



Australian Government

Department of Climate Change, Energy,
the Environment and Water



Frequently Asked Questions – Southern Ocean Region

What is being proposed?

The Southern Ocean Region and surrounds has been identified as a potential site for zoning for future offshore renewable energy projects in Australian Commonwealth waters.

Where is the Southern Ocean Region?

The Southern Ocean Region extends from offshore of Warrnambool (VIC) in the east to Port MacDonnell (SA) in the west.



Image: The green region indicates the area proposed for future offshore renewable energy projects.

How can I have my say?

This is your first opportunity to provide feedback.

We want your feedback on the proposal and how offshore renewable energy projects could share the area with other users and interests. We encourage your feedback through a submission through our [Have Your Say](#) web portal.

Is this the only chance to have my say?

No. This is your first opportunity to provide feedback.

This is a first step to hear about who is using the wider marine area, before developers can seek licences over smaller areas to advance project proposals. As part of testing the feasibility of project proposals, licence holders will need to consult with the local community and other interested stakeholders. The Australian Government is currently developing regulations that will set out the details and requirements of management plans to be developed in the feasibility stage, including the requirement to consult with community.

Why is offshore renewable energy being considered?

The Australian Government has set a target of net zero emissions by 2050 and is looking to reduce emissions by 43%, and by 2030 with 82% of Australia's electricity generated from renewable sources. Offshore renewable energy projects within the Southern Ocean Region can help the Australian Government meet these targets.

The Victorian Government's recently announced updated renewable energy targets are 65% by 2030 and 95% by 2035. The Victorian Government is also targeting at least 2GW of offshore wind energy generation by 2032, 4GW by 2035 and 9GW by 2040, with first power by 2028. Offshore renewable energy projects within the Southern Ocean Region can help the Victorian Government meet these targets.

How will this benefit the local community?

Offshore renewable energy projects within the Southern Ocean Region can help decarbonise the economy with year-round clean energy generation and drive regional jobs growth, with a need for skills in engineering and construction, as well strong transferable skills from other sectors including high-voltage electrical, logistics and offshore work.

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How are First Nations groups being engaged with?

Gunditjmara, Eastern Maar, and the First Nations Australians of the Southeast in South Australia have significant interests in the marine region, as part of their cultural heritage. There are no Native Title claims that overlap the proposed offshore area. Engagement with some First Nations Australians commenced during the initial stages of the development of the proposed Southern Ocean Region.

Consultations will continue throughout the declaration process, to ensure decisions are made which are appropriate and support First Nations Australians interests. We encourage everyone to make a submission on our Consultation Hub.

How will the environment be protected?

We have consulted extensively and continue to work across Government, including with agencies responsible for the protection of the environment. Developers must receive approval under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* for any potential development proposal. This will include an assessment of the relevant impacts and proposed avoidance, management, and mitigation to demonstrate that appropriate environmental outcomes can be achieved and ensure minimal impact on the marine environment. For more information on how the environment will be protected, please see *Marine Users, Interests, and the Environment - Southern Ocean Region*

What sort of projects might be built in the area?

Currently, development interest is mostly focused on potential offshore wind projects. This could change in the future as more technologies come to market. Future licences could be granted for offshore solar, wave or tidal energy, or other forms of energy generation from renewable sources.

Will I still be able to access the area?

Yes, in line with rules that manage safe navigation in the maritime space. The Australian Government will manage the offshore marine environment in a way that recognises all users and balances competing interests. **Future offshore renewable energy projects must work with existing users and interests to ensure the area is shared, while maintaining a safe marine space during construction, operation and maintenance phases.**

Will I be able to fish in the area?

Yes – to the extent possible to ensure a safe marine space. It is Australian Government policy that offshore renewable energy projects will need to share the marine space with existing users. Restrictions may be placed around specific infrastructure to manage safety. It is expected that project developers will consult with fishers and other impacted users to minimise any disruptions. For detailed information on fishing in the vicinity of the area, please read *Marine Users, Interests, and the Environment - Southern Ocean Region*.

How many wind turbines could there be, and will I be able to see them?

Offshore wind turbines are likely to be visible from the shore to differing extents. Their visual effect will depend on their distance to the shore, the extent of haze in the atmosphere, the number of turbines installed, and the elevation of where from shore they are being viewed. The exact location of projects and number of turbines that may be proposed within the declared area is yet to be determined.

What happens to the wind turbines once they reach their end of life?

Offshore wind turbines have a specific lifespan. Once they reach the end of this, they are decommissioned. Currently, up to 95% of wind turbines are recyclable, with manufacturers aiming to reach 100% in the next few years. Developers must have a clear set out plan and financial security set aside for decommissioning, before they are granted a commercial licence. These must be set out in their management plans.

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What marine users and interests are in the area?

We have undertaken initial consultation with Commonwealth, Victorian and South Australian Government agencies to identify interests in the vicinity of the area. Examples of marine users and interests in the area include; Native Title holders, various species of marine animal life, vessel traffic, weather radars, commercial and recreational fishing, owners of existing infrastructure, and tourism industry. For more detailed information, please read *Marine Users, Interests, and the Environment - Southern Ocean Region*.

How will this affect shipping and vessel traffic?

We are working with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) and the relevant port authorities to determine strategies to mitigate disruption and the potential for hazards. This consultation will be ongoing, and strategies will be determined before a final area is declared.

How will electricity generated in the area be transmitted and used?

Electricity generated by renewable energy infrastructure in the area may be transmitted onshore to be fed into the National Electricity Market (NEM) or be used to supply a specific end user, such as heavy industry.

Existing connection infrastructure may have capacity limitations that could put an upper limit on the number of prospective projects that could connect. It is the responsibility of prospective developers to understand existing and future capacity requirements and consider the prospective end use of future electricity generated in the area.

Do existing legal requirements continue to apply?

Yes. Prospective developers are responsible for obtaining all relevant approvals under Commonwealth and State Government legislation. Developers are required to be aware of all other rights and obligations that may apply to their respective projects. This may include, but is not limited to, [Underwater Cultural Heritage](#), [Biosecurity](#), [Navigation](#), [Immigration](#), [Customs](#), [Native Title](#), [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation](#) and [Air Services](#).

How long will the area be declared for?

When declaring an area suitable for offshore energy, the Minister is not required to specify how long the declaration will last for. If the declaration instrument does not state an end date, it will remain in force until it is revoked. To revoke the declared area, the Minister must undertake a consultation process and consider any submissions received. If a declaration is revoked, or otherwise ends, any licences that have already been issued will remain; however, they cannot be changed or renewed.