



Position Statement – Renewable Energy

Purpose

- The purpose of this document is to provide a consolidated and transparent Wellington Shire Council ('Council') position on renewable energy investment and transition in the Wellington Shire.
- In outlining its position on renewable energy, Council acknowledges the divergent community views which exist and the breadth of impacts (both positive and negative) associated with new energy transition. Council will, however, continue to advocate to State and Commonwealth Government decision makers and relevant stakeholders for the best long-term outcomes for the broader Wellington Shire community.

Background

- The 2021-2025 Council Plan <https://www.wellington.vic.gov.au/council/council-plan> sets the strategic actions, priorities, and key projects for Council to deliver. The Council Plan was developed with significant community consultation during 2021 and aligns with the long-term goals the community have expressed in the Wellington 2031 Community Vision. The Council Plan identifies Climate Change as the priority strategic issue in the Wellington Shire, and has a focus on attracting new investment and transitioning to a renewable energy future.
- The Council adopted Wellington Renewable Energy Impact and Readiness Study ('Study') <https://www.wellington.vic.gov.au/development/renewable-energy-planning> summarises the cumulative scale and impact of planned renewable energy investment in the Wellington Shire (and broader Gippsland area), with more than \$40 billion of planned investment (the majority of which is offshore wind). The Study also documents State Government policy support for the Gippsland 'Renewable Energy Zone' and the Commonwealth Government's declaration of Bass Strait as the first area in Australia suitable for offshore wind development.
- Given the scale and speed of renewable energy transition in the Wellington Shire and the high level of community interest, it is appropriate for Council to provide a clear position statement on renewable energy as follows.

Council Position

Support for renewable energy investment/transition

- Consistent with the Council Plan, Council supports renewable energy investment and transition in the Wellington Shire. Council recognises, however, that individual renewable energy projects remain subject to required consultation and statutory assessment processes which are controlled by the State and/or Commonwealth Government.

Transmission

- Council acknowledges the need for the establishment of new onshore transmission to the Latrobe Valley electricity network and will continue to advocate to the responsible State Government agency (VicGrid) for well-

planned and coordinated transmission to avoid a ‘spaghetti effect’ of transmission.

- Council will continue to advocate to VicGrid for transmission solutions to be developed in consultation with the Wellington Shire community.
- Council acknowledges that final decisions about the form of transmission (underground or above ground, or a combination of both) do not ultimately rest with Council, but all viable options (including undergrounding in areas of greatest sensitivity) should be considered to help minimise impact on the Wellington Shire community.
- In all cases, and particularly where overhead transmission is required, Council will continue to advocate to the State Government/relevant agencies for the implementation of ‘industry best practice’ compensation for affected landowners.

Economic benefits

- Council seeks to unlock the economic potential of renewable energy investment and will advocate for and support employment and procurement opportunities for the Wellington Shire community.

Community benefits

- Council will continue to advocate to the State and Commonwealth Government and seek the support of renewable energy proponents to establish lasting and legacy community benefit projects in the Wellington Shire, so the benefits of renewable energy investment are shared.

Community and stakeholder engagement

- Council will continue to advocate to renewable energy project proponents and relevant State and Commonwealth agencies to effectively engage with the Wellington Shire community and with traditional owners, to inform final project proposals and investment decisions.
- Council supports individual community members being provided with meaningful opportunity to input into planning and statutory assessment processes (be it in support or opposition), before final State and/or Commonwealth Government decisions are made about individual renewable energy projects.
- Council strongly encourages thorough community consultation throughout the planning and implementation process for the transition to renewable energy, especially in those communities that are directly affected.
- That Council will continue to advocate for the best long-term outcomes for the broader Wellington Shire community.

Ports

- That Council supports (subject to future private sector investment and statutory approvals) Barry Beach/Port Anthony having both a construction and operations

and maintenance role to support renewable energy investment in Gippsland. Council also supports Port Albert being utilised to assist with future offshore wind operations and maintenance.

Training and skills

- That Council continue to advocate to the State Government for the establishment of Wellington Shire based training and education opportunities associated with renewable energy investment.

Regional collaboration

- Council will continue to collaborate with other Local Government authorities (particularly South Gippsland Shire Council and Latrobe City) and relevant Government agencies to help leverage long term community benefits and support investment readiness across the region.

Information availability

Council will continue to work with the Gippsland Climate Change Network to establish a New Energy website to assist the Wellington Shire community to access information about renewable energy investment/transition.



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