

Implementation Statement 4

April 2025

Cover image

An offshore wind farm in the Netherlands.

We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it.

We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

DEECA is committed to genuinely partnering with Victorian Traditional Owners and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.

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ISBN 978-1-76176-103-4 (print)

ISBN 978-1-76176-104-1 (pdf)

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Minister's foreword



The Hon. Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy and Resources
Minister for Climate Action
Minister for the State Electricity Commission

Offshore wind energy is a key pillar of Victoria's renewable energy future - creating new opportunity for Victorian families for generations to come.

Coal and gas have long powered our state and provided proud lifetime careers for many Victorians. But as these sources become less reliable – and more expensive – we must transition to more renewable forms of energy.

Offshore wind energy will create thousands of Victorian jobs, while helping us keep bills down by delivering affordable, reliable and clean renewable energy into the grid.

It'll also support the future of our regional communities.

As Australia's most advanced offshore wind zone and the national leader with 12 feasibility licences awarded, Gippsland is at the centre of offshore wind development.

Just as Gippsland has always been fundamental to powering our state – with offshore wind, it will continue to be.

That's why the Victorian Government has provided industry the clarity and certainty needed to invest and help us build this necessary next iteration of our energy system.

This is our fourth Offshore Wind Energy Implementation Statement, detailing Victoria's progress to date and the next steps in delivering Australia's first 2 gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind power.

Since Implementation Statement 3, we have legislated our nation-leading offshore wind energy generation targets of at least 2 GW by 2032, 4 GW by 2035 and 9 GW by 2040.

Implementation Statement 4 outlines our approach to offshore wind industry jobs and training, supply chain and local content requirements. It also highlights progress on procurement, ports, transmission, industry development, legislation and regulatory reform, and protections for the natural environment.

I am proud to also announce the commencement of a Registration of Interest (ROI) process for offshore wind feasibility licence holders to access the information needed to inform a Request for Proposal (RFP) stage.

The first tranche of projects will lay the foundation for our new industry to thrive – and ensure our state is ready to reap the rewards.

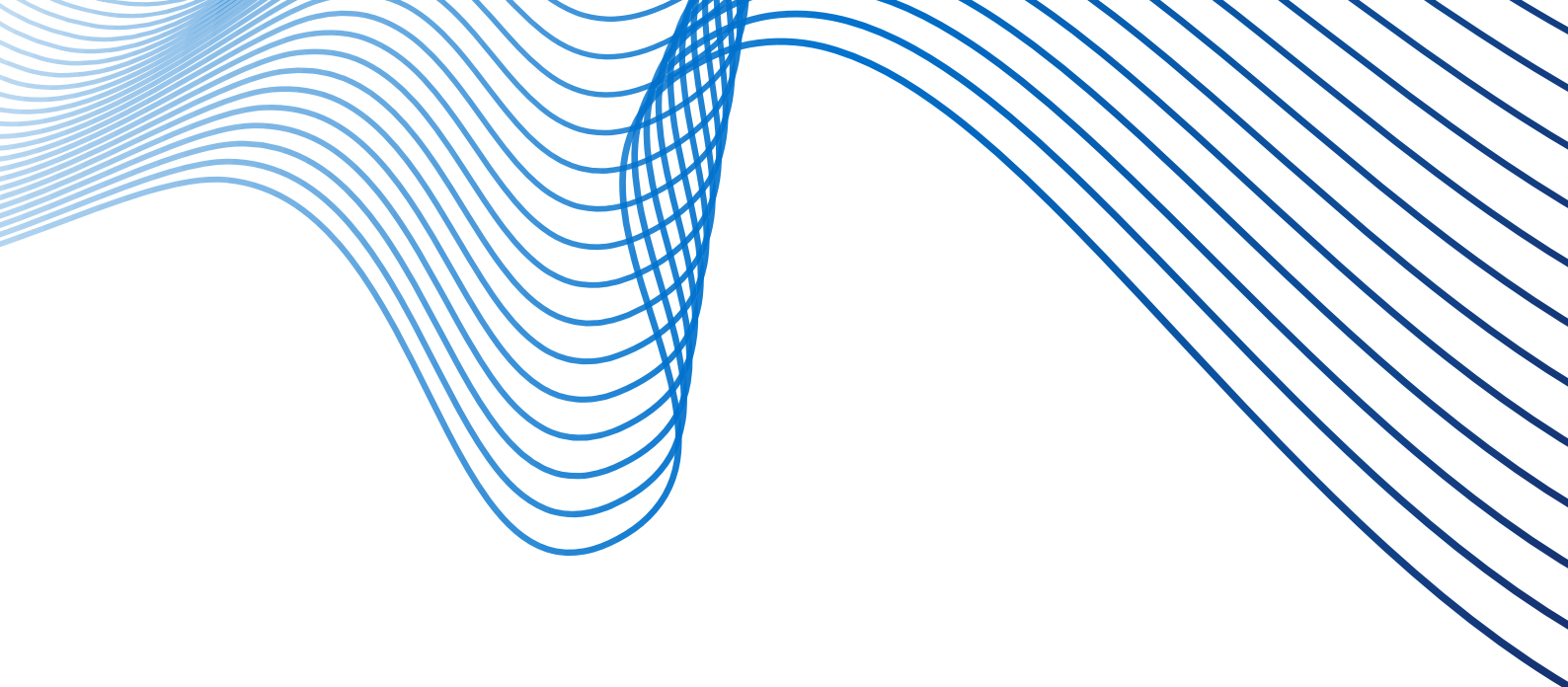
Importantly, Implementation Statement 4 identifies community engagement, benefit sharing, and Traditional Owner relationships as essential to the establishment of this new industry.

Our new offshore wind industry will deliver lasting opportunities for our state, with new jobs, new industries, and new growth for businesses and communities.

Offshore wind has the power to benefit every Victorian.

Our Government is determined to make sure it does.





Offshore wind energy will create thousands of Victorian jobs, while helping us keep bills down by delivering affordable, reliable and clean renewable energy into the grid.

Summary of notices



Procurement

Notice

- 1** The state has commenced a Registration of Interest (ROI) process for offshore wind feasibility licence holders. This is a step towards the first 2 GW of offshore wind energy capacity in Victoria and lays the foundation for achieving the state's longer-term legislated targets of 4 GW by 2035 and 9 GW by 2040.
- 2** The state commenced its ROI in March 2025 and will close the process in May 2025. Subject to a future government decision, we intend for the RFP phase to launch in Q3 2025, with the state targeting contract award in Q3 2026.
- 3** Victoria will continue to work with the Commonwealth Government to enable this nationally significant industry. Commonwealth commitment is required to progress market reform that will enable offshore wind and other high-capacity renewable energy generation and storage technologies to make their critical contribution in the energy transition.



Transmission

Notice

- 4** VicGrid is leading the development of a coordinated connection hub for offshore wind generators in Gippsland and new transmission to connect offshore wind energy projects to the grid.
- 5** VicGrid will confirm a preferred transmission corridor in the first half of 2025 to ensure that offshore wind transmission infrastructure meets the timing commitments set by the Victorian Government – targeting delivery by 2030.
- 6** VicGrid will take a coordination role with offshore wind developers in the area between the Gippsland coast and the proposed VicGrid connection hub.
- 7** In December 2024, VicGrid commenced the procurement process to engage a delivery partner to design, build and operate the transmission line in Gippsland and is targeting award in Q4 2025.
- 8** Elements of the Victorian Transmission Investment Framework applied to the development of offshore wind transmission infrastructure, such as access arrangements and community benefits models, will be finalised by July 2025.
- 9** The first Victorian Transmission Plan will be delivered in July 2025 and will provide information on future transmission development to support Victoria's longer-term offshore wind targets.



Ports

Notice

- 10** The Victorian Government is actively assessing the role of deepwater ports, including the Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal at the Port of Hastings, to support the construction and assembly of Victorian offshore wind projects.



Workforce and industry development

Notice

- 11** The Victorian Government has used the ROI process to release supporting detail to feasibility licence holders on its expected requirements for local content. Supporting detail includes how local content criteria will be assessed and weighted, and the specific developer-led initiatives, strategies and plans developers must propose to enable positive economic outcomes for Victorians.
- 12** The Victorian Government has used the ROI process to indicate to feasibility licence holders how the state's Social Procurement Framework will be applied. Developers will need to set stretch-targets and propose initiatives for supporting the participation of women, the First Peoples of Victoria and disadvantaged Victorians.
- 13** The Victorian Government will release the Victorian Energy Jobs Plan and the Women in Energy Strategy to support the development of renewable energy workforces, including the offshore wind energy workforce.
- 14** The Victorian Government is delivering a Wind Worker Training Centre through an open competitive selection process, increasing training opportunities for Victoria's wind workforce.
- 15** In 2024, the Victorian Government initiated the Renewable Energy Jobs Taskforce (The Taskforce). The Taskforce will ensure unions, industry associations, local businesses and community groups have input into the development of Victoria's offshore wind sector.



Protecting our environment

Notice

- 16** The Victorian Government will continue its commitment to protecting our natural environment through the development of offshore wind projects before, during and after operations. Planning and preparation for offshore wind development in Victoria, including for enabling infrastructure such as ports and transmission, will be guided by the current legislative approval processes including under the Victorian *Environment Effects Act 1978*, *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, and *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*, and the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.



