

MEDIA RELEASE (for immediate release)

Ditching infrastructure portfolios doesn't remove utility damage risks

Before You Dig Australia is urging Victorian Premier Ben Carroll to ensure the costly issue of excavation damage against utility services is not erased by removing cabinet infrastructure portfolios.

Each year in Victoria, more than 6,000 reported incidences of excavation damage to underground utility assets occur, including on significant state infrastructure projects.

In unveiling his new-look cabinet today, the Premier scrapped the transport infrastructure portfolio and specific Suburban Rail Loop portfolio.

"Excavation damage against buried utility services is expensive, foreseeable and entirely preventable," Before You Dig Australia CEO Mell Greenall said.

"Utility strikes expose Victorian workers to serious, unacceptable safety risks and significant community disruption through loss of power, water and telecommunication services.

"The decision to do away with the government's two most significant infrastructure construction portfolios is understandable given the political and policy history, but we cannot afford to let slip the focus on what remains a critical infrastructure challenge."

Civil construction is the single largest cause of costly utility asset strikes, followed by building construction, local government and landscaping, costing the State Budget an estimated \$2 billion a year. BYDA research has also shown the Government budgets up 12 per cent for utility service strikes on infrastructure projects.

"This means strikes are being normalised, even expected and actively bankrolled by Victorian taxpayers, instead of being prevented," Ms Greenall said.

"Victoria's underground utility infrastructure ecosystem has drifted from risk control to liability control, where the worksite becomes the testing ground. Every Victorian voter, taxpayer and utility consumer should be demanding urgent change before the next outage becomes an avoidable fatality."

For further information, case studies or multimedia, contact:

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About Before You Dig Australia

BYDA is a not-for-profit, industry-led organisation that operates Australia's national "before you dig" referral service. Each year we facilitate more than 2.7 million requests for underground utility information from contractors, engineers, councils and the public. Our role is to connect those planning excavation with the asset owners responsible for critical infrastructure to prevent damage, disruption and injury. Read our latest research report [here](#).