

**National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005**  
MINISTERIAL ORDER UNDER SECTION 63

Gippsland Shoreline Renewable Energy Zone

I, Lily D’Ambrosio, Minister for Energy and Resources and Minister responsible for administering the **National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005** (the ‘Act’), make the following Order pursuant to section 63 of that Act.

**PRELIMINARY**

**1. Commencement**

This Order commences on the day it is published in the Government Gazette.

**2. Definitions and interpretation**

In this Order, unless the context otherwise requires, the following words have the following definitions:

**Act** means the **National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005**.

**CESV Documentation** means information and documentation that demonstrates how the Eligible Project is applying, or will apply, the Victorian Government’s Community Engagement and Social Value Guidelines for Renewable Energy and Transmission Projects.

**Declared Transmission System** has the same meaning as in the Law.

**Note:** See Ministerial Order under section 30 of the Act made 26 June 2009, published in Special Gazette No. S 222 on 30 June 2009, which defines the Declared Transmission System.

**Law** means the National Electricity (Victoria) Law.

**REZ** means a renewable energy zone declared under section 63 of the Act and, in this Order, means the Gippsland Shoreline Renewable Energy Zone.

**Rules** means the National Electricity Rules made under Part 7 of the Law, as amended or modified from time to time in accordance with Part 7 of the Law or the Act.

**Shoreline Crossing** means a shoreline crossing area identified in clause 7(c).

**Transmission Hosting Capacity** means the amount of Variable Renewable Generation (in megawatts) which can be connected to the Declared Transmission System by the end of the Victorian Transmission Plan planning horizon to a specified level of curtailment due to network constraints forecast within the REZ.

**Transmission Project Areas of Interest** means the transmission project(s) specified in clause 4(a).

**Variable Renewable Generation** means generation systems that produce electricity from renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, whose output varies due to environmental conditions and cannot be precisely controlled or scheduled.

**Victorian Transmission Plan planning horizon** means the time period set out in section 59(1)(a) or (b) of the Act (as applicable).

**3. Declaration of the Gippsland Shoreline Renewable Energy Zone**

The Gippsland Shoreline Renewable Energy Zone is declared to be the area within the boundaries marked in blue in Schedule 1.

**4. Transmission Project Areas of Interest**

- a) The preferred Transmission Project Areas of Interest are marked in pink in Schedule 1.
- b) Subject to sections 63 and 64 of the Act, this Order does not preclude further refinement or replacement of the preferred Transmission Project Areas of Interest following further investigation or regulatory approvals.
- c) Inclusion of the preferred Transmission Project Areas of Interest in this Order does not constitute regulatory approval of any kind for the location of specific transmission infrastructure, if any.

**5. Transmission Hosting Capacity**

The intended Transmission Hosting Capacity within the Gippsland Shoreline REZ is 2 gigawatts (GW).

**6. Engagement requirements and expectations of project proponents during project development**

- a) A person who intends to apply for a REZ scheme authority for the Gippsland Shoreline REZ must adhere to the engagement requirements and expectations outlined in this clause 6(b) and (c).
- b) A person will be required to submit documentation to VicGrid in accordance with the engagement requirements and expectations of project proponents during project development under section 63 of the Act, in accordance with the requirements of section 33K of the Act (including any CESV Documentation), and any requirements set out by VicGrid.
- c) A person will be encouraged to partner with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation to provide appropriate self-determined agreements, such as:
  - i. Traditional Owner Engagement Agreement – the purpose of an engagement agreement is to enable Traditional Owners to be resourced to engage meaningfully with the project proponent regarding project planning, to facilitate meetings, and to negotiate other agreements;
  - ii. Traditional Owner Project Agreement – a formal project agreement is intended to be a longer-term approach that ensures respect for cultural heritage, fosters collaboration, aligns with the principle of self-determination, includes compensation, employment, and training opportunities and supports meaningful engagement with the involved Traditional Owner groups throughout the project.

**7. Coordination conditions for connection asset infrastructure**

- a) Consistent with the Victorian Transmission Plan published under section 59 of the Act, a person who intends to connect to the Declared Transmission System from within the Gippsland Shoreline REZ will be required to do so in accordance with the requirements in this clause 7.
- b) A person's project onshore connection infrastructure extending landward from the Mean High-Water Mark (MHW) to the Giffard connection hub terminal station site (including all terrestrial infrastructure, cable landfall infrastructure, transition joint bays and project onshore export cables) must:
  - (i) be installed underground, with the exception of access points for ongoing operation and maintenance requirements; and
  - (ii) be wholly located within the Gippsland Shoreline REZ; and
  - (iii) comply with:
    - a. all applicable legislation, subordinate instruments, codes, guidelines, standards, rules or other regulatory instruments; and
    - b. the requirements of any approval, licence, permit, registration, authorisation or exemption granted to the person.
- c) Subject to sub-paragraphs (d) and (e) below, a project's export cables must cross the shore within the boundaries of one of the following four designated shoreline crossing areas set out in Table 1 below:

<b>Table 1: Shoreline Crossings and coordinates</b>		
<b>Shoreline Crossing</b>	<b>GPS X Coordinates</b>	<b>GPS Y Coordinates</b>
Reeves Beach	146.950599	-38.576998
	146.958177	-38.569527
McGauran Beach	147.10127	-38.447531
	147.129333	-38.426375
South-west of Merriman Creek	147.180189	-38.384892
	147.183126	-38.382466
Seaspray Beach	147.20148	-38.368791
	147.207752	-38.363797

- d) Any proposed shoreline crossing location that falls outside the boundaries of a Shoreline Crossing is subject to approval by VicGrid and must demonstrate:
  - (i) the proposed shoreline crossing will produce a lower overall impact; and
  - (ii) the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation's consent to the proposed shoreline crossing has been obtained.
- e) A person holding a REZ scheme authority for the Gippsland Shoreline REZ will be required to connect to the Declared Transmission System at the Giffard connection hub terminal station and otherwise in accordance with the terms of the Gippsland Shoreline REZ scheme declaration.