Legislative and regulatory reform

Notice

- 17** Victoria enacted the *Energy and Public Land Legislation Amendment (Enabling Offshore Wind Energy) Act 2024* (Vic) in May 2024. This Act enables offshore wind developers who hold Commonwealth feasibility licences to undertake feasibility studies on Victorian public land and waters.
- A Victorian offshore wind farm feasibility access licence, application form and regulatory guidance note for the Gippsland declared area have been published for developer use.
- 18** Victoria recognises the importance of having streamlined but robust planning and environmental approval processes for renewable energy projects. The government has established the Development Facilitation Program to accelerate priority projects through the planning and development phase to enable better and faster decisions and has committed to improvements in Environment Effects Statement processes to enable more efficient and quicker assessments.



Traditional Owner partnerships

Notice

- 19** The Victorian Government supports appropriate resourcing for Traditional Owners to allow meaningful engagement and genuine partnerships in the development of the offshore wind energy sector. The state has used the ROI process to indicate to feasibility licence holders that an engagement agreement to provide resourcing to support ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners will be considered as part of Victoria's first auction.
- 20** The Victorian Government supports the aspirations and assertions of all Traditional Owners in declared offshore wind areas, and their rights and responsibilities to care for Country. It reaffirms its commitment to supporting Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation to have mutually beneficial agreements with Gippsland feasibility licence holders, in line with international best practice.



Industry, stakeholder and community engagement

Notice

- 21** The Victorian Government expects community engagement and benefit sharing for Victoria's offshore wind auction to be tailored to local community needs and aspirations, prepared with local community input, and flexible enough to be adapted over time.
- The state has used the ROI process to indicate to feasibility licence holders that they will be encouraged to provide voluntary benefit-sharing measures for host communities by submitting a community benefit-sharing plan as part of the auction documentation.
- 22** The Victorian Government has produced a series of digital images showing what wind turbines off the coast of Gippsland might look like. The series contains interactive images representing a 2 GW offshore wind farm as viewed from three popular locations – Golden Beach, Woodside Beach and Mount Oberon summit – at varying distances.
- 23** Victoria, as the first Global Offshore Wind Alliance sub-national member, is hosting the Global Wind Energy Council APAC Wind Energy Summit at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre on 16–18 September 2025.



Introduction

The commencement of the offshore wind Registration of Interest process and the release of the fourth Offshore Wind Energy Implementation Statement demonstrate our ongoing commitment to developing this exciting new industry and to transitioning to a renewable energy future.

Offshore wind energy presents a significant opportunity for Victoria to strengthen energy security, create thousands of jobs, drive economic growth, reduce emissions and bring lasting benefit to regional communities.

Our Implementation Statements are designed to update industry, stakeholders, Traditional Owners and the community on the progress we are making in establishing an offshore wind sector. In Implementation Statement 3, released in December 2023, we announced:

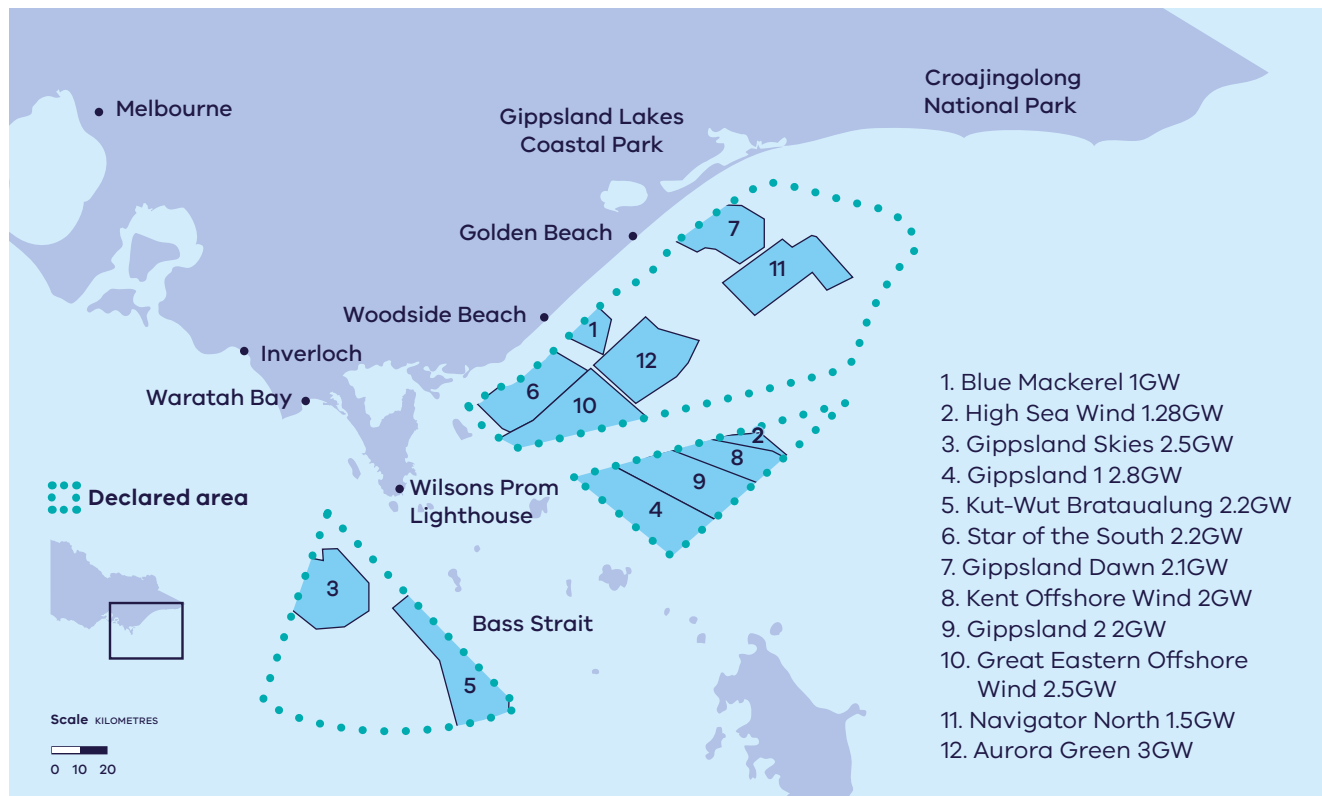
- A competitive auction process for a support package with contract negotiation and award targeted to occur later in 2026.
- VicGrid will ensure the offshore wind transmission infrastructure meets the timing commitments set by the Victorian Government – targeting delivery by 2030.
- Elements of the Victorian Transmission Investment Framework (VTIF) will be applied to development of offshore wind transmission infrastructure where appropriate, such as access arrangements and community benefits.
- Subject to environmental assessments and approvals, the Port of Hastings has been identified to develop the Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal. Other commercial ports in Victoria have the potential to support and facilitate the establishment and operation of the offshore wind industry.
- Local content requirements for the first 2 GW auction reflect the sector's maturity and feasibility licence holders will be expected to compete on non-price factors, including how local content will be maximised and industry development supported.
- Commitment to supporting the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation's (GLaWAC) aspirations for mutually beneficial agreements with Gippsland feasibility licence holders, in line with international best practice.

Since then, and as outlined here in Implementation Statement 4, work has continued to support Victoria's offshore wind energy program.

Key milestones include:

- In May 2024, the state legislated offshore wind targets of at least 2 GW by 2032, 4 GW by 2035 and 9 GW by 2040.
- In May 2024, Victoria enacted the *Energy and Public Land Legislation Amendment (Enabling Offshore Wind Energy) Act 2024* (Vic). This enables offshore wind developers who hold Commonwealth feasibility licences to undertake feasibility studies on Victorian public land and in Victorian public waters.
- The Commonwealth Government awarded 12 feasibility licences for the Gippsland declared area and one feasibility licence for the Southern Ocean declared area.
- In December 2024, VicGrid commenced the procurement process to engage a delivery partner to design, build and operate the transmission line in Gippsland.
- In March 2025, the state opened a Registration of Interest (ROI) process to enable feasibility licence holders to access the information needed to inform a Request for Proposal (RFP) stage.

Gippsland offshore wind declared area and feasibility licence holders



Southern Ocean offshore wind declared area and feasibility licence holder







Procurement

With the opening of a Registration of Interest process, the Victorian Government continues to lead the way in developing an offshore wind industry in Australia.

Notice

1

The state has commenced a Registration of Interest (ROI) process for offshore wind feasibility licence holders. This is a step towards the first 2 GW of offshore wind energy capacity in Victoria and lays the foundation for achieving the state's longer-term legislated targets of 4 GW by 2035 and 9 GW by 2040.

The ROI process for offshore wind feasibility licence holders is an efficient process, enabling feasibility licence holders to access the information needed to inform a Request for Proposal (RFP) stage. The ROI is less onerous than an Expression of Interest (EOI), which would require feasibility licence holders to supply, and be assessed on, a range of information relating to their project status.

This change is appropriate. Due to the timing of licensing and management plan regulations since the release of IS3, this adjusted process helps us maintain our overall offshore wind program timeframes.

We have heard through market soundings that an efficient, effective and robust process is needed for the support of industry aiming to build the first 2 GW.

We are committed to supporting the development of the offshore wind industry in Victoria and are looking forward to hitting the next milestone.

To support detailed design of the auction, there has been a strong focus on understanding recent offshore wind market challenges in other jurisdictions – for instance, relating to supply chain costs, inflationary pressures and interest rates – and how governments have adapted policy to support project development and completion.

