



11/05/2023

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP
Minister for Climate Action
Minister for Energy and Resources
Minister for the State Electricity Commission
lily.dambrosio@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Hon D'Ambrosio MP,

Offshore Wind Transmission in Gippsland and Portland

An opportunity to deliver a once in a lifetime environmental and community legacy in Victoria's transition to renewable energy.

Thank you for providing AILA VIC with the opportunity to submit a response in support of the offshore wind transmission in Gippsland and Portland.

Link to listing under consideration:

<https://engage.vic.gov.au/offshore-wind-transmission-in-gippsland-and-portland>

PREFACE

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) is the peak national body for the Landscape Architecture. AILA champions quality design for public open spaces, stronger communities, and greater environmental stewardship. We provide our members with training, recognition, and a community of practice, to share knowledge, ideas and action. With our members, we anticipate and develop a leading position on issues of concern in landscape architecture. Alongside government and allied professions, we work to improve the design and planning of the natural and built environment.

In operation since 1966, AILA represents over 3,000 landscape architects and promotes excellence in planning, design and management for life outdoors. Committed to designing and creating better spaces in Australia, landscape architects have the skills and expertise to improve the nation's liveability through a unique approach to planning issues via innovative integrated solutions. In doing so, landscape architects contribute towards better environmental, social, and economic outcomes for all Australians.



BACKGROUND

In August 2022, the Australian House of Representatives passed the country's first climate change legislation in more than a decade. The climate bill enshrines into law two national greenhouse gas emissions targets: a 43% cut below 2005 levels by 2030, and a reduction to "net zero" by 2050. At the time of writing, the bill has yet to be taken to the Senate.

The announcement serves as an accelerator for fast-tracking Australia's capacity to produce renewable energy to meet these targets, significantly increasing the need to develop and construct new renewable energy sources, namely solar and wind.

Offshore wind generation will play a significant role in this transition by expanding Australia's renewable energy generation network. Modernising and upgrading Victoria's transmission network to accommodate renewable energy demands and transport it to homes and businesses across the state requires equal, if not more, significant consideration of high voltage transmission infrastructure.

The Offshore Wind Transmission in Gippsland and Portland project provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver environmental and community legacies for Victoria's transition to renewable energy.

HOW CAN AILA HELP?

As the peak body for Landscape Architecture in Australia since 1966, the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects represents members' interests at the very highest levels. In this, we are governed by an elected board of directors who receive strategic support from our chapters (comprising all States and Territories of Australia).

The advocacy submission is made by the Victorian Chapter on behalf of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA).

Historically, AILA has not played a crucial role in the design of electrical transmission infrastructure or offshore wind transmission. However, the profession is well-positioned to ensure that the high voltage power transmission line infrastructure required for projects such as the Offshore Wind Transmission in Gippsland and Portland can provide opportunities to support sustainable communities across Australia. This can be achieved by delivering infrastructure in a way that balances the drivers behind improving environmental, social, and economic benefits to society.

Members of AILA are increasingly becoming more frequently and actively involved in the design inputs and development of high voltage electrical transmission infrastructure. This involvement spans from initial tasks such as Route Options Assessments and Landscape Visual Impact Assessments to design, delivery, landscape remediation, and maintenance.



WHY IS LANDSCAPE IMPORTANT AT PORTLAND AND GIPPSLAND?

Victoria's landscapes have been carefully curated by the world's oldest landscape architects, Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, for over 60,000 years.

The Gunditjmara First Nations Peoples are responsible for the area now known as Portland, situated on the Glenelg Plain. The Glenelg Plain forms part of the western boundary of the Victorian basalt plains that once covered around a third of Victoria. Less than 1% of these grasslands now remain, with this significant ecological community currently protected by Victorian and Commonwealth environmental legislation. The Traditional Aboriginal significance of this area extends much longer and includes Budj Bim, which in 2019 was inscribed by UNESCO as the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape in recognition of more than 6,600 years of planning, design, creation and management of hydrological regimes and ecological systems to systematically trap, store and harvest short-finned eels to support a permanent population of up to 10,000 people.

Gippsland, in the east of Victoria is also home to the unique Gippsland bioregion, the Gippsland Plains and adjacent Strzelecki ranges ecological classes with tall open eucalyptus forest and wet tussock grass lands with significance to the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai Nations. This carefully curated Country also includes the iconic Australian Alps, the Snowy River Mitchell River heritage rivers, Wilson's Promontory, and the Gippsland Lakes.

