

I am a resident of Port Stephens NSW and I wish to register my objection to the proposed offshore wind farm off the Port Stephens coast.

I support renewable energy but object to placing the proposed wind turbines across 1,800 square kilometres of our pristine waterways. The impact to our marine park, wildlife, jobs and local economy will be significant and imposes risks that are unacceptably high.

Here are some of the key concerns that have driven my decision to oppose the offshore wind farms:

1. Detrimental impact on the economy: For over 20 years various government programs have encouraged us to develop eco-tourism in our area and obtain eco-tourism certification, showcasing the natural assets of Port Stephens – the pristine waters, Marine Parks, National Parks and abundant sealife.

- o The international and Australian tourism industry is a vital economic driver for Port Stephens, providing over \$669 million in expenditure within the economy. I am concerned the installation and operation of the wind turbines will have detrimental effects on the natural assets of Port Stephens, putting our local economy at risk.

- o Eco-tourism has helped drive the growth of the local job market, helped to attract families to the local area and helps to keep young people in our local area in employment. Our residential population is growing, and many new homes are under construction. Port Stephens is currently seen to be a desirable place to live and work, and people settle here to enjoy its natural beauty, stunning vistas, and leisure pursuits such as sailing, fishing and other ocean-based recreation.

- o Port Stephens is renowned for its natural beauty, and I am concerned that the wind turbines will negatively alter the region's picturesque landscape, making it less desirable for visitors and residents.

- o There are over 100 commercial fishers in Port Stephens waters whose livelihood will be impacted, and the sustainability of various different segments of the industry put at risk

2. Detrimental impact on the natural environment: It is indisputable that the testing, construction and operation of the offshore windfarm will impact the local ecosystem, including wildlife habitats, migratory bird routes and the disturbance of other local flora and fauna.

- o Over 40,000 whales pass the shores of Port Stephens between May to November during their annual northerly migration, and then on their way south each year. The declared Hunter wind turbines zone is inside the migratory path of the whales.

- o Overseas studies have demonstrated that dolphins and seals avoid the off-shore windfarm areas due to their detection of the low-frequency sound generated by offshore wind-farms. This in turn can significantly impact on their ability to hunt. Cabbage Tree Island sees a returning seal colony every Winter, with numbers of seals increasing annually. The common dolphin population use the proposed area and are a tourist attraction.

- o Studies conducted overseas show that significant migratory sea bird fatalities have been reported at wind turbines situated close to breeding colonies. 58 species of seabirds including rare visitors have been recorded in the Hunter Region, 38 of which are truly pelagic birds. The offshore islands of Port Stephens, to the north of the lease are important breeding colonies for the wedge-tailed shearwater and the threatened Gould's Petrel with its primarily breeding site on Cabbage Tree Island and is known to migrate south, through the lease area. The short-tailed shearwater also migrates through this area in flocks of tens of thousands flying around the same height as the turbine blades. Birds will not conform to specific hours of the day for their travel through the area.
- o Overseas studies show that offshore wind farms generate large volumes of underwater noise. The research demonstrates that the underwater noise from these offshore developments have the capacity to reduce the survival rate of marine animals. As an example, pile-driving noise during the construction phase of the offshore wind farms can lead to acute stress responses in juvenile fish species. The repeated and prolonged exposure to increased noise in the wild may lead to a decrease in survival.
- o Corridors for electricity cables on the shore and travelling inland will cause fragmentation of wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors, increase bushfire risk and destroy the visual amenity of the Stockton Sand dunes and coastal hinterland
- o Environmental offsets paid by developers to the government for impacts to the environment are not an adequate compensation for the loss of amenity, beauty and habitat that will affect residents, human and other, of the land and ocean.

3. Lack of community consultation and engagement: The community was not properly notified of the declaration for proposed offshore wind farms, the drop-in centres or the opportunity for community consultation and information gathering. I did not receive any information in any form and it seems that the majority of residents in Port Stephens had the same experience. The consultation process was flawed, inappropriate, and ineffective in reaching the majority of residents. Since we are the people who are going to wear the greatest impact of this proposal it seems logical that residents should have been a high priority for engagement. Therefore I object to the proposal going forward as the process, as laid out in the departmental document "Overview of the Offshore Renewable Energy Process" has not been properly.