Over the past 12 months, significant work has been undertaken, informed by extensive analysis and expert advice, to progress the detailed design of a comprehensive support package and auction process. The proposed support package comprises a contract-for-difference (CfD) and availability

payment – together providing investment certainty and closing the revenue-cost gap for the state's first tranche of offshore wind projects. The availability-style payment is a fixed-sum periodic payment, conditional upon the infrastructure being available to generate electricity and only payable following achievement of commercial operation.

The state has continued to consult extensively with industry. This included a third targeted market sounding exercise with Gippsland and Southern Ocean feasibility licence holders in July and August 2024, which showed there was broad industry support for the approach to the auction and the key features of the support package. Feedback was key to further detailed design work in the second half of 2024.

With this industry feedback, and informed by expert commercial advice, Victoria's first auction will be designed to maximise the deliverability of the first offshore wind projects. The state expects to evaluate bidder proposals based on project cost, deliverability and local content. Project deliverability includes the assessment of feasibility licence holders' partnerships with Traditional Owners as well as their broader community engagement and benefit-sharing plans.

Auction process and timeline update

Notice

2

The state commenced its ROI in March 2025 and will close the process in May 2025. Subject to a future government decision, we intend for the RFP phase to launch in Q3 2025, with the state targeting contract award in Q3 2026.

The commencement of the ROI process is a step forward for the state, industry and communities, as we work together to establish the offshore wind sector in Victoria. Feasibility licence holders are eligible to participate in the ROI and Gippsland licence holders are expected to connect to the VicGrid-identified connection hub location near Giffard; VicGrid has focused on developing a single hub for the first tranche of offshore wind in Gippsland, with longer-term planning underway.

The purpose of the ROI process is to provide key information – including draft contract terms, guidance on stakeholder engagement and expectations relating to the *Local Jobs First Act 2003* (LJFA) – to help feasibility licence holders prepare for an RFP phase.

Feedback received from ROI participants will inform the finalisation of auction design and support package contract terms – subject to government decision-making – ahead of the RFP opening in Q3 2025.

In the early stages of offshore wind project development, significant work is undertaken to better understand site conditions and inform project design engineering. These activities are also key in ensuring projects are ready and able to submit a competitive bid at Victoria's first auction. The ROI process and RFP timing will give feasibility licence holders additional time to commence and gather essential feasibility data following the finalisation of Commonwealth management plan regulations in December 2024.



Partnering with the Commonwealth Government

Notice

3

Victoria will continue to work with the Commonwealth Government to enable this nationally significant industry. Commonwealth commitment is required to progress market reform that will enable offshore wind and other high-capacity renewable energy generation and storage technologies to make their critical contribution in the energy transition.

The Victorian Government is working closely with the Commonwealth Government to enable the development of the offshore wind industry and the delivery of Australia's first offshore wind auction. It will be critical that the Commonwealth Government ensures a timely national commitment progressing market reforms that enable offshore wind to form an essential component of the nation's future energy system, providing greater reliability without the social licence challenges facing onshore equivalents.

The Commonwealth also has an essential role in providing policy and regulatory certainty by developing an approvals framework, beyond the Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act and Regulations, that supports investment in the offshore energy industry.





Transmission

VicGrid is coordinating the development of transmission infrastructure to support offshore wind in Gippsland and is considering transmission needs associated with offshore wind in the Southern Ocean.

VicGrid-led transmission infrastructure

Notice

4

VicGrid is leading the development of a coordinated connection hub for offshore wind generators in Gippsland and new transmission to connect offshore wind energy projects to the grid.

In March 2024, VicGrid identified a transmission study area and connection hub area in Gippsland to support the first 2 GW of offshore wind energy.

The study area was announced following a strategic options assessment. The study area is now being refined to identify a preferred corridor, route and easement for building the shared transmission line.

VicGrid has completed preliminary desktop investigations to identify and assess areas suitable for further investigation. Areas deemed unsuitable for hosting transmission, because of highly sensitive protected species, technical constructability, or feasibility, have been removed.

After careful consideration of the merits and complexities of 330 kilovolt (kV) and 500 kV, it was determined that 500 kV aboveground line is the most suitable solution for Gippsland. This is because 500 kV transmission has a higher transfer capacity than 300 kV and will result in significantly less power loss. The aboveground option also avoids a number of challenges with undergrounding, including cost, engineering complexity, procurement and timing.

In 2025, VicGrid will continue engaging with landholders, conducting field studies and environmental assessments to build its understanding of important areas and features in the study area and how to minimise impacts on host communities.

In line with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation's Pathways to Partnerships approach, VicGrid will continue discussions with GLaWAC on ways to minimise potential impacts to tangible and intangible cultural heritage and values.

VicGrid is also preparing an Environment Effects Statement (EES), which will be assessed under the Victorian *Environment Effects Act 1978* and is being undertaken as an accredited assessment to address national environmental matters under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The EES will comprehensively investigate the project's potential impacts on the environment.

Since the release of Implementation Statement 3, the Commonwealth Government declared an offshore wind area in the Southern Ocean. In February 2025, one feasibility licence was awarded. VicGrid is considering transmission needs in the Southern Ocean area.

Notice

5

VicGrid will confirm a preferred transmission corridor in the first half of 2025 to ensure that offshore wind transmission infrastructure meets the timing commitments set by the Victorian Government – targeting delivery by 2030.

The study area will be refined to a corridor, and then a route, through technical studies, on the ground environmental assessments and engagement with landholders, local communities and Traditional Owners.

A range of criteria will be applied to understand and compare potential impacts and identify suitability of land for hosting transmission. The criteria are informed by VicGrid's guiding principles, industry expertise and engagement.

VicGrid is committed to ensuring the transmission infrastructure to coordinate offshore wind connections (and onshore generation) meets the timing commitments set by the Victorian Government; it is targeting a 2030 delivery date for the project(s).

Notice

6

VicGrid will take a coordination role with offshore wind developers in the area between the Gippsland coast and the proposed VicGrid connection hub.

VicGrid is developing a coordination strategy that will look at how and where Gippsland offshore wind developers will:

- bring their offshore wind cables onshore, and
- build their underground cables between the coast and the VicGrid connection hub.

VicGrid is consulting with offshore wind developers to better understand their technical requirements and ensure these are considered early in planning.

The strategy will also consider how VicGrid can best support landholders and communities and work with Traditional Owners as rights-holders in this area and ensure a consistent approach to landholder engagement, community consultation and information sharing.

VicGrid will share more on the onshore connection coordination strategy in the first half of 2025 and will seek feedback from communities and landholders near the Gippsland coast to help inform decisions.

Procurement

Notice

7

In December 2024, VicGrid commenced the procurement process to engage a delivery partner to design, build and operate the transmission line in Gippsland and is targeting award in Q4 2025.

The delivery partner will need to share VicGrid's commitment to work closely with Traditional Owners, landholders and local communities while driving value for money for Victorian energy users.

The first stage of the procurement process, an Expression of Interest (EOI) closed in February 2025.

The VicGrid EOI is targeted to eligible respondents who can demonstrate:

- status as an existing transmission network service provider or the capability and intent to become one, and
- a consortium structure comprising, at a minimum, a lead respondent member, design and construction capability and equity providers.

Victorian Transmission Investment Framework and the Victorian Transmission Plan

Notice

8

Elements of the Victorian Transmission Investment Framework applied to the development of offshore wind transmission infrastructure, such as access arrangements and community benefits models, will be finalised by July 2025.

The Victorian Government is changing the way renewable energy zones and transmission infrastructure are planned through the Victorian Transmission Investment Framework (VTIF) reforms. The reforms include development of a long-term strategic plan called the Victorian Transmission Plan (VTP), early and meaningful engagement with landholders and local communities, partnerships with Traditional Owners, fairer community-benefit arrangements and certainty for investors.

The first stage of legislation to enable the VTIF reforms passed the Victorian Parliament in May 2024, empowering VicGrid to deliver the first VTP by 31 July 2025.

Current offshore wind transmission project development is focused on the first offshore wind target of at least 2 GW by 2032. Although this project will not be delivered under the new framework, its defining principles are being applied where possible – in particular, the focus on strengthening community

engagement principles and delivering community benefits. This project will be treated as an input in the 2025 VTP and assumed to be delivered as a starting point for developing the first plan.

While current transmission projects are being planned in a way that anticipates and prepares for future development and system needs, more transmission infrastructure will be required to accommodate the future offshore wind targets of 4 GW by 2035 and 9 GW by 2040. Future projects will be planned through the VTP and developed under the VTIF.

In addition, there are some elements of the VTIF, particularly access arrangements and community-benefits models, that will apply to both the current and future transmission projects.

In particular:

- The Victorian Access Regime will apply to offshore wind generators connecting to the Declared Shared Network in Victoria. In June 2024, VicGrid published a public paper outlining what the new Victorian Access Regime is, why it is required and how it is proposed to operate. VicGrid will ensure the access arrangements are ready in time to support the connection of at least 2 GW of offshore generation by 2032, in line with Victoria's offshore wind targets.
- VicGrid intends to provide priority access to offshore wind generators so they can connect to the transmission infrastructure and operate without experiencing excessive curtailment up to the available transmission network hosting capacity that is provided to these projects. This is important because offshore wind farms will be required to connect to the provided transmission infrastructure.

Under VTIF, the Victorian Government is introducing a Renewable Energy Zone (REZ) Community Benefits Plan delivering initiatives to support landholders, Traditional Owners, neighbours and communities near major transmission and REZ infrastructure.

