



15 September 2021

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
E: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary,

Joint letter of Support – Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Bill 2021 & Offshore Electricity Infrastructure (Regulatory Levies) Bill 2021

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Gippsland is a dedicated committee of business and community leaders from across Gippsland. There is a network of 52 Committees across Australia under this Australian Government initiative. The Committees work with all levels of government, business and community groups to support economic and workforce development, local procurement, strategic regional planning and inform government programs and infrastructure investments.

Gippsland Regional Partnership is similarly a partnership of local business and community leaders dedicated to making a positive contribution to regional development. In addition to the ministerially appointed direct community members, local council CEOs and Regional Directors of Victorian departments actively participate in the work of the Partnership. Gippsland Regional Partnership is one of nine Partnerships across Victoria established by the Victorian Government in 2016 in recognition of local communities being best placed to understand the opportunities and challenges faced by their regions.

The advocacy and priority work of the two groups is complementary and we work together on matters of regional significance to advocate across both state and federal jurisdictions for outcomes that will benefit Gippsland.

The Latrobe Valley has traditionally generated the majority of Victoria's electricity at our brown coal fired power stations. However, in response to climate change and carbon emission reduction targets, the region is focused on transitioning our energy sector to a clean energy sector.

The Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Bill 2021 & Offshore Electricity Infrastructure (Regulatory Levies) Bill 2021 represent a positive step towards realising offshore wind developments. These Bills are a significant milestone for our region and could contribute to transitioning our energy sector, with the Star of the South offshore windfarm development proposed to be located off the south coast of Gippsland.

RDA Gippsland and Gippsland Regional Partnership support the principles put forward in the Bills. We recognise the need for continued progress on finalising necessary regulations so proposed offshore windfarm projects have clear guidelines and regulations to develop their projects within. Timely progress of regulation and policy development, the declaration of sites and the assessment of licence applications will support investment attraction by providing investment certainty.

RDA Gippsland and the Gippsland Regional Partnership acknowledge the importance of projects undergoing thorough assessment to minimise environmental impacts and promote responsible development.

The [Gippsland Regional Plan 2020-2025](#) identifies renewable, clean and community energy initiatives as game changer priorities for the region that will leverage existing infrastructure and the skilled workforce in Gippsland as we transition to a clean energy economy. RDA Gippsland and Gippsland Regional Partnership are supportive of the transition to clean energy production in Gippsland, which will create jobs and industry growth into the future.

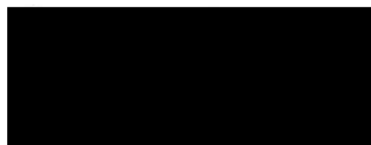
RDA Gippsland has invested in a project which is underway through Committee for Gippsland to establish a Clean Energy Vision and Prospectus for Gippsland. This work will support industry transition across the region and demonstrates our enthusiasm to progress proposed clean energy projects such as the Star of the South offshore windfarm.

These Bills provide a further step towards enabling and developing Australia's offshore wind industry, which has the potential to create many jobs and great positive economic benefits for Australia. The proposed Star of the South development alone has the potential to create approximately 2,000 jobs and \$8.7 billion investment into Victoria over its lifetime. This includes 760 construction jobs and 200 ongoing jobs in Gippsland when operational, and a \$6.4 billion injection to Gippsland's economy.

Given the potential benefits of Star of the South to Gippsland and the considerable work that has already taken place on this proposed project, RDA Gippsland and Gippsland Regional Partnership urge the Australian Government to declare Gippsland the first area to be considered suitable for offshore infrastructure activities. This will allow regional benefits to be realised through continued investment in Star of the South.

RDA Gippsland and Gippsland Regional Partnership support the Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Bill 2021 & Offshore Electricity Infrastructure (Regulatory Levies) Bill 2021 and urge the Australian Government to get behind these Bills so the benefits from offshore windfarm developments can be realised.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Elkington
Chair, RDA Gippsland



Therese Tierney
Chair, Gippsland Regional Partnership