Dated 26 May 2026

HON. LILY D'AMBROSIO MP  
Minister for Energy and Resources

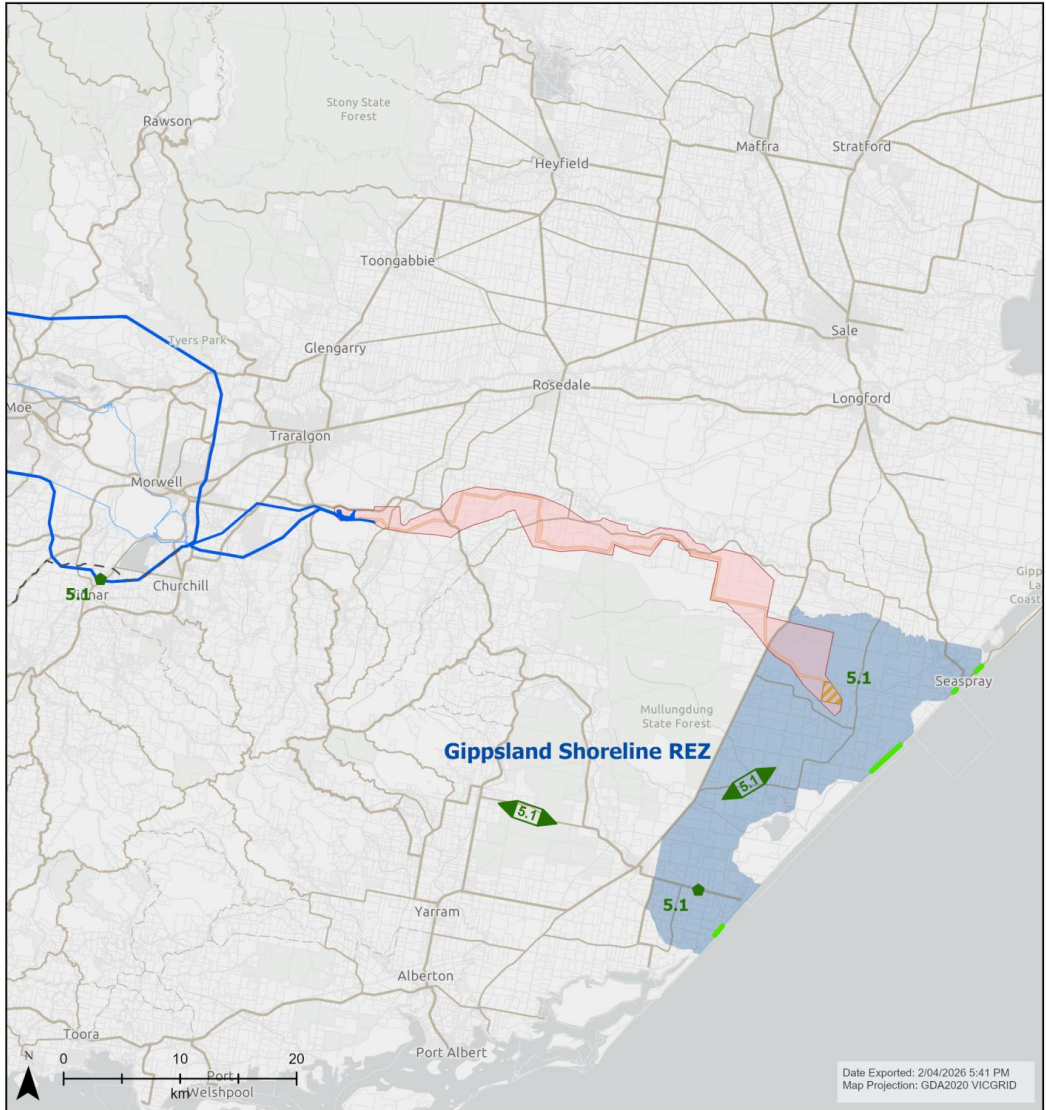
### SCHEDULE 1

Figure 1 delineates the geographical boundaries of the Gippsland Shoreline Renewable Energy Zone and specifies the locations of shoreline crossings. Access to the corresponding shape file, REZ\_2026, dated 29 May 2026, version 1, is available via the following link: <https://datashare.maps.vic.gov.au>

Figure 1 also identifies the Transmission Project Areas of Interest (identified in Figure 1 as 'Offshore wind transmission draft preferred route' and 'Offshore wind transmission corridor'). The transmission line begins at the proposed terminal station in Giffard where offshore wind energy projects will connect their infrastructure into the shared transmission line and will connect to a switchyard adjacent to the Loy Yang Power Station.

Transmission networks: existing high-voltage transmission lines and routes, compiled by VicGrid are from Geoscience Australia, National Electricity Infrastructure, <https://ecat.ga.gov.au/geonetwork/srv/api/records/3844c10c-ecfd-44a9-94f5-29222bb6d36d>

Figure 1: Gippsland Shoreline REZ



## Gippsland Shoreline REZ

### Victorian Transmission Plan program\*\* number

**5: Gippsland offshore wind transmission stage 2 program**  
 5.1 Second Gippsland 500 kV double circuit radial line and tie-in loop

\*This includes transmission projects defined as Committed and Anticipated or Actionable under the Australian Energy Market Operator's 2024 Integrated System Plan.  
 \*\* Please refer to the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan Appendix A for further details about proposed works included in each program. Each program includes multiple transmission projects.