The plan introduces new REZ Community Energy Funds that will coordinate financial contributions from transmission, generation, and storage developers to support projects that improve local energy outcomes and create lasting benefits for communities in regions hosting energy infrastructure.

The plan also includes payments for host landholders, guidance for payments for impacted neighbours, and a commitment to co-design a new approach to benefits for Traditional Owners.

These initiatives will apply to the transmission projects to coordinate offshore wind connections.

The payments to landholders who host new transmission easements will be in addition to, and not a replacement for, existing compensation arrangements for landholders under existing legislation. Landholders are entitled to be fully compensated for easements established on their land, including for the impact on farming and business operations.

On top of compensation, landholders will also receive \$200,000 per kilometre for a typical area of new transmission easement, paid in annual instalments over 25 years and indexed to inflation.

These payments have been introduced by the Victorian Government to acknowledge the important role landholders and regional communities play in hosting critical energy infrastructure.

A second stage of legislation to introduce new community benefits and network access arrangements is expected to be brought to parliament in 2025.

Notice

9

The first Victorian Transmission Plan will be delivered in July 2025 and will provide information on future transmission development to support Victoria's longer-term offshore wind targets.

The Victorian Transmission Plan (VTP) will ensure we have the right infrastructure in the right place at the right time to support the transition to renewable energy. It will provide further information on future transmission development to support Victoria's longer-term offshore wind targets of 4 GW by 2035 and 9 GW by 2040.

VicGrid has engaged with Traditional Owners, landholders, regional communities, and stakeholders across Victoria to seek input as it develops and publishes its draft 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan for community feedback. The VTP will include:

- draft proposed renewable energy zones (REZs) and transmission infrastructure projects to meet Victoria's energy needs over the next 15 years
- how partnerships with Traditional Owners and engagement with communities and industry have shaped the draft plan
- further opportunities for landholders, communities, Traditional Owners and industry to provide feedback to shape the final 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan.

More information can be found at Developing the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan on Engage Victoria.¹

Key milestones

Major milestones for transmission to coordinate offshore wind connections

2025	2026 – 2027	2027 – 2030	2030
Identify a preferred corridor and then a route. Contract award for delivery partner to design, build and operate the transmission line.	Confirm transmission easement through environment assessments and consultation. Public review and decision on planning and environment assessment.	Construction and commissioning.	Target delivery date.

Overall timeline to be consistent with Victorian Government targets and informed by offshore wind generation procurement.

¹ engage.vic.gov.au/victransmissionplan



Victoria understands the importance of port infrastructure to the development and delivery of offshore wind projects in the state.

Notice

10

The Victorian Government is actively assessing the role of deepwater ports, including the Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal at the Port of Hastings, to support the construction and assembly of Victorian offshore wind projects.

Specialised port infrastructure is essential for achieving Victoria's offshore wind targets. Due to their size and weight, the only viable method to date for the movement, storage, assembly, installation, and maintenance of offshore wind components is via specialised, deepwater offshore wind port facilities. As Victoria's offshore wind farms become operational, ports will be needed to transport workers out to the wind farms to perform essential maintenance.

In 2023, the Victorian Government confirmed the development of the Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal at the Port of Hastings as the primary offshore wind construction and assembly port.

Following the decision of the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Water (the Minister) to reject the initial *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act* referral in January 2024, the Port of Hastings Corporation

began preparing a new EPBC Act referral to address the concerns raised by the Minister. Over a dozen technical and environmental reports have been prepared to examine potential impacts and approaches to refining the project to minimise impacts on significant environmental values protected under the EPBC Act. Any new referral will include:

- revising the design of the terminal to mitigate the environmental impacts construction will have while maintaining the ability to provide port services throughput of 1 GW per annum and support the installation of up to 18 MW turbines
- assessment and minimisation of the potential impact of the terminal's development on Western Port's Ramsar wetlands.



A new referral will be informed by the Environment Effects Statement (EES) process, as determined by the Victorian Minister for Planning. A technical reference group of government agencies and regulators was established in late 2023 to provide expert advice on a range of environmental assessments, including the impact the development of the Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal may have on marine ecology, coastal processes and local and migratory birdlife, which includes Ramsar values. Traditional Owners, the community and other stakeholders will be engaged during the preparation of the EES and will have the opportunity to comment on the EES when it is completed.

Considering the Commonwealth Minister's decision on the terminal's initial EPBC referral, the Victorian Government has been assessing the role other Victorian and Australian deepwater ports can play in the construction and assembly of offshore wind. To meet Victoria's long-term target of 9 GW of offshore wind by 2040, port infrastructure will be required to allow the installation of around 1 GW of offshore wind every year.

While other ports may not individually provide the full construction and assembly services envisaged at the proposed Victorian Renewable Energy Terminal, the Victorian Government is exploring the feasibility of port services for individual elements of the process. These services can range from the provision of laydown areas for the storage of pins used to attach jacket foundations to the seabed, to the assembly and installation of wind turbine generators (WTG) – assembling the towers, nacelles and blades and shipping the WTG to be attached to the foundations.

While new construction and assembly ports will be able to service Gippsland and Southern Ocean offshore wind projects, there are also broader opportunities available. In addition to being able to meet Victoria's offshore wind targets, the Commonwealth Government has also declared offshore wind zones in Tasmania and New South Wales, potentially increasing the demand for construction and assembly port infrastructure in southeast Australia. The nature of construction and assembly ports – deepwater berths with strengthened quaysides and laydown areas – means they can be easily utilised for other trades in the future, such as onshore renewables. Other deepwater ports have already announced their interest in supporting the development of offshore wind.

In 2022, GeelongPort announced its plans to develop up to 25 hectares of land to build a renewable energy-focussed terminal. This was confirmed in September 2024 when GeelongPort revealed new designs for the Geelong Renewables Terminal aimed at servicing offshore wind business.

The Port of Portland has highlighted its desire to cater for offshore wind needs, owing to its water depths and proximity to the Southern Ocean offshore wind declared area. In 2024, NSW Ports announced plans for a Port Kembla offshore wind port facility, while TasPorts announced plans to develop the Bass Strait Renewable Energy Terminal at the port of Bell Bay in Tasmania.

The Victorian Government is working with other deepwater ports to assess their viability for supporting Victoria's offshore wind targets. This includes:

- a technical assessment of potential designs, including their viability to provide foundations, WTG or full construction and assembly services
- modelling the impact use of different ports will have on offshore wind development timelines, taking into account their distance from the offshore wind zone and likely weather conditions
- potential development and construction timelines.

Through its engagement with other ports, the Victorian Government is maintaining optionality that alternative construction ports will be available for offshore wind developers to use. Offshore wind feasibility licence holders are already using Victoria's ports, such as the Barry Beach Marine Terminal, to provide services to undertake important site investigation activities. The proximity of these ports to the offshore wind declared areas provides them with the opportunity to service feasibility licence holders' development activity and, subject to approvals, operations and maintenance activities once projects start generating power. The development of operations and maintenance ports can help drive local jobs and regional investment as has been experienced in international jurisdictions, such as in Grimsby in the northeast of England.



Workforce and industry development

The Victorian Government is progressing a range of workforce and industry development initiatives to support the timely delivery of Australia's first offshore wind projects.

Supply chain and local content

Notice

11

The Victorian Government has used the ROI process to release supporting detail to feasibility licence holders on its expected requirements for local content. Supporting detail includes how local content criteria will be assessed and weighted, and the specific developer-led initiatives, strategies and plans developers must propose to enable positive economic outcomes for Victorians.

The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring that establishing offshore wind energy brings sustainable long-term opportunities for Victorian workers and businesses.

The details of the state's local content requirements have been integrated within the state's overall procurement approach. The approach is designed to reflect how price criteria, non-price criteria and local content criteria can achieve the state's objectives.

In Implementation Statement 3, we announced specific local content requirements as part of the *Local Jobs First Act 2003* (LJFA). These include minimum percentage expenditure requirements in the Australia and New Zealand region on certain types of expenditure, the proposal of new opportunities for growing local content in targeted areas, and engagement with the Industry Capability Network (ICN) to ensure local suppliers have an opportunity to participate in the development of Victoria's offshore wind sector.

Under the Local Jobs First Act, 'local content' refers to value-added activity of goods produced by local industry, services supplied by local industry and construction activities carried out by local industry, with 'local' defined as those costs occurring in Australia and New Zealand.

Further detail on local content can be found on the Local Jobs First website.²

Feasibility licence holders will be expected to respond to the following:

- Proposing opportunities for investing in the construction and capital expenditure stages to maximise local content for the development and construction phase of the project and support increased levels of local content in future projects. Projects after the first tranche auction will likely be required to comply with a minimum local content requirement in the capital expenditure phase.
- Demonstrating plans to achieve 80 per cent minimum local content during the operations and maintenance phase (2032 onwards), as averaged over a 30-year period. This acknowledges the considerable opportunity for offshore wind to provide meaningful ongoing jobs in Victoria's regions, some of which have a considerable workforce transitioning away from legacy fossil fuel industries. The operations and maintenance expenditure does not include major component procurement (e.g. nacelles), as these are capital expenditure.
- Demonstrating plans to meet the Major Projects Skills Guarantee, requiring 10 per cent of all labour hours to be performed by apprentices, trainees and cadets during relevant onshore construction activities and during the operations and maintenance phase. This requirement supports opportunities for recent workforce entrants.
- Demonstrating plans to maximise the use of steel supplied using locally milled and locally processed fabricated steel, and maximise the use of materials, products and services produced or manufactured by suppliers based in Victoria's regions.
- Working with the Industry Capability Network (ICN) to publish forward work packages to provide Australian and Victorian businesses with the opportunity to tender and participate in relevant project phases.
- Submitting industry development initiatives and investments in supply chain, workforce development, innovation and infrastructure, supported by an industry engagement strategy.