First Nations Peoples, the community and landscape considerations have been identified by VicGrid as key pillars important to the preliminary design of these projects, specifically; the planning transmission infrastructure that attracts renewable energy generation investment, reduces impacts on landscape and communities, and avoids unnecessary costs to energy consumers, as well as establishing strong and mutually beneficial relationships with Traditional Owners. **AILA supports and encourages a collaborative approach to these key themes.**

AILA'S ADVOCACY STATEMENT ON TRANSMISSION IN GIPPSLAND AND PORTLAND

Given the extensive new electrical transmission infrastructure required for the Gippsland and Portland Offshore Wind Transmission projects, AILA advocates for solutions that will contribute to improving the liveability and sustainability of urban and regional towns and settlements. This can be achieved by encouraging a consistent approach to delivering electrical transmission infrastructure that helps yield better results to improve future sustainable communities:

VicGrid aid in delivering transmission policy that improves outcomes for electricity consumers and host communities.

- Advocating for a consistent industry-wide approach to engagement in electrical transmission infrastructure strategies that delivers environmental, community and social legacies for the Portland and Gippsland projects.



- Promoting the positive role that underground electrical transmission infrastructure can have across the fabric of regional and rural townships, pre-urban and urban settlements.
- Recommending adoption of a transparent Multi-Criteria Analysis (MCA) for electrical transmission infrastructure route options assessment to best identify and compare different solutions within connection point areas of interest and options by assessing the effects, performance, impacts, and trade-offs against whole-of-lifecycle cost, and environmental, sustainable, and community benefits.

VicGrid champion high-quality electrical transmission infrastructure to improve policy formulation through:

- Supporting and collaborating with research organisations to better understand the environmental, First Nations, and social cost benefit of above ground vs underground solutions against cost to complete to show VicGrid is the national industry leader on projects of this nature Australia-wide.
- Supporting research of increased vulnerability of above ground and underground infrastructure to increase resilience and reduce effects of more severe and frequent climatic events, such as bushfires, storms, floods, and other events to ensure a cohesive, cost-effective, and consistent approach to delivering and maintaining these state and national significant assets.
- Improving access to and incorporation of high-quality spatial and statistical data captured during the detail design phase of these projects to help manage natural, rural, urban and peri-urban landscapes.

VicGrid advocating for design outcomes that deliver nation-wide industry innovation by:

- Supporting place-specific design outcomes that consider physical constraints, environmental sensitivities, and community sensitivities.
- Designing to reduce the environmental footprint of easements, maintenance access tracks, ancillary structures, and facilities.
- Designing transmission assets in the Gippsland and Portland areas to reduce environmental impacts, for example on sensitive ecological vegetations classes, valued sensitive habitats and arable land.
- Take the opportunity to lead industry-wide design guidelines to minimise vegetation clearance and setback requirements for electrical infrastructure of projects of this nature.

VicGrid advocate for improved environmental, community and First Nations outcomes by:

- Working to minimise the environmental impacts of electrical transmission infrastructure to help build Australia's climate change resilience.
- Increasing rigour and scrutiny during the planning, design, and approvals phase of a project to ensure consistency in assessment of environmental impacts, including landscape and visual impacts.



- Minimising and managing potential impacts of electrical transmission infrastructure of both the Gippsland and Portland projects on local communities to ensure the projects contribute positively to these communities.
- Mitigating the environmental and community impacts in the preliminary and detailed design phases, by incorporating meaningful collaborative First Nations and community input.

VicGrid can provide a consistent approach to whole-of-lifecycle costs by:

- Designing electrical transmission infrastructure in Gippsland and Portland to support a resilient and prosperous economy that offers opportunities for all.
- Strengthening Victoria's resilience to climate change challenges such as habitat loss, declining biodiversity, and increased bush fire risk.
- Protecting natural resources and physical environments.
- Creating a resilient electrical infrastructure system to support healthy communities.

CONCLUSION

The Offshore Wind Transmission projects in Gippsland and Portland provides a once in a lifetime opportunity for VicGrid to deliver improved environmental, First Nations, and community legacies on Victoria's journey to renewable energy.

The Victorian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) AILA encourages VicGrid to consider the offshore wind electrical transmission infrastructure in Gippsland and Portland regions as an opportunity to deliver better results to improve future sustainable communities, and we welcome the opportunity to discuss this further.

Sincerely yours,

James Millar

AILA VIC Secretary

SUBMISSION TEAM:

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