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|--|--|
| <p><b>New Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: green;">●</span> New transmission connection point</li> <li><span style="color: green;">---</span> Transmission projects under development*</li> <li><span style="color: green;">—</span> Gippsland offshore wind shoreline crossing areas</li> <li><span style="color: orange;">—</span> Offshore wind transmission draft preferred route</li> <li><span style="color: pink;">—</span> Offshore wind transmission corridor</li> <li><span style="border: 1px dashed orange; padding: 2px;"> </span> Proposed Giffard Terminal Station area</li> </ul> | <p><b>Existing transmission network</b></p> <p>System Capacity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: blue;">—</span> 220 KV</li> <li><span style="color: blue;">—</span> 500 KV</li> </ul> <p>Property Parcel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="border: 1px solid black; display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px;"></span> Property Parcel</li> </ul> <p>Roads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="color: brown;">—</span> Highway</li> <li><span style="color: brown;">—</span> Major Road</li> <li><span style="color: brown;">—</span> Minor Road</li> <li><span style="color: brown;">—</span> Local Road</li> </ul> |
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Sources: Vicmap, ESRI, TomTom, Garmin, FAO, NOAA, USGS, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community



REASONS FOR MAKING THE GIPPSLAND SHORELINE  
RENEWABLE ENERGY ZONE MINISTERIAL ORDER UNDER SECTION 63 OF THE  
NATIONAL ELECTRICITY (VICTORIA) ACT 2005

In accordance with section 63(1) of the **National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005** (NEVA), I, Lily D'Ambrosio, Minister for Energy and Resources, am authorised to declare an area of Victoria as a renewable energy zone (REZ) by making a REZ Order.

I make this statement of reasons for my decision to make the Gippsland Shoreline REZ Order in accordance with section 63(4) of the NEVA.

In this statement of reasons, **Gippsland Shoreline REZ Order** means the REZ Order which declares the area within the boundaries marked in blue in Schedule 1 of attached REZ Order to be the Gippsland Shoreline REZ.

### Background

As acknowledged in the 2025 Victorian Transmission Plan (2025 VTP), Victoria's transition away from coal-fired power requires new renewable energy, storage and transmission infrastructure to maintain a reliable and affordable electricity system as coal power stations close (pages 10 and 25). The 2025 VTP also identifies that many areas with strong renewable energy potential are constrained by limited transmission capacity, highlighting the need for coordinated transmission planning and development (page 28).

A REZ is an area identified as suitable to host renewable energy infrastructure, designed to coordinate generation development, and minimise the extent and inefficiency of required transmission network upgrades (2025 VTP, page 28). The 2025 VTP identifies REZs as a key mechanism to support Victoria's orderly transition from coal-fired power to renewable energy (pages 10 and 25).

By prioritising areas with existing grid infrastructure (2025 VTP, page 28) and planning targeted upgrades only where needed, REZs enable more efficient use of the transmission network and help reduce congestion (2025 VTP, page 18). This coordinated approach avoids higher costs from uncoordinated and duplicative infrastructure, while supporting a more cost-effective, reliable energy system and delivering regional economic benefits (2025 VTP, pages 21 and 28).

Currently, an 'open' access regime applies in Victoria under the National Electricity Market (NEM). In the NEM there are currently no restrictions on where generators can connect to the Declared Transmission System (DTS). Victoria is delivering a new access regime in which there will be an introduction of 'physical' access arrangements for projects seeking to connect to the DTS. Under the new Victorian Access Regime, a generating system or integrated resource system may apply to VicGrid to access the DTS through:

- a. a REZ scheme authority, where the project is an eligible technology and is inside a REZ; or
- b. a grid impact authority, where the project is not an eligible technology and/or is outside a REZ.

The Victorian Government's expectations for developers to engage with and create social value for communities, Traditional Owners and landholders will apply to all projects under both processes.

The Renewable Energy Zone scheme declarations is the mechanism that coordinates the new access regime for eligible generation and storage facilities within declared REZs.

A REZ Order declares the geographic area of the REZ. That declared area provides the foundation for the relevant REZ scheme declaration under the NEVA, and for VicGrid to grant and administer REZ scheme authorities under that REZ scheme declaration. This process governs how eligible projects obtain rights to access and connect to the DTS within the declared REZ.

### Declaring a REZ Order

The Gippsland Shoreline REZ is located in Gippsland South, near Woodside and Giffard, and between the coastline and the South Gippsland Highway. The REZ sits within the Wellington Shire local government area and is close to the Gippsland Declared Area for offshore wind.

The Gippsland Shoreline REZ is located within the Registered Aboriginal Party boundaries of the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation. In making the REZ Order, I have considered information provided by Traditional Owners and First Peoples about Aboriginal cultural heritage, cultural values and related matters under section 64(2)(b) of the NEVA.

In developing the 2025 VTP and proposed REZs, VicGrid's 2024 VTP Guidelines emphasise partnering with First Peoples and treat cultural heritage and cultural values as key considerations, including through VicGrid's strategic land use assessment. The 2024 VTP Guidelines also note that Aboriginal cultural heritage information used at this strategic planning stage is limited to publicly available datasets and does not capture all known values, and that detailed regulatory requirements (including under the **Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006** (Vic.)) continue to apply to any future works and I took this into account in making this Order.

I also note that in accordance with section 4B of the **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988** (Vic.), in performing any of my functions that may reasonably be expected to impact on biodiversity in Victoria, I must give proper consideration to the objectives of that Act and instruments made under that Act, so far as is consistent with the proper exercising of my functions. I note the REZ Order establishes a strategic area for renewable energy development and that REZs will contain some sensitive areas that are not suitable for development. Declaring an area to be a REZ does not remove or otherwise diminish the need for future projects to comply with applicable environmental assessment, approval and offset requirements, such as the requirement to obtain approvals under the **Planning and Environment Act 1987** (Vic.) and, where applicable, the **Environment Effects Act 1978** (Vic.). A more detailed assessment of impacts of any future energy infrastructure will necessarily depend on the location, scale and design, and are more appropriately assessed at the project level. Any proposed development will continue to be subject to applicable planning approvals, environmental impact assessments and compliance with relevant legislation. Where issues related to biodiversity have been raised through the REZ development process, 2025 VTP process, and draft REZ Order consultation, these issues have been considered as part of any relevant decisions to amend or not amend REZ boundaries, to strike a balance between differing objectives of the **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988** and objectives of the NEVA.