² localjobsfirst.vic.gov.au/key-documents

Following the 2023 announcement of requirements, the Victorian Government has engaged with feasibility licence holders to further clarify expectations on local content. The state has prepared further requirements as part of its Supply Chain Action Plan and Engagement Plan. Feasibility licence holders will need to:

1. Provide a supply chain strategy that outlines how they plan to integrate and support local suppliers throughout the project.
2. Provide a partnerships, collaboration and engagement strategy that outlines how they plan to engage with local suppliers.
3. Provide a workforce development strategy outlining plans for supporting the immediate and long-term development and productivity of workers in the offshore wind industry, including those from transitioning industries.

Further details on these requirements will be provided at the commencement of the state's procurement process.

The Victorian Government has been working closely with the Commonwealth Government to identify opportunities for aligning and applying Commonwealth programs and initiatives to Victoria's emerging offshore wind supply chain.

The Victorian Government also regularly engages with government and industry representatives from leading international offshore wind jurisdictions to seek best practice in establishing supply chains, workforces and industry. This includes engaging with governments of Denmark, the United Kingdom, and across the Asia-Pacific region as well as through leveraging its sub-national membership of the Global Offshore Wind Alliance (GOWA).

Social procurement

Notice

12

The Victorian Government has used the ROI process to indicate to feasibility licence holders how the state's Social Procurement Framework will be applied. Developers will need to set stretch-targets and propose initiatives for supporting the participation of women, the First Peoples of Victoria and disadvantaged Victorians.

The state supports all objectives of the Social Procurement Framework and will seek to prioritise:

- opportunities for Victorian priority jobseekers including women and disadvantaged Victorians
- women's equality and safety
- opportunities for the First Peoples of Victoria.

These objectives have been selected because of their alignment with key auction criteria, including Traditional Owner engagement, local employment requirements under the *Local Jobs First Act 2003*, and the upcoming Victorian Energy Jobs Plan (VEJP).

Developers will have a requirement to develop and submit a social procurement commitment proposal, as a minimum bid requirement, that achieves outcomes from the stated objectives.

The proposal will need to include:

- current employment data – detailing the roles of individuals from target groups (the First Peoples of Victoria, disadvantaged Victorians, and women) currently within the organisation
- existing policies or initiatives – outlining any current initiatives that promote inclusive employment for these groups
- commitment to new policies or initiatives – detailing the feasibility licence holder's plan to implement new actions supporting employment for disadvantaged groups
- measurable targets and monitoring plan – setting clear, measurable targets and a framework for monitoring and reporting progress throughout the project lifecycle.

This approach is consistent with international practice and the Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework. More information will be provided to developers during the competitive procurement process.

The Victorian Energy Jobs Plan and the Women in Energy Strategy

Notice

- 13** The Victorian Government will release the Victorian Energy Jobs Plan and the Women in Energy Strategy to support the development of renewable energy workforces, including the offshore wind energy workforce.

The speed and scale of Victoria's energy transition mean it is important to ensure the right workforce development conditions exist. To support this, the Victorian Government is delivering the Victorian Energy Jobs Plan (VEJP). VEJP will establish a framework that identifies opportunities to enhance capacity, capability and coordination for Victoria's energy workforce. VEJP is a call to action to the energy industry, the education and training sector, and governments to work together and meet the challenge. This will help to ensure the required workforce is available to deliver the state's renewable

energy targets, and that Victoria's energy transition is supported by strong investment confidence.

The Women in Energy Strategy sits alongside VEJP and seeks to progress the Victorian Government's gender equity agenda, with the objectives to increase the proportion of, and equity for, women in the energy sector. VEJP, with the Women in Energy Strategy, will support Victorians to benefit from the education, training, and employment opportunities the energy transition creates.

Wind Worker Training Centre

Notice

- 14** The Victorian Government is delivering a Wind Worker Training Centre through an open competitive selection process, increasing training opportunities for Victoria's wind workforce.

Up to \$4.9 million will be available through an open competitive process to deliver the Victorian Government's election commitment to establish a Wind Worker Training Centre.

As set out in Cheaper, Cleaner, Renewable: Our Plan for Victoria's Electricity Future,³ the Wind Worker Training Centre – along with the establishment of a Renewable Hydrogen Worker Training Centre – will support Victoria's renewable energy transition by skilling, up-skilling and training Victoria's energy workforce.

From August to October 2024, a Request for Information⁴ (RFI) sought industry and stakeholder feedback on how the worker training centres can best be delivered. The feedback is being reviewed and applications to a competitive selection process are expected to open in early 2025 and close in mid-2025. Contracts are expected to be awarded in late 2025.

³ energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/victorias-electricity-future

⁴ engage.vic.gov.au/project/clean-energy-worker-training-centres/timeline/35230

Renewable Energy Jobs Taskforce

Notice

15

In 2024, the Victorian Government initiated the Renewable Energy Jobs Taskforce (The Taskforce). The Taskforce will ensure unions, industry associations, local businesses and community groups have input into the development of Victoria's offshore wind sector.

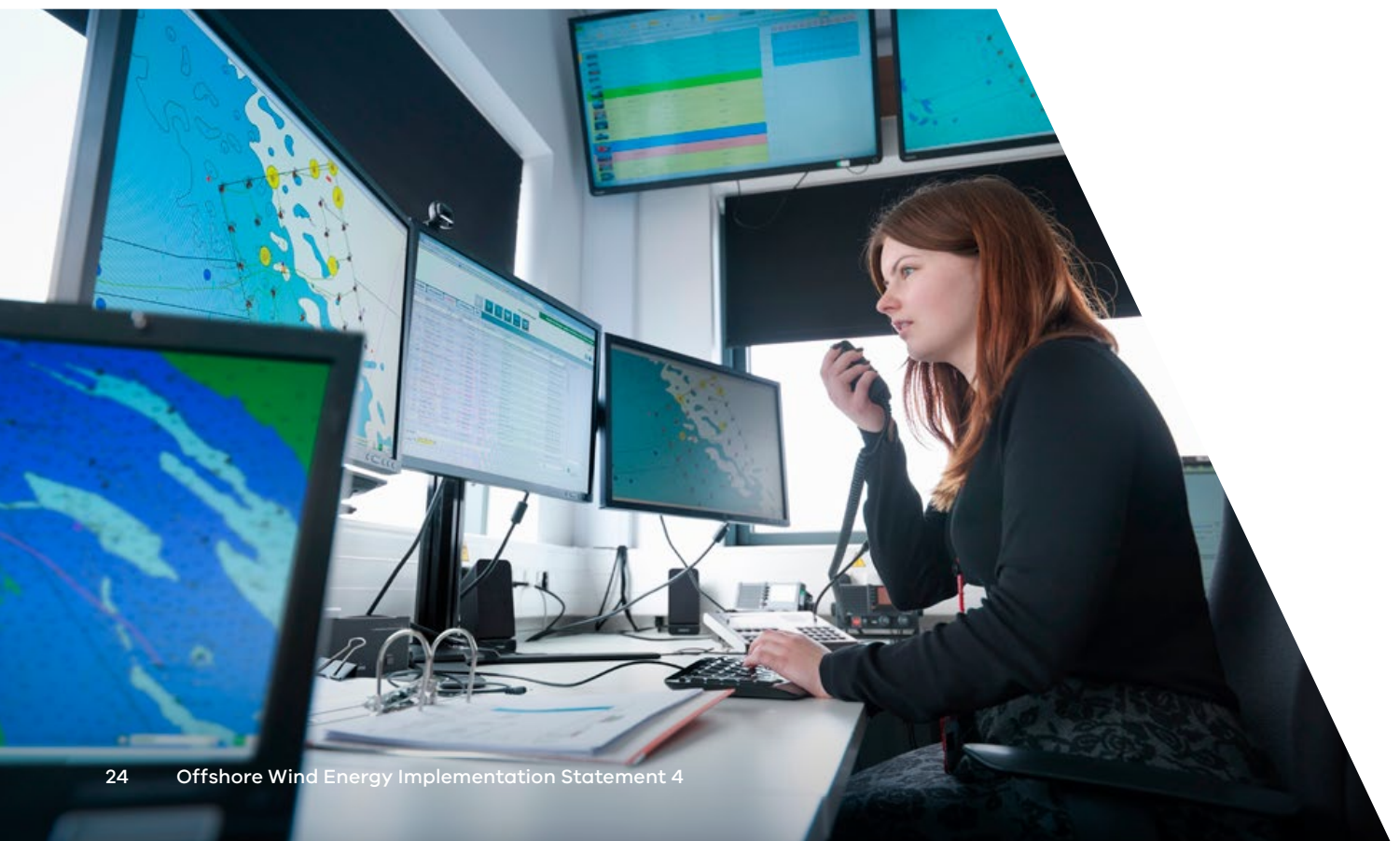
Victoria's renewable energy transition, including establishing Australia's offshore wind industry, presents many new and unique opportunities to Victoria's workers, businesses, and communities. To ensure local business and workforces benefit from new opportunities brought by this new industry, the Victorian Government established the Renewable Energy Jobs Taskforce.

Jointly led by the Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), The Taskforce includes representatives from a diverse mix of stakeholders such as unions, community, and industry associations and businesses.

