

For Public Notice via Internet**REASONS FOR DECISION UNDER *ENVIRONMENT EFFECTS ACT 1978*****Title of Proposal:** **VIC Offshore Windfarm****Proponent:** **VIC Offshore Windfarm Pty Ltd****Description of Project:**

The project comprises an offshore wind farm in Discovery Bay near the coast of Portland, supporting electricity transmission assets required to transfer energy generated by the wind farm to the existing electricity transmission network, and modifications to ports and harbours required to support the construction and operation of the wind farm.

The key components of the project are:

- Offshore wind assets consisting of up to 62 wind turbines and a network of buried or mechanically protected subsea cables.
- An offshore substation platform installed on foundations and buried or mechanically protected subsea cables.
- A landfall site with a transition joint pit connecting the marine cables from the offshore substation to the onshore cables that will run to the onshore substation.
- An onshore substation, which may include further transformers.
- A new transmission line supplying energy generated from windfarm to the National Electricity Market, with additional equipment as required, which may include battery storage for fast frequency response to provide stability to the grid.
- Modifications to existing ports and harbour to support project construction and operations.

Decision:

The Minister for Planning has decided that an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required for the VIC Offshore Windfarm, as described in the referral accepted on 28 May 2021.

Reasons for Decision:

- The project has the potential for a range of significant and complex effects that require rigorous assessment. In particular, the project as proposed could have significant effects on:
 - marine and coastal processes and ecosystems, including the Bonney Coast Upwelling;
 - ecological values of the area's terrestrial environments, including native vegetation and habitats for migratory species;
 - threatened terrestrial and aquatic species and communities listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* and *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, including but not limited to the Antarctic Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*), the Pygmy Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus brevicauda*), Southern Right Whale (*Eubalaena australis*), Giant Kelp Marine Forests of South East Australia, and the Orange-bellied Parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*);
 - ecological character and conservation values of Glenelg and Discover Bay Ramsar Site and Discovery Bay Marine National Park;
 - landscape values;
 - Aboriginal cultural heritage; and
 - and the local and regional socioeconomic environment.

- Integrated assessment of potentially significant effects is necessary to sufficiently examine their extent, related uncertainties and acceptability. This includes examining the scope for avoidance and minimisation of effects via feasible siting/layout, design and operational alternatives for key components of the proposal, as well as evaluating ability to achieve acceptable environmental outcomes.
- An EES is warranted to provide a robust and transparent assessment process for consideration of potentially significant adverse effects of the project, prior to any relevant statutory decision-making, including under the *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, *Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, *Aboriginal Heritage act 2009*, *Marine Coastal Act 2018* and *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*.

Date of Decision:
1/8/2021