The Gippsland Shoreline REZ is distinct from the other REZs in that it has not been designed to provide access to the DTS for onshore wind or solar projects. Instead, the Gippsland Shoreline REZ is a limited area where developers will be required to locate infrastructure to connect offshore wind energy projects located in the Declared Area for offshore wind off the coast of Gippsland, to the transmission network on the mainland.

The coordination conditions for connection asset infrastructure specified in the Gippsland Shoreline REZ Order reflect its distinct purpose as an offshore wind connection zone only. Those conditions are consistent with the strategic character of a REZ Order and are intended to facilitate coordinated planning, without predetermining the final design, siting or approval of any project-level infrastructure.

Consistent with the 2025 VTP, I expect that declaring the Gippsland Shoreline REZ will support a more coordinated approach to generator access and connection to the DTS. This is expected to reduce the risk of inefficient or duplicative transmission investment and support efficient use of existing and planned transmission infrastructure, noting that the detailed access and connection arrangements will be established and administered through the relevant REZ scheme.

#### **Matters required to be addressed in a REZ Order**

Section 63(2) of the NEVA requires a REZ Order to set out specific matters. These requirements have been addressed as follows:

- a. The boundaries of the REZ, including a map of the REZ. The Gippsland Shoreline REZ Order includes an appended map that shows the boundaries of the Gippsland Shoreline REZ within Victoria. In defining the boundaries of the Gippsland Shoreline REZ, I considered the submissions received on the draft REZ Order to the extent they raised issues relevant to the boundaries of the REZ.
- b. The intended transmission hosting capacity within the REZ. The Gippsland Shoreline REZ Order specifies the intended transmission hosting capacity within the REZ. The intended transmission hosting capacity describes, at a high level, the amount of renewable generation that the Gippsland Shoreline REZ is intended to accommodate through the coordinated access regime, having regard to the capability of the DTS and the transmission development

identified in the current 2025 VTP. I specified the intended transmission hosting capacity on the expert advice of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and VicGrid based on energy market modelling and planned transmission capacity. In setting this value, I also considered the submissions received on the draft REZ Order to the extent they raised issues relevant to intended hosting capacity.

- c. Engagement requirements and expectations of project proponents during project development. Engagement requirements have been addressed by requiring that project proponents submit documentation in accordance with the requirements for a REZ scheme authority application under section 33K of the NEVA, including demonstrating how they meet the expectations set out in the Victorian Community Engagement and Social Value Guidelines for Renewable Energy and Transmission Projects. These guidelines set out minimum expectations of project proponents in relation to community engagement and the creation of social and economic benefits for communities, Traditional Owners and landholders in Victoria, and provide a consistent benchmark for engagement and social value expectations for renewable energy and transmission projects in Victoria. I consider this appropriately fulfils engagement requirements and expectations of project proponents during project development. The Gippsland Shoreline REZ Order also sets engagement expectations regarding partnering with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation to provide appropriate self-determined agreements, such as Traditional Owner Engagement Agreements and Traditional Owner Project Agreements.

The REZ Order may also, in accordance with section 63(3)(a) of the NEVA, contain the preferred transmission project areas of interest:

- a. within the REZs for the development of major electricity transmission infrastructure; and
- b. between the REZ and the location of the DTS, or a part of that system, for the development of major electricity transmission infrastructure.

The REZ Order includes the preferred transmission project areas of interest to provide transparency to the community and industry on how the REZ is intended to be supported by future transmission infrastructure. These areas of interest identify broad locations where future major transmission infrastructure may be developed to support connections within the REZ and are intended to inform strategic planning and engagement rather than determine a final route or project design. I have included these areas of interest on the advice of DEECA and VicGrid, having regard to the Victorian transmission planning objective (VTPO) and the 2025 VTP, to indicate the most plausible transmission development pathways that could support the REZ over a 15 year planning horizon.

The REZ Order may also, in accordance with section 63(3)(b) of the NEVA, contain any other matters I consider appropriate. In relation to the Gippsland Shoreline REZ, I consider it appropriate for the REZ Order to specify coordination conditions for connection asset infrastructure to ensure offshore wind projects connect in a coordinated, orderly and transparent manner, consistent with the 2025 VTP. These conditions signal the requirements that will apply to a person seeking to connect their offshore wind project to the DTS from within the Gippsland Shoreline REZ.

The REZ Order requires onshore connection infrastructure extending landward from the Mean High-Water Mark (MHWM) to the Giffard connection hub terminal station site and including, but not limited to, all terrestrial infrastructure, cable landfall infrastructure, transition joint bays, and a person's project onshore export cables, to be wholly located within the REZ and installed underground, except where access points are required for operation and maintenance, and where there may be conditions subject to all applicable legislation, regulatory instruments and approvals.

It also specifies designated shoreline crossing areas, with alternative crossings permitted only where lower overall impacts can be demonstrated, the relevant Traditional Owners' consent has been obtained, and approval is provided by VicGrid in accordance with the REZ scheme declaration for this REZ.

#### **Matters the Minister must consider when declaring a REZ**

Section 64(2)(a) of the NEVA requires that, in making a REZ Order, I must have regard to:

- a. the VTPO; and
- b. the current VTP.

*Victorian Transmission Planning Objective*

The VTPO is set out in section 56(1) of the NEVA. The VTPO is:

- a. to promote efficient investment in, and efficient operation and use of, electricity services for the long term interests of consumers of electricity with respect to:
  - i. the price, quality, safety, reliability and security of supply of electricity; and
  - ii. the reliability, safety and security of the national electricity system.
- b. the delivery of transmission services, consistent with a least-regrets development pathway; and
- c. the achievement of targets set by Victorian legislation for reducing, or that are likely to contribute to reducing, Victoria's greenhouse gas emissions.

*Victorian Transmission Plan*

The VTP is developed under section 59 of the NEVA. The VTP sets out an optimal set of projects that address the planning and development needs over 15 years for the first VTP, and 25 years for each subsequent VTP related to new major electricity transmission infrastructure to facilitate connection of renewable energy zones to the DTS.