The Taskforce met twice in 2024. The focus of the sessions included:

- understanding the state's offshore wind program and procurement timelines
- identifying opportunities and barriers facing the state in maximising local content
- discussing insights from international jurisdictions in successfully establishing an offshore wind sector.

The Taskforce will continue providing advice and insight to the development of Victoria's offshore wind industry during 2025.





Protecting our environment

We are aligning Victoria's future renewable energy needs and environmental values as we take the critical action necessary to limit climate change.

Notice

16

The Victorian Government will continue its commitment to protecting our natural environment through the development of offshore wind projects before, during, and after operations. Planning and preparation for offshore wind development in Victoria, including for enabling infrastructure such as ports and transmission, will be guided by the current legislative approval processes including under the Victorian *Environment Effects Act 1978*, *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, and *Marine and Coastal Act 2018*, and the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

A healthy environment has intrinsic values and contributes to the state's liveability and sustainability by providing clean water and air, and habitats for species. It is also the basis for many Victorian regional industries such as agriculture, commercial and recreational fishing, and tourism. We have heard from communities in Gippsland and southwest Victoria and understand concerns regarding conservation values and marine life.

The Victorian Government works in partnership with regulators and experts, Traditional Owners, industry and community stakeholders and the Commonwealth Government to ensure development will effectively avoid, minimise and offset impacts on biodiversity and natural values. At a practical level, the government is developing strong guidance on managing environmental impacts and building a knowledge base of our coastal and marine values. The government is ensuring land and marine-based environmental studies and data determine the best location for offshore wind infrastructure.

A better approach to managing biodiversity impacts from renewable energy

In April 2024, the Victorian Government released the Joint Ministers' Statement – *A better approach to managing biodiversity impacts of renewable energy projects*. The statement outlines a suite of actions being undertaken to develop new tools and risk-based guidance to facilitate renewable energy projects while protecting Victoria's unique biodiversity.


The key actions are:

- improved spatial analysis (terrestrial and marine) that identifies risks and opportunities for biodiversity harm reduction and renewable energy development
- targeted research projects to fill critical knowledge gaps about biodiversity impacts and the effectiveness of mitigation measures to inform policy development
- improved guidance that reflects a strategic and risk-based approach in line with global best practice.

DEECA has been working closely with Traditional Owner Corporations whose Country may be impacted by renewable energy development, including offshore wind, and environment and industry stakeholders to develop new guidance for addressing the impacts of renewable energy projects on Victoria's biodiversity. Public consultation on the proposed guidance was conducted between December 2024 and February 2025. The guidance aims to help feasibility licence holders and decision-makers identify and assess impacts on species most at risk from renewable energy development, including species of cultural significance for Traditional Owners, and options for how to manage those impacts by applying the mitigation hierarchy.

Information about the consultation can be found on the Engage Victoria website.⁵ The government expects to finalise and release this guidance by May 2025. While the initial focus of the guidance is to address impacts of onshore wind energy facilities, further consideration will be given to how it can be expanded to other renewable energy projects, including offshore wind, as we continue to build our understanding of the potential biodiversity impacts of these projects.

⁵ engage.vic.gov.au/a-better-approach-to-managing-the-biodiversity-impacts-of-renewable-energy



The Joint Ministers' Statement also outlines how DEECA is working with the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) to investigate the options for developing regional planning in Victoria. A Commonwealth and Victorian funding initiative, regional planning is a landscape- and seascape-scale approach to environmental planning to provide clear information to decision makers, project proponents and communities. Regional plans aim to facilitate critical developments and industries while preserving biodiversity. They encourage development in areas with the least biodiversity value and preserving and investing in conservation actions to achieve a nature-positive outcome.⁶

Regional planning presents an opportunity to adopt a strategic approach to assessing and managing biodiversity impacts of development, such as offshore wind energy, at scale with the goal of facilitating the delivery of critical new energy infrastructure while ensuring that biodiversity is protected.

This work is ongoing and updates on progress of actions under the Joint Ministers' Statement will be provided in 2025. DEECA is also engaging closely with the Commonwealth's Gippsland Licence Holder Advisory Committee to guide industry consideration of how best to fulfil environmental assessment and approval regulatory requirements in a more coordinated way.

Supporting offshore wind licence holders to prepare for assessment processes

Overview of values, uses and activities

In June 2024, DEECA published a high-level synthesis of available information on values, uses and activities within or relevant to the marine environment of Gippsland. *Overview of values, uses and activities in Gippsland's marine environment* aims to support offshore wind developers pursuing environmental assessments or planning feasibility activities, and to aid any future strategic planning, including marine spatial planning, that may occur within the area. A high-level synthesis for the southwest marine environment, with relevance to the Southern Ocean declared area will be developed, with an expected delivery by end of 2025.

Research and data sharing

In July 2024, DEECA published the Marine Biodiversity Values (MBV) map – an updateable spatial assessment of Victoria's listed and key marine and coastal biodiversity features. The MBV map will help support spatial planning decision-making, development and planning approvals, ecological monitoring and threatened species management. The MBV map covers Victoria's three nautical mile jurisdictional waters and inland to five kilometres. As part of the regional planning initiative, DEECA is considering how the MBV map could be extended to support mapping the entire Bass Strait.

Species valued by Traditional Owners are recognised as cultural keystone species, vital to the cultural identity of communities, essential for sustenance, materials, medicine, and spiritual practices. Although some species hold significance for Traditional Owners such as dolphins, birds, marine turtles, and whales, partnering with Traditional Owners to undertake a comprehensive assessment of culturally significant species for Sea Country should be addressed in future iterations of the map.

DEECA maintains a marine and coastal knowledge and data sharing portal called CoastKit. The portal is an interactive web-mapping tool designed to support marine and coastal management in Victoria. It provides a centralised repository of spatial data, enabling managers, researchers, consultants, and the community to access and utilise publicly available information for evidence-based decision-making. CoastKit offers various features, including mapping layers, video imagery, graphing capabilities, and decision-support tools, to assist with planning applications, environmental risk assessments, and restoration activities.

⁶ The regional plan initiative is a component of the Nature Positive Plan, which is the Commonwealth Government's package of reforms designed to halt and begin to reverse the damage to Australia's unique biodiversity.



Legislative and regulatory reform

The Victorian Government continues to progress its regulatory reform program to support the development of the offshore wind sector, while appropriately protecting environmental and Traditional Owner values.

Amending legislation to enable feasibility studies

Notice

17

Victoria enacted the *Energy and Public Land Legislation Amendment (Enabling Offshore Wind Energy) Act 2024 (Vic)* in May 2024. This Act enables offshore wind developers who hold Commonwealth feasibility licences to undertake feasibility studies on Victorian public land and waters.

A Victorian offshore wind farm feasibility access licence, application form and regulatory guidance note for the Gippsland declared area have been published for developer use.

The Victorian Government has implemented practical reforms to support industry to investigate the suitability of offshore wind connection assets. In May 2024, Victoria enacted the *Energy and Public Land Legislation Amendment (Enabling Offshore Wind Energy) Act 2024 (Vic)* (Enabling Act).

The offshore wind provisions of the Enabling Act commenced on 19 December 2024 amending the:

- *Land Act 1958 (Vic)*, *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978 (Vic)* and *Forests Act 1958 (Vic)* to create a new category of licence for the purpose of investigating offshore wind electricity transmission infrastructure with a duration of up to 21 years
- *National Parks Act 1975 (Vic)* to allow access to managed land for the purpose of transmitting or distributing energy
- *Electricity Industry Act 2000 (Vic)* to enable the Minister for Energy and Resources to declare a company to be an offshore wind energy generation company, which allows developers to access public land in the same way as onshore generation companies.

Publishing the Victorian feasibility access licence and opening applications for Gippsland

To implement the licensing provisions of the Enabling Act and provide a streamlined pathway for industry, the Victorian Government published the offshore wind farm feasibility access licence and opened applications for Commonwealth feasibility licence holders in the Gippsland declared area in December 2024. To complement the licence, the Victorian Government released a regulatory guidance note in February 2025.⁷

The licence outlines the rights and obligations of developers seeking to undertake feasibility investigations on Victorian public land. These investigations are necessary to determine the most appropriate location for required connection infrastructure. The licence does not enable developers to construct any connection infrastructure.

Importantly, developers who are granted an access licence must comply with environmental, native title and cultural heritage obligations to undertake feasibility studies. This includes obtaining other regulatory approvals, including a *Marine and Coastal Act 2018 (Vic)* consent, if applicable.

The access licence for Gippsland was co-designed with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC).

A separate access licence for future projects in the Southern Ocean declared area will be co-developed through ongoing and respectful discussions with affected Traditional Owner groups through 2025.

⁷ DEECA, 'Offshore wind farm feasibility access licence (Gippsland)', 'Application form (Gippsland)' and 'Regulatory Guidance Note (Gippsland)' Regulatory information (2025) <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/renewable-energy/offshore-wind-energy/regulatory-information>.

Supporting regulatory reforms

Notice

18

Victoria recognises the importance of having streamlined but robust planning and environmental approval processes for renewable energy projects. The government has established the Development Facilitation Program to accelerate priority projects through the planning and development phase to enable better and faster decisions and has committed to improvements in Environment Effects Statement processes to enable more efficient and quicker assessments.

