



## **FISHING INDUSTRY CONDEMNS OFFSHORE WINDFARM PROPOSAL FOR HUNTER REGION**

The NSW commercial fishing community condemns the Federal Government's proposal to install windfarms in both the Hunter and Illawarra regions.

Tricia Beatty, Chief Executive Officer of the Professional Fishermen's Association of NSW said today, "The proposal being considered by the Federal Government is ludicrous and will have a devastating impact on endangered, protected species as well as devastating our commercial fishing families and seafood consumers of New South Wales."

The Minister for Climate Change and Energy has proposed an area in Australian Commonwealth waters off the Hunter and Illawarra for offshore renewable energy projects. "Although our industry supports the government's intent to unlock renewable energy jobs, energy security and job security, there is significant concerns and evidence that the offshore windfarms will have a significantly negative impact on the marine environment both in the area proposed and across the East Coast of Australia", said Ms Beatty.

The declared Hunter area covers 1,854 square kilometres between the Central Coast and Port Stephens and is situated 20 km from the coast in the north and over 35 km from the coast in the south. The proposed Illawarra area covers 1,461 square kilometres. The turbines will be allowed 10km off Wollongong and Shellharbour and 30km off Kiama. Although it has the potential to generate up to 5 gigawatts of renewable wind energy, enough to power an estimated 4.2 million homes, there is enough evidence to demonstrate that it will have significant negative impact on the marine environment and life it supports.

Offshore windfarms are relatively new and so not much is known about impact until more recently. However, the Table 1 below demonstrates that what research has been undertaken, paints an extremely concerning picture, with impacts demonstrated on local wildlife, marine life, phytoplankton and even currents and water temperatures. Offshore windfarms increase ocean noise and introduces electro-magnetic fields that impact on navigation, predator detection, communication and the ability for fish and shellfish to find mates. Offshore wind farms can negatively affect marine mammals, both during construction and operation stages. The physical presence of turbines, the noise during construction, the underwater noise as well as boat and helicopter traffic can disturb mammals causing them to avoid wind farms.

"The studies done to date demonstrates enough evidence that listed threatened species and ecological communities, as well as listed migratory species (protected under international agreements) will be impacted by the proposed wind farms. There is also some opinion amongst the scientific community that there is a link between both the increased mortality rate of whales alongside the expansion of offshore wind infrastructure on the busy coastal cities of New York and New Jersey, although this is still being studied. The areas proposed for the offshore windfarms is in the migratory path of important species such as southern right

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PFA providing effective representation on NSW commercial wild harvest fishing to all levels of government and other key stakeholders.



whales (one of the most endanger large whale species in the world) and humpback whales”, said Ms Beatty.

“The proposed marine windfarm offshore from the Hunter and Illawarra region will have a significant impact on NSW commercial fishers. These fishing areas feed into the seafood supply of all of NSW and Australia. Removal of the grounds that supply these areas will lead to major protein short-falls and economic hardships. Not only will the windfarms remove seafood production from the area but is also located in an area subject to heavy traffic from container ships. The Ulladulla to Newcastle offshore region has the heaviest density of container ship and cruise line traffic on the East Coast of Australia. Already the area has seen significant maritime accidents such as 2 separate incidences of many lost containers etc. as well as the failed Kingfish Seacage farms off Port Stephens that were destroyed after an east coast low hit the region,” said Mr Gauta.

“Offshore Wind Farms are not the solution for renewable energy. Only last month did UK’s [Vattenfall AB](#) halt the development of their offshore wind project in the UK due to the surging costs and the challenging nature of offshore wind power. We urge the Federal Government to cease the pursuit of these offshore windfarms in our waters and look to more viable and productive alternatives”.

"We strongly reject the Federal Government’s proposal and urge them to cease this pursuit before a major environmental disaster is created." said Ms Beatty.

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Table 1: Research demonstrating negative impact of windfarms on the ecosystem

Impact	Research source
underwater noise from offshore developments have the capacity to reduce the survival rate of marine animals	<a href="#">"Assessing the Impact of Underwater Sounds on Fishes and Other Forms of Marine Life   Tethys"</a> . <a href="http://tethys.pnnl.gov">tethys.pnnl.gov</a> . Retrieved 28 May 2023.
Impact to harbour porpoises and harbour seals – studies demonstrated that porpoises and seals are able to detect the low-frequency sound generated by offshore wind-turbines.	Koschinski, S.; Culik, BM; Damsgaard Henriksen, O.; Tregenza, N.; Ellis, G.; Jansen, C.; Kathe, G. (1 January 2003). <a href="#">"Behavioural reactions of free-ranging porpoises and seals to the noise of a simulated 2 MW windpower generator"</a> . <i>Marine Ecology Progress Series</i> . 265: 263–273. doi:10.3354/meps265263.
wake turbulences—air vortices caused by wind turbines—changes the flow and stratification of the water beneath them	Ute Daewel et al, Offshore wind farms are projected to impact primary production and bottom water deoxygenation in the North Sea, <i>Communications Earth &amp; Environment</i> (2022). DOI: 10.1038/s43247-022-00625-0



<p>altered spatial distribution of marine ecosystem components. This includes the distribution of nutrients, phyto- and zooplankton as well as biomass in the sediment, the food basis for many bottom-dwelling organisms.</p>	<p>Ute Daewel et al, Offshore wind farms are projected to impact primary production and bottom water deoxygenation in the North Sea, <i>Communications Earth &amp; Environment</i> (2022). DOI: <a href="https://doi.org/10.1038/s43247-022-00625-0">10.1038/s43247-022-00625-0</a></p>	
<p>offshore wind farms act as barriers to travelling seabirds. Displacement from their favoured routes is likely to increase travel distances, causing greater energy expenditure and potentially impacting the survival of nestlings by lowering provisioning rates.</p>	<p>Petersen, I. K., Fox, A. D. and Clausager, I. (2003) <i>Distribution and numbers of birds in Kattegat in relation to the proposed offshore wind farm south of Læsø –Ornithological impact assessment</i>. Department of Wildlife Ecology and Biodiversity, National Environmental.</p> <p>Fox, A. D., Desholm, M., Kahlert, J., Christensen, T. K. and Krag Petersen, I. B. (2006) Information needs to support environmental impact assessment of the effects of European marine offshore wind farms on birds. <i>Ibis</i> 148 (Suppl. 1): 129–144.</p>	
<p>Underwater cables emit an electromagnetic field. Brown crabs (the UK’s second most valuable crustacean catch) can’t resist the electromagnetic pull of underwater power cables, changing the behaviour of the crabs into a stupor – impacting on their reproduction etc.</p>	<p>Journal of Marine Science and Engineering: <a href="https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1312/9/7/776/">https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1312/9/7/776/</a></p>	
<p>Similar to the above study but impacting on Edible Crab.</p>	<p>Exposure to Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) from Submarine Power Cables Can Trigger Strength-Dependent Behavioural and Physiological Responses in Edible Crab, <i>Cancer pagurus</i> (L.)</p>	