*Other relevant information*

Section 64(2)(b) of the NEVA permits me to have regard to any other information I consider relevant. In having regard to submissions and other information under section 64(2)(b) of the NEVA, I note that opposition to the declaration of a REZ, concerns about social licence, or a lack of willingness by some landholders or community members to host renewable energy infrastructure do not, of themselves, prevent the declaration of a REZ. Those matters are nonetheless relevant considerations that I have weighed together with the VTPO, the 2025 VTP and the long-term interests of Victorian electricity consumers.

**Steps taken to develop the REZs**

In developing the 2025 VTP under section 59 of the NEVA, VicGrid was required to comply with section 60(2) of the NEVA. In identifying the proposed REZs in the 2025 VTP (including the proposed Gippsland Shoreline REZ), VicGrid was required to undertake the strategic land use assessment, multi-criteria analysis, robustness analysis and cost-benefit analysis required by section 60(2) of the NEVA, and to undertake any consultation required by the 2024 VTP Guidelines and consider the results of that consultation (section 60(2)(d) of the NEVA). The steps described below summarise how VicGrid undertook these analyses and consultation in developing the proposed REZs in the 2025 VTP.

Consistent with this, the NEVA requires the VTP to include maps setting out the boundaries of each REZ and each proposed REZ. Accordingly, VicGrid's development of the 2025 VTP necessarily included identifying proposed REZs and settling proposed REZ boundaries for inclusion in the 2025 VTP.

First, VicGrid undertook the statewide strategic land use assessment required by section 60(2) of the NEVA, which incorporated community feedback alongside information about agriculture, land use, biodiversity, cultural and social factors. To gather early information about community values and preferences, VicGrid undertook a renewable energy planning survey and opened an interactive mapping activity in 2023 to help inform the identification of REZ study areas. VicGrid sought further community feedback on the REZ study areas and the draft VTP Guidelines in 2024, which was reflected in the draft 2025 VTP.

In developing the 2025 VTP, VicGrid undertook further analysis to narrow and develop REZ candidate areas, including energy market modelling and related calibration checks, spatial multi-criteria analysis (a mapping-based assessment that considers and compares multiple factors across different locations to help identify areas that are relatively more suitable or constrained), and preliminary generation resource planning. These steps informed VicGrid's consideration of proposed REZs and associated transmission pathways in finalising the 2025 VTP, consistent with the analysis requirements in section 60(2) of the NEVA.

VicGrid released the draft 2025 VTP for public consultation in May 2025 and invited feedback (including submissions) on the proposed REZs, modelling assumptions and transmission pathways. VicGrid considered the feedback received in finalising the 2025 VTP, released in August 2025, which includes six proposed onshore REZs and the Gippsland Shoreline REZ, and the proposed transmission projects needed from 2025–2040.

## What VicGrid heard during the 2025 VTP consultation and adjustment to REZ boundaries

During consultation on the draft 2025 VTP, VicGrid received feedback on the size of the draft proposed Gippsland Shoreline REZ. Some community members called for a reduction in size to minimise impacts on the region, while industry suggested the REZ be increased to allow greater flexibility in determining onshore cable routes for offshore wind development and to include viable onshore wind areas near Giffard and Darriman. Concerns were also raised by community members in relation to overlapping cable corridors of the REZ with the connection hub infrastructure build out in Giffard and Woodside, as well as the proximity of the proposed REZ to sensitive sites such as Ramsar wetlands and other coastal reserves.

Following the draft 2025 VTP consultation, minor refinements were made in the final 2025 VTP to the boundaries of the proposed Gippsland Shoreline REZ, particularly along the coastline to ensure that all feasible shoreline crossing areas were contained within the boundaries of the REZ. This was intended to provide offshore wind developers with the opportunity to consider a full range of potential shoreline crossing sites. The four shoreline crossing areas that were introduced include Reeves Beach, McGauran Beach, south-west of Merriman Creek and Seaspray Beach. These areas were identified through technical assessment, having regard to feasibility and the avoidance of areas of high environmental and cultural value.

### The REZ Order consultation process

Consultation relevant to identifying and declaring the REZ occurred in three stages. The first stage occurred during VicGrid's statewide strategic land use assessment in 2024, the second stage when VicGrid released the draft 2025 VTP for public consultation, and the third stage when I published the draft REZ Order and invited submissions under section 64(1) of the NEVA.

Under section 64(1) of the NEVA, I am required to publish a draft of the REZ Order and invite submissions to be made within a period of not less than six weeks. A draft Gippsland Shoreline REZ Order was published on 20 November 2025. The end of the consultation period was extended from 22 February 2026 to 15 March 2026 to accommodate stakeholders impacted by the 2026 bushfires. In total, this consultation period ran for more than 16 weeks.

#### *How feedback was considered and addressed*

Consultation feedback received in response to the draft REZ Order was collated and assessed by VicGrid, in partnership with DEECA, to inform my decision. In making the REZ Order, I had regard to the matters set out in section 64(2)(a) of the NEVA, including the VTPO and the current 2025 VTP, and I also had regard to other information I consider relevant (section 64(2)(b) NEVA), including issues raised in submissions about potential impacts on Traditional Owners, the environment, land use and local communities and the efficient use of existing and planned transmission infrastructure. Some of the information provided by Traditional Owners and First Peoples was provided to VicGrid and to me on a confidential basis and is not for public disclosure. I have nonetheless had regard to that information to the extent I considered it relevant to my decision under section 64(2)(b) of the NEVA. I considered and weighed that information thematically together with the other submissions and information received through the consultation process.

VicGrid and DEECA assessed consultation feedback received in response to the draft REZ Order against the factors considered in determining the location of proposed REZs in the 2025 VTP, including agricultural land use, land use and landscape values, energy generation projects in planning, modelled generation build, transmission network requirements, engagement feedback, consultation with Traditional Owners, and regional development considerations.