The Victorian Government's *Economic Growth Statement* (2024) reaffirmed our commitment to streamlined but robust approval processes to developing large-scale projects. The onshore aspects of the connection and transmission assets required to connect offshore windfarms to the National Electricity Market (NEM) will be eligible for the government's new Development Facilitation Program (DFP). The DFP is an accelerated assessment pathway for priority projects to encourage investment in the Victorian economy, including from offshore wind projects, which have the potential to deliver substantial economic benefits to the state. The Victorian Government has also committed to improving Environment Effects Statement processes, to target assessments for new projects within 18 months.

The Victorian Government intends to speed up approvals for projects in Victoria's renewable energy zones by incorporating them into the Planning Policy Framework. This will benefit the process to seek planning approvals required to proceed with the construction of offshore wind transmission and connection assets.

Consideration of a longer-term regulatory framework for Victorian offshore electricity infrastructure

In 2025–2026, the Victorian Government will continue to work on regulatory settings and reform options that better align and coordinate with the Commonwealth regulatory framework applicable to offshore electricity infrastructure. The government will work with and seek input from the Commonwealth and industry including through the Gippsland Licence Holder Advisory Committee.





Traditional Owner partnerships

Traditional Owners have been caring for Country for more than 65,000 years. It is vital to recognise this longstanding connection to Country and Sea Country and to understand Traditional Owners' relationships with the region, including important cultural sites and seascapes.

The Victorian Government is committed to the self-determination of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities and to genuinely partnering with them to support the protection of Country and Sea Country, the maintenance of spiritual and cultural practices and their broader aspirations for the future.

Engagement expectations

Notice

19

The Victorian Government supports appropriate resourcing for Traditional Owners to allow meaningful engagement and genuine partnerships in the development of the offshore wind energy sector. The state has used the ROI process to indicate to feasibility licence holders that an engagement agreement to provide resourcing to support ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners will be considered as part of Victoria's first auction.

In Victoria, there are 12 Traditional Owner groups with formal recognition and many other groups without formal recognition. Formally recognised groups have gained rights and obligations through legal instruments. It is important to consider how projects, activities or decisions might impact the cultural rights of all Traditional Owners, regardless of their recognition status, before any decisions or actions are made. It is also important to understand that Traditional Owners will self-determine their level of participation.

The development of the offshore wind sector impacts Victorian Traditional Owners' Country and Sea Country. Gippsland hosts the nation's largest offshore wind zone, with 12 projects holding Commonwealth feasibility licences. The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, as the legally recognised Registered Aboriginal Party for much of this zone, has become an active participant in the development of the sector, developing a clear position and aspirations for offshore wind projects.

Areas around Yiruk Wamoon (Wilsons Promontory) have not had formal recognition applied; Gunaikurnai, Kurnai, Boonwurrung, and Bunurong peoples all assert interests in this area.

In March 2024, the Commonwealth declared an area in the Southern Ocean for offshore wind. It announced a decision to grant one feasibility licence in February 2025. The Victorian Government acknowledges the statements made by Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC) following the declaration of the area. We will continue to work with EMAC and GMTOAC to support their engagement in the development of the offshore wind sector – as determined by them.

Key considerations when engaging with Traditional Owners are:

Rights-holders – Traditional Owners have inherent rights to care for Country. That's why any decision-making must balance Traditional Owners' formalised rights and responsibilities.

Self-determination – Traditional Owners should be at the centre of decision-making on the issues that affect their lives. In practice, this means a transfer of decision-making power and resources to Traditional Owners. The enablers of self-determination are to prioritise culture, address trauma and support healing, address racism and promote cultural safety, and transfer power and resources to communities on the issues that impact them.

Free, prior and informed consent – Traditional Owners request that the concept of free, prior and informed consent be followed when engaging. This requires parties to negotiate with Traditional Owners, creating a process where parties can talk on an equal footing and come to a solution or agreement that all parties are satisfied with.⁸

Aboriginal cultural safety and competency – Engagement must be conducted in a culturally safe way. This means being aware of and valuing the cultural knowledge and skills of Aboriginal people and creating culturally safe environments.

Early engagement – It is essential to meet with Traditional Owners as early as possible to understand the level of engagement, partnership and co-design that Traditional Owners deem feasible, desired and appropriate throughout the project stages. The purpose of the engagement and the decisions that need to be made should be clear.

Respect for decision-making processes – Traditional Owners have unique governance structures and ways of making decisions. Representatives often need to discuss matters with a committee or their community before being able to confirm their involvement. This must be respected, and timelines must incorporate Traditional Owner governance structures and ways of making decisions.

Adequate resources – Traditional Owners should be adequately resourced for their knowledge, expertise and time. If engagement is required, feasibility licence holders should formalise funding agreements with Traditional Owners in a manner that is determined with the Traditional Owner group.

Research and plan – Whole of Country Plans or other Traditional Owner authored strategies provide an overview of Traditional Owner priorities and assertions for Country. For example, GLaWAC released *Gunaikurnai and Offshore Energy: Aspirations for a Better Future* to government and developers and *Pathways to Partnerships – Gunaikurnai and Major Projects*. These documents set the expectation of negotiating agreements with offshore wind generators that will help enable the seven goals of GLaWAC's Whole of Country Plan. Refer to Traditional Owner Corporation websites for more information.

8 Gunaikurnai and Offshore Energy: Aspirations for a Better Future – Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (2023)



Agreement making

Notice

20

The Victorian Government supports the aspirations and assertions of all Traditional Owners in declared offshore wind areas, and their rights and responsibilities to care for Country. It reaffirms its commitment to supporting Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation to have mutually beneficial agreements with Gippsland feasibility licence holders, in line with international best practice.

Offshore Wind Energy Implementation Statement 3 and Victorian Government testimony before the Yoorrook Justice Commission confirmed the Victorian Government's commitment to supporting Traditional Owners' aspirations through mutually beneficial agreements with feasibility licence holders, in line with international best practice.

Traditional Owners' cultural and legal rights must be upheld under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic), the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic), the *Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (Vic), and the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth).

In addition, if projects are proposed over an area where rights exist under the Native Title Act or Traditional Owner Settlement Act, Traditional Owners may have rights to compensation and procedural rights (such as negotiation and consent rights) which must be satisfied prior to the project commencing. These rights are distinct from any benefit-sharing arrangements that may be part of the project.

Support for Traditional Owners' aspirations will also take place in the context of future Statewide and Traditional Owner Treaty negotiations and will therefore include ongoing engagement with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, as the democratically elected First People's representative body, legislatively obligated to negotiate Statewide Treaty on behalf of Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. This will occur alongside the direct engagement with affected Traditional Owners.

Treaty is a legislative obligation of the entire Victorian Government enshrined within the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018* (Vic). The state has used the ROI process to indicate to feasibility licence holders that they are expected to be evaluated in the auction on their progress and approach in establishing formal agreements, that meet world best practice, with relevant Traditional Owner groups. These agreements are intended to ensure respect for cultural heritage, foster collaboration, align with the principles of self-determination, include compensation, employment, and training opportunities and support meaningful engagement with Traditional Owner groups throughout the project. The agreement may cover matters such as: economic compensations; Traditional Owner engagement; protection of cultural heritage; procurement from Aboriginal businesses; as well as employment and training opportunities for Traditional Owners – as determined by them.





Industry, stakeholder and community engagement

The Victorian Government continues to undertake planned, respectful and ongoing engagement with the community, industry and stakeholders. The invaluable insights gained from the many conversations we've shared with people across the state are integral to informing the steps we are taking to strengthen industry development and better understand how Victorians want to be guided towards, and benefit from, an offshore wind energy future.

Notice

21

The Victorian Government expects community engagement and benefit sharing for Victoria's offshore wind auction to be tailored to local community needs and aspirations, prepared with local community input, and flexible enough to be adapted over time.

The state has used the ROI process to indicate to feasibility licence holders that they will be encouraged to provide voluntary benefit-sharing measures for host communities by submitting a community benefit-sharing plan as part of the auction documentation.

Community engagement expectations

The offshore wind industry is well-established internationally, but it is a new industry in Australia. Working with communities to help them understand the opportunities, benefits and impacts of offshore wind is fundamental for the successful development of the sector in Victoria. Community engagement, benefit sharing, and Traditional Owner partnerships are pivotal for encouraging and maintaining acceptance for offshore wind development.

The Victorian Government expects that feasibility licence holders will approach community engagement and community benefit sharing with the same

attention and diligence given to technical and economic feasibility. Engagement and benefit-sharing outcomes should be tailored to the diverse needs and aspirations within any community and provide solutions that create shared and lasting value.

The Victorian Government supports a flexible approach to community engagement, provided engagement methods and benefit sharing throughout the project's lifecycle and beyond are tailored to local needs, priorities and aspirations.



Key factors to be considered for positive social outcomes and strong community support are:

- **Early and ongoing engagement** – Engaging early and using diverse and ongoing opportunities for connecting to communities and stakeholders is critical.
- **Social feasibility** – Integrating the project with local landscape values and local identity (tailoring to local history, context, priorities and needs).
- **Fairness in the process** – Ensure local communities have meaningful opportunities to influence the design and outcome of the project. There is an important link between fair process and fair outcomes. A fair process will increase acceptance of the outcomes, even if the outcomes are not strictly what communities would have preferred.
- **Trust and relationships** – Trust is an important factor in building and maintaining strong community support. Community trust is enhanced if an accessible, effective complaints management process is prioritised as part of a community engagement strategy.

