australian Energy Regulator (AER).

The AER alleges HPR offered to provide frequency control ancillary services (FCAS) between July and November 2019, for which it was paid by the Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO), but that these services were not provided.

AEMO brought this failure to the attention of the AER after the Kogan Creek Power Station tripped in October 2019.

Kogan Creek Power Station

The 750MW Kogan Creek Power Station is Australia's newest coal-fired power station, and according to the Australia Institute's Gas and Coal Watch: "the most unreliable single generating unit in the NEM."

According to aforementioned report, Kogan Creek broke down 13 times in the two years examined.



AER's Complaint

AER claims HPR's failure to provide promised capability "created a risk to power system security and stability."

AER chair Clare Savage said: "Contingency FCAS providers receive payment from AEMO to be on standby to provide the services they offer. We expect providers to be in a position, and remain in a position, to respond when called upon by AEMO." And added: "It is vital that generators do what they say they can do if we're going to keep the lights on through the market's transition to variable renewable generation."

The AER is seeking pecuniary penalties, declarations and costs.

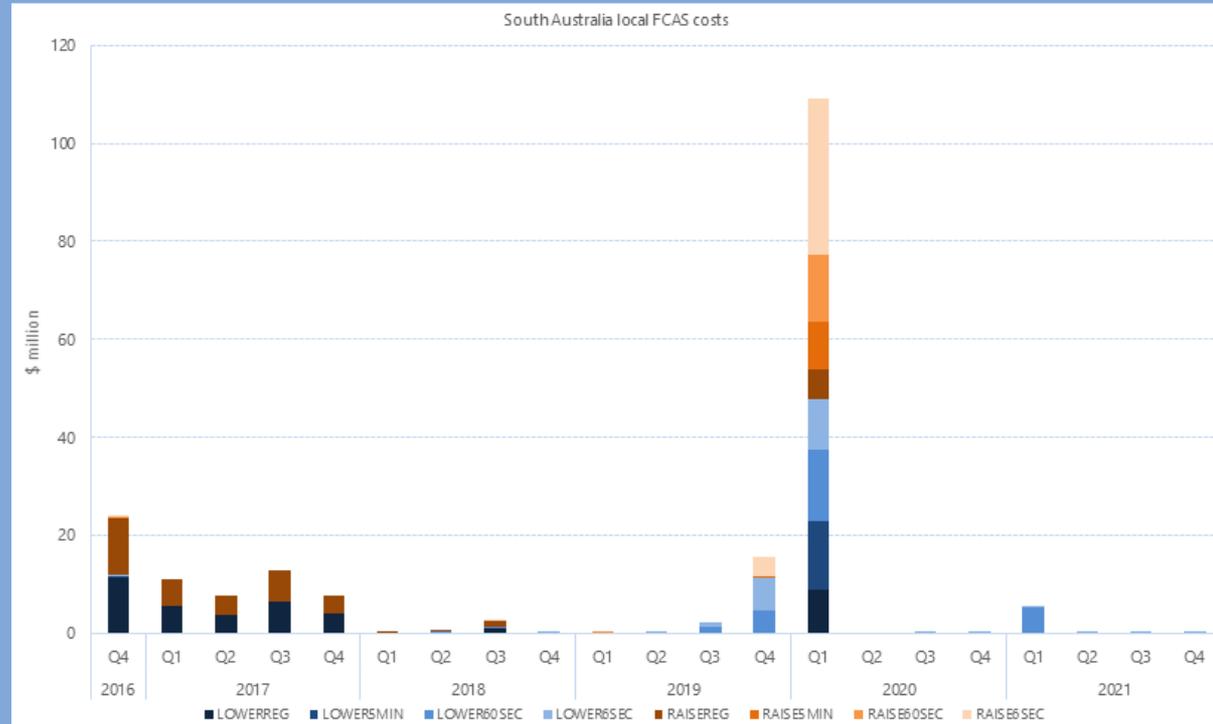
Neoen's Response

Neoen Australia managing director Louis de Sambucy did not comment on the allegations but said in a statement that HPR had repeatedly delivered on high expectations since opening for business in 2017. Adding: “Whilst we are disappointed by the AER decision, we will continue to maintain our collaborative relationship with them.”

FCAS

Those “high expectations” also mean high profit margins.

In Q1 2020, the Heywood Interconnector which links South Australia to Victoria failed for 18 days. This “islanding” resulted in a huge windfall for HPR through its FCAS services.



Source: AER; AEMO, Last updated: 13 Jan 2022 - 10:53 pm

Revenue & Expansion

The revenue accrued by the HPR as a result of FCAS in the first half of 2020 (AU\$258) virtually tripled Neoen's storage revenue compared to 2019 levels, and are largely due to services provided during the one-off islanding event.

This success saw Neoen complete a 50% expansion of HPR in September 2020.



pv magazine reached out to the AER for an update on court proceedings and was told there was “no update at this time.”

According to Commonwealth Courts, both parties must provide their submissions by February 11, 2022, and a hearing is set for Feb 24, 2022 at 8:30am to be presided over by Justice Besanko.

Thank you!

Thank you to the Country Fire Authority and Fire Rescue Victoria for the incident information and imagery used in this case study.

Images: Fire Rescue Victoria

Timeline: Red Havas

ESV Report:

https://esv.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/VBB_StatementOfFindings_FINAL_28Sep2021.pdf

pv magazine links:

<https://www.pv-magazine.com/magazine-archive/moorabool-burning/>

<https://www.pv-magazine-australia.com/2021/08/02/fire-at-victorian-big-battery-now-under-control/>

<https://www.pv-magazine-australia.com/2021/09/28/australias-biggest-battery-cleared-for-testing-following-fire-fallout/>