

Our ref: [EF/22/592](#)



*South Gippsland
Shire Council*

30 September 2022

Department of Industry, Science and Resources
Australian Government

<https://consult.industry.gov.au/oei-gippsland/feedback>

Submission - Response to the Federal Government's announcement that Gippsland will be the first site in Australia to be formally examined as a new offshore wind zone.

Thank you for providing the opportunity for South Gippsland Shire Council to make a submission in response to the Federal Government's proposal.

Council acknowledges both State and Federal Government announcements towards their commitment to developing an offshore wind industry to support the transition toward a net-zero emissions economy into the future.

There are major shifts in the way energy will be produced into the future with renewable energy targets, incentives and investments driving these changes, both globally and locally. Gippsland, and in particular, the surrounding coastal areas of South Gippsland, Bass Coast and Wellington Shires, are currently the focus of several major renewable energy proposals and opportunities.

The offshore projects proposed off Gippsland's coast could help meet emission targets and these projects could also offer the local community opportunities and benefits. The Gippsland region is recognised as being well-suited for potential projects, because of its strong consistent winds, proximity to electricity markets, existing connections to the grid and interested industries.

It is anticipated that any proposed project may also increase interest in industrial land usage, manufacturing and ports infrastructure to service and capitalise on future developments and South Gippsland's proximity to proposed locations. All this interest has the potential to generate a lot of economic activity and investment in our local community, potentially leading to the establishment of new industries, training and upskilling of local workforce and the creation of jobs.



Current engagement with Proponents/Developers

Preliminary information from proponents and developers regarding the scale, location and impact of these proposals has been varied. This has mainly reflected the stage of development and engagement of each proposed project. Therefore, some proposals have provided comprehensive information, whereas others are limited in their detail. This limits understanding of the overall potential benefits or impacts to the community and economy for South Gippsland, at this point in time.

Council's submission seeks to understand the likely economic, environmental and community impacts that these projects may have in order to effectively plan and maximise the local economic benefits, while adequately representing the expectations of the community.

Council Resolution

At its Meeting on 21 September 2022, South Gippsland Shire Council considered a report recommending that Council endorse a submission to this announcement. The following resolution was adopted by Council.

That Council:

1. *Endorses the submission to the Federal Government for Offshore Renewable Energy Infrastructure Area Proposal: Bass Strait Off Gippsland, which provides 'in principle' support towards offshore renewable energy projects, excluding the proposed zone's visual impacts, identified adjacent to south western coastline and bays of the municipality, recognising that:*
 - 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, preferring 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.*
2. *Continue to work with Offshore Renewable Wind Energy proponents, developers, businesses, State and Federal Government towards achieving beneficial outcomes for the South Gippsland community.*



South Gippsland Context

South Gippsland Shire is part of Victoria's Gippsland Region. The Shire has a population of 30,577 people, which is projected to rise to 36,000 by 2036. Its major towns are Leongatha, Korumburra, Mirboo North and Foster. While a relatively small population it has an economy of national significance with regard to food production. South Gippsland has the most Agricultural businesses of any Local Government Area in Victoria.

It is one of Australia's key centres for dairy production with 10 per cent of Victoria's dairy farms and three significant dairy production facilities. It is an area for premium beef production, which also includes the regional cattle saleyards and a major export abattoir. Horticulture, including snow peas, celery and potatoes has become an important sector and boutique food production, across a wide range of products, is an expanding area which is also attracting new people to the area.

South Gippsland is best known for Wilsons Promontory National Park, which along with other key attractions like the Great Southern Rail Trail, brings 1.2 million visitors to the area each year. Vessels operating from Barry Beach service the offshore oil and gas rigs and fishing fleets operate from Port Welshpool and Port Franklin.

Council acknowledges the importance of the Gippsland region to the national economy. From our productive agriculture and energy resources, to our tourism and natural environment, we have many great opportunities and challenges that are reflected in our current and future infrastructure needs.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. If you would like further information, please contact Christian Stefani, Manager Economy, Community and Investment on (03) 5662 9200 or email christian.stefani@southgippsland.vic.gov.au

Yours sincerely

Cr Mohya Davies
Mayor