

Renewable Offshore Wind Energy

At today's Council meeting, a submission to the Federal Government's Offshore Renewable Energy Infrastructure Area Proposal was formally endorsed. The submission provides in principle support toward offshore renewable energy, but also outlines Council's concerns, which primarily stem from community feedback and a lack of information on the direct and indirect impacts.

Council's submission recognises:

- a. the energy landscape is changing and that there is a sense of urgency to prepare and react to developments proposed in or around South Gippsland;
- b. there is a lack of information on the direct and indirect impacts that proposed projects located near the South Gippsland coast may have on the South Gippsland community and the position of the community is not yet fully understood;
- c. there are areas of community interest and concern that will need to be addressed further, before Council can support the proposals with confidence;
- d. the Federal Government and Offshore Wind Energy Proponent's community engagement processes continue to be promoted and inclusive of the community with Council an active participant;
- e. the Gippsland Proposed Area for investigation and its proximity to shore has raised community concerns, especially their tourism and visual amenity impact and closeness to South Gippsland's iconic natural attractions, environment, seascapes and main tourism and coastal holiday townships – Venus Bay, Walkerville, Waratah Bay, Sandy Point and Tidal River (Wilson's Promontory National Park);
- f. Council does not currently support the proposed two zones closely adjacent to south western coastline and bays of the municipality, preferencing zones to be further off the coast, until further information is confirmed to reduce the potential impacts on coastal visual amenity;
- g. the proposed projects would bring welcome employment and investment opportunities;
- h. there is a significant shortfall of housing to accommodate rapid increases in new workforces or population;
- i. local government is not appropriately resourced to meet rapid increases in the demand for services, planning and infrastructure, including upgrading assets and facilities and requests resourcing and funding support from other levels of government to help address these challenges and maximise opportunities for the community;

j. there needs to be a greater understanding of direct community benefits and potential offsets for our community, including but not limited to, potentially reduced electricity tariffs for community and locally impacted land holders;

k. the coastal and marine environment must be protected and that any proposed developments do not have an adverse impact; and

l. proposed 'on land' transmission routes utilise existing infrastructure and transmission routes, including placing transmission lines underground, to minimise the impacts to existing land use such as farming and tourism.

Submissions for the Offshore renewable energy infrastructure area proposal are open until 7 October and can be made at: <https://consult.industry.gov.au/oei-gippsland>

Quote attributable to South Gippsland Shire Council Mayor, Mohya Davies

“Council’s position on the Offshore Renewable Energy Infrastructure Area Proposal is mainly supportive in principle, but we do have concerns about how the turbines could impact the visual amenity of our area – particularly around areas of immense significance such as Wilsons Promontory Nature Park.

We also are cautious about the environmental and social impacts and we would like assurance that transmission lines would be placed underground to minimise impacts on existing land usages, such as farming and tourism. We recognise the importance of the transition to renewable energy, however we are keen to ensure this transition does not occur at the expense of South Gippsland’s unique natural, agricultural and tourism assets, which are of state and national significance. We encourage any community members who have thoughts on the proposal to also make submission, prior to the cut off on 7 October.”

PR2770 21/09/22