

COMMUNITY INFORMATION SHEET · RENEWABLES DEVELOPMENT

Wind farms explained — onshore and offshore

The other half of the renewable build-out, on land and at sea

The key idea: wind works when solar doesn't

Wind blows at night and through winter, which is why a grid supplying round-the-clock users like **data centres** needs wind alongside solar. Onshore wind is mature and among the cheapest power available; offshore wind is newer to Australia, larger in scale and earlier in its journey. They raise different community questions and shouldn't be lumped together.

Onshore: what a modern wind farm is

Today's turbines stand 200–280 metres to blade tip, spaced hundreds of metres apart, with farming continuing between them; a wind farm's **footprint** (roads, pads, substation) uses only a few percent of the land it spans. The persistent issues are real and manageable: **noise** (state limits apply at dwellings, measured not modelled), **shadow flicker** (predictable and limited by condition), visual change and road impacts during construction. Host landholders are paid; the harder fairness question is neighbours who see the turbines but receive nothing. Good projects extend benefit to them.

Offshore: bigger, further, earlier

Six offshore zones have been declared around Australia: Gippsland (the most advanced, where 12 feasibility licences were granted in 2024; nine remain active after several projects withdrew), Hunter, Southern Ocean, Illawarra, Bunbury and **Bass Strait off northern Tasmania** (declared December 2024; in January 2026 the government made a preliminary decision not to offer feasibility licences there for now, citing a lack of competitive bids). The lesson: a declared zone is the *start* of a long, uncertain pipeline of feasibility, environmental assessment and transmission planning before construction. (*Status current at July 2026.*)

Who decides

Onshore: state planning and environment processes, with councils and communities in the assessment; noise and flicker conditions enforced by state regulators. **Offshore:** the Commonwealth declares zones and licenses projects (with NOPSEMA regulating offshore work), while landfall cables and substations go through state planning, so one project can have two consultation tracks. Ask which track a given concern belongs to.

What good practice looks like

- Noise and flicker compliance measured at homes and published, not just promised.
- Benefit-sharing that includes near neighbours, not only host landholders.
- Offshore proponents honest about timelines and about what a feasibility licence does and doesn't mean.
- Decommissioning and turbine-recycling obligations set in the approval.

Questions to ask

How far is the nearest turbine from my home and what noise limit applies there? Who shares in the benefits and how were neighbours defined? For offshore: what stage is the project actually at and when would construction realistically begin?

Want to know more? DCCEEW publishes offshore wind zone maps and licence status; your state planning authority publishes onshore wind guidelines. *Last checked: July 2026.* This sheet is general information, not legal or planning advice; a specific proposal is confirmed by qualified assessment.