In assessing any proposed boundary adjustments, VicGrid and DEECA applied a clear and consistent methodology to the assessment of all submissions received through the consultation period. This included applying consistent boundary change principles, undertaking objective analysis, and adopting a statewide approach where appropriate. Advice from DEECA and VicGrid on the proposed changes was provided to me for my consideration.

VicGrid documented submissions and feedback that, while noted, were not relevant to the matters that a REZ Order is required or permitted to deal with under sections 63(2) and 63(3) of the NEVA (including the setting of REZ boundaries, intended transmission hosting capacity and engagement requirements). This included matters better addressed through broader system planning processes (such as the VTP), transmission project design, environmental assessment and planning approval processes, or matters requiring longer-term analysis. VicGrid will carry that feedback forward to the

development of the 2027 VTP. Matters raised in submissions that are relevant to any REZ scheme declaration or the granting of REZ scheme authorities will be considered as part of the design of those instruments and, where applicable, any public consultation processes.

### Response to feedback

A total of 65 submissions relating to the draft Gippsland Shoreline REZ were received in this consultation phase.

Submissions were organised by VicGrid into key common themes identified through a structured decision-making framework. These themes represent the vast majority of submissions and are:

- a. shoreline crossings and REZ boundary adjustments;
- b. underground onshore connection infrastructure;
- c. impacts on biodiversity and the natural environment;
- d. impacts on the region.

A summary of these submissions, together with responses to the issues raised, are organised thematically and set out below.

In making the REZ Order, I have considered all of the submissions received and had regard to the matters set out in section 64(2) of the NEVA, including the VTPO and the current 2025 VTP, and other relevant information under section 64(2)(b).

#### *Shoreline crossings and REZ boundary adjustments*

Submissions emphasised the importance of locating shoreline crossings away from established coastal townships and sensitive areas, in particular Seaspray and Woodside. Concerns were raised about the proximity of shoreline crossings to residences, community facilities, and tourism infrastructure, and the potential for construction and ongoing maintenance activities to affect local amenity, community wellbeing, and regional character. To that end, there were requests from members of the community to adjust the coastal boundary of the REZ to exclude townships.

Environmental concerns were also raised, particularly regarding dune systems, waterways, coastal processes, threatened and migratory species, and proximity to the Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park. Submissions focused on the importance of aligning shoreline crossing decisions with established environmental assessment frameworks. Submissions emphasised that the *Environmental Effects Statement* (EES) and **Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999** (Cth) (EPBC) processes are specifically designed to rigorously test alternatives and assess cumulative impacts, and that making shoreline crossing location decisions too early risks undermining these processes.

Some submissions from community members supported the proposed shoreline crossing locations, noting that they were appropriate and considered.

#### *Response to shoreline crossings and REZ boundary adjustments*

I have considered these submissions and have had regard to the VTPO and the 2025 VTP in doing so. I note some of these submissions raise similar issues to matters raised during consultation on the 2025 VTP. These issues were reconsidered and where they did not, on balance, necessitate further change, the outcome of the VTP assessment has been maintained.

I acknowledge the views expressed in submissions regarding the location of proposed shoreline crossings, including concerns about proximity to coastal townships such as Seaspray and Woodside, potential impacts on local amenity, community wellbeing and tourism, and the need to protect sensitive coastal environments, while also noting that some submissions supported the proposed shoreline crossings.

I am required to balance the concerns raised in submissions with the VTPO and the 2025 VTP. Consistent with the 2025 VTP, the Gippsland Shoreline REZ was identified as providing significant advantages to all Victorians in supporting efficient planning for offshore wind transmission infrastructure. I note that consistent with the 2025 VTP, offshore wind is a critical component of Victoria's future generation mix to ensure energy can be supplied at the lowest cost to consumers.

I note the 2025 VTP included technical consideration of shoreline crossing options to support the first 2 GW of offshore wind generation, including underground cable routes to the Giffard connection hub, the avoidance of townships, and the exclusion of environmentally and culturally sensitive areas such as waterways and wetlands, as well as efforts to minimise crossing of major transport corridors, including the South Gippsland Highway.

These considerations were refined to the four proposed shoreline crossing areas of Reeves Beach, McGauran Beach, southwest of Merriman Creek and Seaspray Beach. These areas were selected based on detailed technical feasibility, industry and Traditional Owner input, and information gathered through engagement with coastal communities since early 2023. The shoreline crossing areas aim to minimise impacts to the environment, cultural heritage and communities.

I have considered this information and find it appropriate to retain the four identified shoreline crossing locations, at this stage, to provide flexibility and resilience in planning for offshore wind transmission, and to avoid constraining future options in a way that could create undue risk of delay to offshore wind development.

I note that retaining multiple potential locations does not predetermine project development or where infrastructure will be constructed. The REZ Order does not replace existing statutory planning and environmental frameworks, such as the requirement to seek and obtain approvals under the **Planning and Environment Act 1987** (Vic.) and, where applicable, the **Environment Effects Act 1978** (Vic.). These processes are specifically designed to enable engagement with all interested parties and facilitate detailed and thoughtful consideration of the issues raised.

Any proposed shoreline crossings will be subject to further detailed planning, environmental assessment and approval processes, including requirements for early and ongoing engagement with communities and Traditional Owners, with detailed environmental impacts to be assessed at the project stage. Accordingly, the EES and EPBC processes raised in submissions are more appropriately applied at the project stage, rather than at the REZ boundary-setting stage.

I also note that the REZ Order provides safeguards where alternative shoreline crossing locations are proposed outside the identified boundaries. Any such proposal is subject to VicGrid and relevant Traditional Owner approval and must clearly demonstrate a lower overall environmental, social and cultural impact. This framework is intended to ensure shoreline crossing decisions remain responsive to community concerns, environmental values and Traditional Owner interests, while supporting a coordinated approach to offshore wind development.

The VTPO requires me to have regard to efficient investment in electricity services for the long-term interests of Victorian electricity consumers, the reliability and security of the electricity system, Victoria's emissions reduction targets, and the delivery of transmission services consistent with a least-regrets development pathway.

