



Position Statement

Offshore Wind Energy

Recfishwest acknowledges and supports the need for renewable energy production. In pursuit of government carbon reduction targets, Offshore Wind Energy is becoming increasingly popular.

Recfishwest believes recreational fishing can be largely compatible with OWE projects and is an activity that must be recognised as a key value when planning, designing, constructing and operating OWE projects.

Recfishwest will only support Offshore Wind Energy (OWE) projects that improve recreational fishing experiences with no net loss of amenity. As a matter of priority, OWE projects must provide clarity as to the impacts on fishing access.

All OWE projects should avoid important habitats such as spawning areas and nursery areas as well as popular fishing locations.

Background

The global shift to renewable energy is well underway with Offshore Wind Energy (OWE) one of the fastest growing forms of energy creation. In 2021, the Australian Parliament passed the Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Bill.

Wind at sea reaches a higher speed and is more constant than wind on land because there are no barriers. To harness this energy, wind turbines are seated on giant towers installed on the seabed in depths of up to 60 metres or on floating structures anchored to the bottom in deeper waters. The wind turns the propeller-like blades of the turbine around a rotor, which spins a generator creating electricity. This electricity is converted into alternating current and transmitted via underwater cables to a substation. The substation converts the electricity to a high voltage current which is fed through an existing distribution network.

The development of renewable energy in Australia is expected to grow substantially over the next few decades. Under the Paris Agreement, Australia has committed to net zero emissions by 2050 and The Western Australian government also aspires for net zero emissions by 2050. The WA climate policy includes a feasibility study into local manufacture of wind turbine components highlighting the important role wind energy is likely to play in the future.

Currently, there are proposals for large-scale OWE projects in Western Australia, both in state and commonwealth waters. There is potential for the subsea structures of OWE projects to serve as artificial reefs, potentially enhancing marine biomass through the provision of increased habitat availability and complexity. These projects also have the potential to adversely impact environmental and social values through habitat damage, implementation of exclusion zones as well as displacement and concentration of commercial fishing effort.

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This document should be read in conjunction with all Recfishwest's other Position Statements with a reference to the position Statement on Recognising the Values of Recreational Fishing.