

# Newcastle & Port Stephens Game Fish Club Ltd.

A.C.N. 060 390 516 A.B.N. 25 292 918 920

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**25<sup>th</sup> August 2024**

To: Senate Committee on Environment and Communications

**Re: Submission on Offshore Wind Project and Lack of Consultation with Newcastle Port Stephens Game Fish Club (NPSGFC)**

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing on behalf of the Newcastle Port Stephens Game Fish Club (NPSGFC) to express our deep concerns regarding the offshore wind project currently under consideration and, more specifically, the lack of adequate consultation with our organisation.

**1. Introduction and Background**

The NPSGFC, established in 1913, is one of the most prominent game fishing clubs in Australia, with a long history of fostering sustainable fishing practices and promoting the sport within our community. Our members are avid fishers, many of whom have decades of experience in the waters off Newcastle and Port Stephens. These waters are not only vital to our recreational activities but also to the local economy, supporting tourism, hospitality, and related industries.

**2. Lack of Consultation**

Despite our vested interest in the marine environment and the potential significant impacts of offshore developments on fishing grounds, NPSGFC was not adequately consulted during the planning stages of the offshore wind project. This omission is concerning for several reasons:

• **Direct Impact on Fishing Grounds:**

The proposed wind farm area overlaps with critical fishing grounds regularly used by our members. These areas are known for their rich biodiversity and are vital to the sustainability of local fish populations. Any disruption to these habitats could have severe consequences for the marine ecosystem and, by extension, our club's activities.

• **Economic Implications:**

Our club contributes significantly to the local economy, with members and visitors spending on accommodation, charters, gear, and other services. Disruptions to fishing activities due to offshore wind farm construction and operation could lead to economic losses for both our members and the broader community.

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- **Environmental Concerns:**

While we understand and support the transition to renewable energy, it is crucial that such projects do not come at the expense of the marine environment. The potential impacts of turbine construction, operation, and maintenance on local fish populations and marine life need thorough assessment, and stakeholders like NPSGFC should be involved in these discussions.

### 3. **Call for Comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement**

We believe that effective consultation should involve meaningful dialogue with all affected stakeholders, including those directly relying on the marine environment for their livelihood and recreation. To this end, we recommend the following actions:

- **Immediate Engagement:**

The project developers and relevant authorities should immediately engage with NPSGFC and other local fishing clubs to discuss the proposed project's scope, potential impacts, and mitigation strategies.

- **Environmental Impact Assessments:**

Independent, comprehensive environmental impact assessments should be conducted with input from local experts, including our members who have extensive knowledge of the local marine environment.

- **Transparent Communication:**

Regular updates and open channels of communication should be established between the project developers and our club to ensure that our concerns are addressed throughout the project's lifecycle.

### 4. **Time Line**

There were only 7 community information sessions held in Wamberal, Doyalson Swansea, Newcastle, Bar Beach, Nelson Bay and Hawks Nest from the 6th March to 9th March 2023 with low attendance with little to no notification of the consultation sessions. These sessions were commonly scheduled during business hours on weekdays when most of the community is otherwise engaged at work or family care.

NPSGFC was not aware of the offshore wind project until a representative from EDF one of the proponents made contact for a meeting on the 31st May 2023 by this time Submissions had already closed.

On the 4th July we had a phone hookup meeting with MERYL SWANSON member for Paterson she explained what she knew of the process but by this time submissions had already closed.

On the 12th July 2023 Chris Bowen officially declared the Hunter off shore wind zone.

On the 20th July 2023 NPSGFC had a zoom meeting with Rosie Gilbert policy advisor to Chris Bowen we expressed our disappointment and concerns of the lack of consultation.

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## **Conclusion**

It seems that the consultation process has been rushed with poorly advertised publications. There were no notifications of the consultation sessions from DCCEEW in the public notice sections of the 1st March 2023 editions of the NOTA in the Port Stephens and Myall coast area.

Rather a headline article in the NOTA written by a local journalist noting the sessions were presented, unfortunately the article clearly contained government supplied information that strongly focused on job opportunities rather than providing any information on the wind zone.

People who did go to the consultation sessions have reported that there was a lack of information in these sessions when questions were asked the people who held these meetings could not answer these questions all they would say is that is up to the proponent.

Letter box drops seemed to be non existent I have not come across anyone who has said they received a letter box drop promoting information sessions.

There was no information provided by local federal member Meryl Swanson and state member Kate Washington to their electorate about the proposed wind farm zone at the time of consultation.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and request the senate inquiry is conducted in Port Stephens; we also look forward to a constructive dialogue moving forward.

Yours sincerely,

Troy Radford  
President  
Newcastle Port Stephens Game Fish Club (NPSGFC)