Maintaining flexibility in shoreline crossing planning is consistent with these objectives, and supports coordinated connection to existing and future transmission infrastructure within the REZ, which is essential to Victoria's energy transition and must be undertaken in a way that serves the long-term interests of all Victorians.

I have carefully considered submissions seeking the exclusion of townships, in particular Seaspray, from the REZ, taking into account the matters raised and the approach adopted in the 2025 VTP and other REZs across the state. I reiterate that the REZ Order does not predetermine project development or where infrastructure will be constructed. The REZ Order does not replace existing statutory planning and environmental frameworks, such as the requirement to seek and obtain approvals under the **Planning and Environment Act 1987** (Vic.) and, where applicable, the **Environment Effects Act 1978** (Vic.). Offshore wind project developers will be required to consult with communities as they seek to progress their projects through planning and approvals.

Importantly, the REZ Order sets Victorian government expectations for offshore wind developers to meet regarding community engagement and delivering social value and economic benefits.

On balance, having considered the matters raised in submissions under this theme and weighed them against the VTPO, the 2025 VTP and the benefits associated with the Gippsland Shoreline REZ, I have decided to retain the four shoreline crossing areas and the REZ boundary as proposed in the draft REZ Order in response to submissions under this theme.

*Underground onshore connection infrastructure*

Submissions also included specific requests aimed at minimising future impacts from offshore wind developers' onshore connection infrastructure.

Submissions called for onshore connection infrastructure to be legally required to be installed underground to reduce long-term visual, environmental and land use impacts.

There were also requests for assurance that underground cables would not go under residences.

*Response to underground onshore connection infrastructure*

I have considered these submissions and have had regard to the VTPO and the 2025 VTP in doing so. I note some of these submissions raise similar issues to matters raised during consultation on the 2025 VTP. These issues were reconsidered and where they did not, on balance, necessitate further change, the outcome of the VTP assessment has been maintained.

I acknowledge the concerns raised in submissions about the potential impacts of onshore connection infrastructure associated with offshore wind development. I understand the concerns about long-term visual, environmental and land-use effects and the desire for reassurance about the location of underground infrastructure, particularly in relation to any impacts on homes.

Having considered these matters, and in response to these concerns, I have amended the REZ Order to clarify the expectation that onshore connection infrastructure between the MHW and the Giffard connection hub terminal station site is to be installed underground, subject to technical constraints and any requirements imposed by applicable legislative and regulatory frameworks. This amendment is consistent with the 2025 VTP which stated offshore wind developers in Gippsland will be required to connect to VicGrid's Giffard connection hub via underground cables to access the shared transmission infrastructure (page 99).

In relation to requests to ensure that underground cabling does not run underneath residences, I reiterate that the REZ Order does not predetermine project development or where infrastructure will be constructed. The REZ Order does not replace existing statutory planning and environmental frameworks, such as the requirement to seek and obtain approvals under the **Planning and Environment Act 1987** (Vic.) and, where applicable, the **Environment Effects Act 1978** (Vic.). Project developers will be required to consult with communities as they seek to progress their projects through planning and approvals. I note that this matter is more appropriately addressed through the REZ scheme process for the Gippsland Shoreline REZ. The REZ scheme process will include further consultation with the community and industry and will consider how concerns about the location of underground cabling can be appropriately managed.

*Impacts on biodiversity and the natural environment*

Submissions commented on the impacts on biodiversity in the region, in particular from construction. This included impacts on sensitive coastal and dune systems, and on birds of prey and other bird species, other fauna, and species listed as threatened or vulnerable.

*Response to impacts on biodiversity and the natural environment*

I have considered these submissions and have had regard to the VTPO and the 2025 VTP in doing so. I note some of these submissions raise similar issues to matters raised during consultation on the 2025 VTP. These issues were reconsidered and where they did not, on balance, necessitate further change, the outcome of the VTP assessment has been maintained. I acknowledge the concerns raised in submissions about potential impacts on biodiversity in the region, particularly during construction activities. I understand the importance of safeguarding habitat for native species, including species listed as threatened or vulnerable.

Biodiversity values, environmental constraints and natural hazard vulnerabilities were integral considerations during the development of the proposed Gippsland Shoreline REZ, including through the application of avoidance principles in the strategic land use assessment. Where possible, the assessment prioritised areas with comparatively fewer land use and environmental constraints. Accordingly, areas of high biodiversity value and environmentally and culturally sensitive areas were considered at a strategic level during the identification and refinement of the proposed REZ.

As I have observed elsewhere in these reasons, declaring an area to be a REZ does not remove or otherwise diminish the need for future projects to comply with applicable environmental assessment, approval and offset requirements. Detailed environmental impacts will need to be assessed at the project stage. Similarly, as noted before, a REZ Order does not replace existing statutory planning and environmental frameworks.

On balance, having considered the matters raised in submissions and weighed them alongside the strategic assessment undertaken through the 2025 VTP, I have decided to retain the Gippsland Shoreline REZ boundary as proposed in the draft REZ Order in response to submissions under this theme.

#### *Impacts on the region*

Submissions highlighted potential impacts on the region's tourism, and general opposition to offshore wind development. There were concerns raised through the submissions about impact on mental health and wellbeing, jobs and livelihoods.

Some community members requested for the REZ Order to prevent onshore wind, solar, battery energy storage systems (BESS), or data centre developments from being established within the Gippsland Shoreline REZ, to avoid overdevelopment and minimise cumulative impacts. Submissions were also received from some industry participants and some community members seeking greater flexibility to host onshore generation.

Some submissions raised concerns about potential land-use conflicts, including impacts on airspace used for training operations by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) over Seaspray and the Ninety Mile Beach coastline.

#### *Response to impacts on the region*

I have considered these submissions and have had regard to the VTPO and the 2025 VTP in doing so. I note some of these submissions raise similar issues to matters raised during consultation on the 2025 VTP. These issues were reconsidered and where they did not, on balance, necessitate further change, the outcome of the VTP assessment has been maintained.