- **Employ local project staff** – Local project staff and a regular presence in the community are key determinants of positive social outcomes.
- **Considering cumulative impacts** – As many engagement processes are happening simultaneously, it is important to consider the cumulative nature of impacts within a region when undertaking offshore wind projects. When cumulative impacts occur, social acceptance can be reduced.

A sensitive, considered, ‘whole of development’ approach includes initiating and maintaining constructive and meaningful dialogue with relevant councils, community members, trade and service providers, other renewable energy developers, network service providers, regulators and energy retailers who operate in the region.

The Victorian Government expects that developers in Victoria’s offshore wind auction will view the ‘involve’ level of the International Association for Public Participation’s (IAP2’s) framework as the minimum baseline for engaging with communities. Feasibility licence holders are strongly encouraged to go beyond this.

IAP2 spectrum of public participation

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Community engagement objective	Provide balanced and objective information. Assist the community in understanding all aspects of the project, including possible problems/issues.	Obtain feedback from the community on plans, options and/or decisions.	Work directly with the community throughout all stages of the project. Ensure community concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	Partner with the community in each aspect of planning, development and decision-making, including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	Place decision-making in the hands of the community, so the community leads the development of the renewable energy project.
Promise to community	Keep the community informed through all stages of development, including issues and delays.	Keep the community informed, listen and acknowledge suggestions and concerns. Provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.	Work with the community to ensure concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed. Provide feedback on how input influenced the decision.	Look to the community for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions. Incorporate advice and recommendations into decisions to the maximum extent possible.	Implement what the community decides.

Community benefit sharing

It is important that communities hosting renewable energy infrastructure feel that this process is leaving them better off. Community benefits aim to foster ‘generational change’ by delivering sustained and inclusive social, economic or environmental improvements that are tailored to the needs of local communities. These benefits are also expected to establish and maintain positive long-term connection between offshore wind projects and local communities.

Beneficiary communities should be host communities most likely to be impacted by offshore wind development. These beneficiary communities can include coastal communities that will likely be affected by the visibility of offshore wind projects; communities that will experience additional pressure on local infrastructure and services due to the arrival of temporary workers; and marine user communities that share the same space as offshore wind with activities such as boating and fishing.

Community benefit sharing for Victoria’s offshore wind auction is expected to include voluntary measures that feasibility licence holders provide to host communities outside of the planning and licensing process. These measures are expected to be additional to the contributions developers may make under VicGrid’s REZ Community Benefit Plan.

Local councils can play an important role in supporting the design of community benefit sharing. Councils understand the needs and aspirations of their community and have given strategic thought to how to achieve these. Council input is particularly valuable when developing long-term community benefit initiatives, as they are in touch with their communities and understand historical experiences, the current environment, issues and opportunities.

In addition, developers should consider that Traditional Owners have cultural and legal rights that must be upheld. These rights should be considered in the development of benefits for Traditional Owners and in negotiations with these groups.

The Victorian Government encourages feasibility licence holders to be guided by the following principles regarding community benefit sharing:

Be willing to negotiate

- Identify community expectation around benefit sharing and openly discuss what is achievable from early negotiations with local communities.⁹

Design an appropriate and collaborative plan

- Ensure that a community benefit-sharing plan is targeted, addresses local needs, and empowers local stakeholders – ideally communities and key stakeholders can co-design or provide input into the development of the plan. Working with councils and reviewing relevant council plans can provide valuable information on local priorities and existing initiatives.

Seek mutual benefits

- Benefit sharing should be designed to bring mutual benefit to local communities and feasibility licence holders, creating a positive legacy and lasting value to the local area.

Maximise benefits by being part of a broader strategy

- Consider what other initiatives exist in the local area, including strategic partnerships and local government functions. Community benefit sharing should aim to create new initiatives or complement existing ones, rather than duplicate them.
- Governance arrangements and mechanisms to include beneficiary communities in the decision-making process and the distribution of benefits are encouraged.

Allow for flexibility in your plan

- The benefits should be flexible, allowing adjustment over the project’s lifetime to respond to evolving community needs.

Be transparent

- Benefit-sharing arrangements should be available to the community and managed in a transparent and accountable way.¹⁰
- As Victoria’s offshore wind industry will develop in stages, feasibility licence holders should set expectations with local communities about the linkage between benefit sharing and the successful development of their project.

9 ‘Community Benefits from Offshore Renewables: Good Practice Review’, David Rudolph, Claire Haggett, Mhairi Aitken (2015), Climate Xchange, Scotland (2015)

10 *A guide to benefit sharing options for renewable energy projects*, Clean Energy Council (2019)

Industry engagement

Industry engagement has remained central to informed and robust policy and program development. Regular engagement ensures we have learned from recent international offshore wind market challenges and experiences and factored them into our plans for Victoria. The state continues to receive positive feedback about its demonstrated commitment to consulting with industry, alongside our other key stakeholders and partners.

Building on the two targeted consultation activities undertaken in 2023, OWEV held a third market sounding exercise with Gippsland and Southern Ocean feasibility licence holders in July and August 2024. The purpose of this latest exercise was to set out the state's updated policy positions on auction design, support mechanism features and risk allocation, and to provide further opportunity for feedback. There was an overall positive response to this, with the majority of terms well received by the market and few adjustments proposed.

A key theme of the industry feedback was the need for additional time to undertake feasibility studies given delays to finalising management plan regulation. In response to this, the state has adjusted targeted auction timing and, subject to a further government decision, intends for the RFP phase to launch in Q3 2025, with the state targeting contract award in Q3 2026. Feasibility licence holders also provided feedback that underlined the importance of enabling infrastructure plans in supporting the timely delivery of offshore wind projects.

A wide range of other industry engagement activities have been undertaken during the past 12 months, including consultation and requests for information to help shape the development of the Wind Worker Training Centre; coordination between offshore wind generation, transmission and port infrastructure; and the development of state legislative and regulatory reform.

Engagement events

Throughout 2024, OWEV participated in and supported a range of community and industry events to gain direct insights from communities, regional stakeholders and leaders in sector development.

In Gippsland, OWEV met with community members at Farm World, East Gippsland Field Days, the Gippsland Jobs Expo, and the Gippsland Offshore Wind Days. Held across November 2024 and March 2025, the offshore wind days gave communities across Gippsland an opportunity to meet with the feasibility licence holders, OWEV, VicGrid and the Commonwealth Government to learn more about offshore wind and the proposed projects in Gippsland.

OWEV continues to be a major sponsor of the Gippsland New Energy Conference. Entering its fourth year in 2025, the regional conference with an international attendance brings together industry leaders, Traditional Owners, regional stakeholders and experts to discuss and explore the latest advancements, challenges, and opportunities in the realm of renewable energy. The 2024 conference was held in Traralgon.

Other industry events in 2024 included the Clean Energy Council's Wind Industry Forum, the All Energy conference and exhibition, and attendance at the Global Wind Energy Council's APAC Wind Energy Summit, held in Incheon, Korea. In 2025, the Victorian Government – the first sub-national member of the Global Offshore Wind Alliance – will host the conference in Melbourne.





Offshore wind turbine visualisations

Notice

22 The Victorian Government has produced a series of digital images showing what wind turbines off the coast of Gippsland might look like. The series contains interactive images representing a 2 GW offshore wind farm as viewed from three popular locations – Golden Beach, Woodside Beach and Mount Oberon summit – at varying distances.

The Gippsland offshore wind turbine visualisations were developed to support community understanding of potential visual amenity impacts of turbines off the Gippsland coast. Each image shows a visual representation of a 2 GW offshore wind farm, with 18 MW turbines laid out over a rectangular grid at 2 km x 2 km spacing. The distances of 10 km, 30 km and 60 km offer a broad visual representation of wind turbines in parts 1 and 2 of the Gippsland declared area.

The images were produced using a digital rendering method that combines photography with information such as GPS coordinates, elevation data, viewing direction, distance calculations to the turbines, and turbine scaling.

The images are available on the OWEV webpage and continue to be used at community engagement events to help build awareness of offshore wind in the Gippsland region.

OWEV online resources

To reflect the ongoing developments of offshore wind in Victoria, OWEV's webpages on energy.vic.gov.au have been updated with new content and design. New pages include information on the offshore wind workforce, an offshore wind resources directory, maps showing the location of feasibility licence holder projects, offshore wind turbine visualisations, and more explanation and illustrations outlining the stages and process of developing offshore wind industry in Victoria.

Global Wind Energy Council Asia-Pacific Wind Energy Summit

Notice

23 Victoria, as the first Global Offshore Wind Alliance sub-national member, is hosting the Global Wind Energy Council APAC Wind Energy Summit at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre on 16–18 September 2025.

Victoria is a rapidly emerging offshore wind energy market. The state is engaging actively with mature and established offshore wind jurisdictions around the globe – both to draw on their experience as we build this industry, and to share our learnings as we progress.

As part of these efforts, in August 2023, Victoria was formally admitted to the Global Offshore Wind Alliance (GOWA), a global driving force that works towards increasing the uptake of offshore wind through political mobilisation and creation of communities of practice. Founded by Denmark, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), and the Global Wind Energy Council (GWEC), several governments are members including leading countries in offshore wind such as Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Victoria is the first sub-national member admitted, a recognition of our leadership in this space.

To reinforce the state's commitment to support the industry internationally, Victoria will be hosting the GWEC APAC Wind Energy Summit at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre in 2025. This event will engage with community and industry and draw attention of global participants to Melbourne. Victoria successfully hosted the inaugural event in 2023, and the 2025 summit will build on that success.