I acknowledge the concerns raised in submissions about the potential regional impacts of offshore wind development, including effects on tourism, jobs, livelihoods and community wellbeing, as well as differing views on the appropriate scale of onshore development and potential land use conflicts. I take seriously the concerns raised about mental health and wellbeing, and recognise that uncertainty, change and impacts from development can place pressure on individuals, families and communities.

I am however, required to balance these concerns with the VTPO. Consistent with the 2025 VTP, I note that the Gippsland Shoreline REZ was identified as offering significant advantages to all Victorians in terms of efficient investment in transmission planning for offshore renewable energy projects. I also note that the 2025 VTP identified the potential for coordinated development to support reliable and affordable electricity services, and to the potential for development to attract investment, support regional employment, improve services, boost local economies, facilitate payments to landholders, and generate benefits for Traditional Owners and local communities.

It is clear from submissions made in response to the draft REZ Order that some community members are concerned about the potential impacts of generation and transmission projects on the region covered by the Gippsland Shoreline REZ. In this context, I note that VicGrid is taking an active coordination role in the area between the coast and the Giffard connection hub to minimise impacts on coastal communities and landholders.

The Gippsland Shoreline REZ is distinct from the other REZs in that it has not been designed to provide access to the DTS for onshore wind or solar projects but instead to facilitate the coordinated connection of offshore wind generation into the DTS.

I acknowledge that some submissions have expressed opposition to further onshore generation and storage projects within the region, especially within the boundary of this REZ, based on concerns about cumulative impacts, overdevelopment and effects on landscape, amenity and wellbeing.

The Gippsland Shoreline REZ has been deliberately established to support the connection of offshore wind generation only, and the decision not to include onshore generation as an eligible technology reflects that intent and the concerns raised by the community.

While some landholders and project proponents may continue to pursue onshore generation and battery energy storage systems (BESS) proposals within the Gippsland Shoreline REZ, they will be required to go through the grid impact assessment. This REZ has been deliberately developed to signal to proponents that the area is intended to facilitate the connection of offshore wind generation and is not designed to support or encourage additional onshore generation development.

The detailed impacts of any future generation and transmission projects will necessarily depend on their location, scale and design. Therefore, these impacts are more appropriately assessed at the project level. Given the proximity of the REZ to the RAAF base in East Sale and other aviation activities, project proponents will be required to identify, assess and propose appropriate mitigation measures for any potential aviation impacts as part of established planning, design, environmental assessment and statutory approvals processes. These processes enable engagement with relevant authorities and interested parties, and support detailed and thoughtful consideration of the issues raised.

Similarly, I observe that matters relating to how projects will be assessed as located in a REZ and the process to obtain a REZ scheme authority for access in a REZ will be set out in the draft REZ scheme declaration for the Gippsland Shoreline REZ. VicGrid will consult further on the draft REZ scheme declaration when this is published for community and industry feedback. The REZ Order does not authorise individual projects or determine the final location or design of future infrastructure. Proposed developments are still subject to planning approvals, environmental impact assessments and compliance with laws.

I acknowledge the concerns expressed in submissions about the potential impacts of development on coastal communities, however, having regard to the purpose and design of the Gippsland Shoreline REZ, its role in facilitating offshore wind connection only, and the coordination measures outlined above I am satisfied that no changes to the REZ boundary are warranted. I have therefore decided to retain the REZ boundary as proposed in the draft REZ Order in response to submissions under this theme.

A more detailed account of the feedback will be set out in the *What We Heard* report, released alongside the final REZ Order and the statement of reasons.

#### **Consultation with the Premier and Treasurer (section 64(1)(c) of the NEVA)**

I wrote to the Premier and the Treasurer for the purposes of section 64(1)(c) of the NEVA. I have considered any responses received from the Premier and/or Treasurer in making the REZ Order.

#### **Conclusion**

Having considered the submissions received during consultation on the draft REZ Order, and having complied with the consultation requirements in section 64(1) of the NEVA (including publishing a draft REZ Order, inviting submissions for at least six weeks and considering the submissions received), and having regard to the matters set out in section 64(2)(a) of the NEVA, including the VTPO and the current 2025 VTP, I am satisfied that making the Gippsland Shoreline REZ Order supports efficient investment in and use of transmission services in the long-term interests of Victorian electricity consumers (including in relation to price, reliability and security of supply), supports achievement of Victoria's emissions reduction targets, and is consistent with the least-regrets development pathway set out in the 2025 VTP for transmission development in and around the Gippsland Shoreline REZ. In making this assessment, I have also had regard to other information I consider relevant under section 64(2)(b) of the NEVA, including issues raised in submissions about impacts on local communities, land use, the environment and Traditional Owners.

In refining the REZ boundaries, VicGrid applied a consistent statewide approach, aligning zone boundaries with existing administrative and planning features, including local government boundaries, roads, and designated planning areas. As a result of this refinement process, minor changes have been made from the draft to final REZ boundaries.

Where proposed changes would have undermined or delivered outcomes that were not consistent with the VTPO or the 2025 VTP, or conflicted with other mandatory requirements, they were not recommended. Where submissions proposed changes that are more appropriately considered against the wider strategic outcomes of the Victorian Access Regime, I have directed VicGrid to include these matters for consideration and further discussions as part of the draft 2027 VTP.

As part of considering the draft REZ Order, consideration has also been given to the cost-benefit analysis which was conducted for the optimal development pathway as outlined in the 2025 VTP. The cost-benefit analysis demonstrates that the net benefits of the proposed plan to Victorians as a whole are substantial, with a net present value of \$9.6 billion and projected reductions in household and business energy bills.

For the reasons given in this statement, and having regard to the matters referred to in this statement, I am satisfied that the final Gippsland Shoreline REZ Order represents a reasonable and appropriate outcome to support Victoria's long-term energy needs.

HON. LILY D'AMBROSIO MP  
Minister for Energy and Resources

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