



Department of Energy, Mines,
Industry Regulation and Safety
Energy Policy WA

Offshore Electricity Infrastructure – Frequently Asked Questions

Find out more on how the WA government is working towards a more sustainable future by incorporating offshore electricity infrastructure, including offshore wind.



Offshore Electricity Infrastructure – Frequently Asked Questions

An area off WA in the Indian Ocean in the Bunbury region has been proposed. Does that mean offshore wind farms are coming?

The Minister for Climate Change and Energy announced the Proposed Area in the Indian Ocean off the Bunbury Region on the 20 February 2024. The priority area extends from Dawesville to Cape Naturaliste, with its closest point 20 km from shore (see map below).

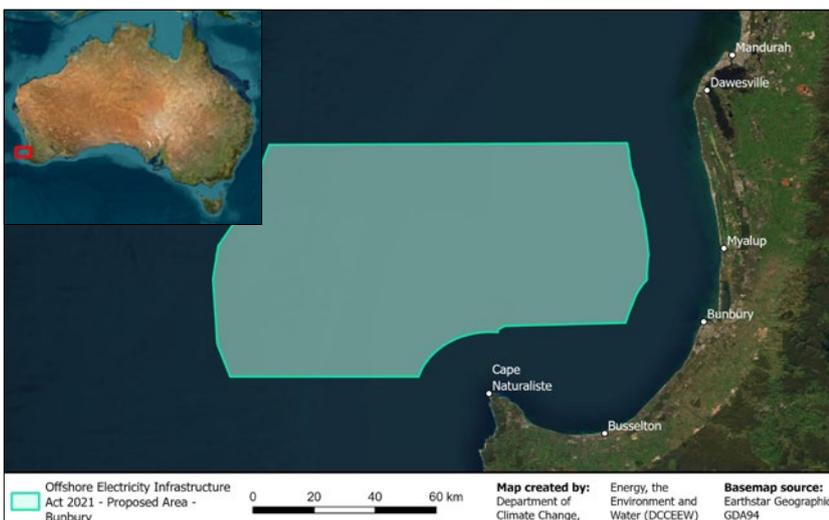
This does not mean offshore wind energy projects can commence. It simply signals the start of a detailed public consultation process to help inform a decision on whether to declare an area as suitable for offshore wind energy projects.

The proposed area includes locations that I am concerned about. What can I do?

Please make your concerns known during the consultation process by visiting [Proposed Offshore Wind Area: Indian Ocean off Bunbury, Western Australia](#) and making a submission.

The final Declared Area may be modified from that initially proposed or include any exemptions or conditions necessary. Area exemptions may be made to protect the environment or key industries.

The final Declared Area may include conditions to be imposed on any future proposed project, such as wind turbine height restrictions.



What is offshore wind energy?

Offshore wind energy is created when offshore wind turbines are turned by the wind. This energy is then transmitted onshore and connected to the onshore electricity grid.

What is a proposed area for offshore wind energy?

A proposed area for offshore wind is within Commonwealth waters. The Commonwealth Minister for Climate Change and Energy may identify an area as having the necessary attributes to support the generation of offshore wind energy.

These attributes include:

- strong and consistent winds;
- close to areas of high electricity demand;
- close to existing electricity transmission infrastructure; and
- close to existing transport and port infrastructure.

The Commonwealth Minister announced in August 2022 that six areas around Australia were being looked at in more detail to determine the suitability for offshore wind, and hence could be subject to formal public consultation to determine their potential suitability for offshore electricity infrastructure. One of the six areas identified is an area in the Indian Ocean off Western Australia.

For further information on previous offshore renewables areas, please visit the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water page at [Australia's offshore wind areas](#).

Offshore Electricity Infrastructure – Frequently Asked Questions

What is the process once an area has been declared?

If an area is declared as suitable for offshore wind energy projects, prospective wind energy developers will first have to apply to the Commonwealth government for a Feasibility Licence.

Only once a developer has complied with all requirements under the Feasibility Licence phase can they then apply for a Commercial Licence also from the Commonwealth government to seek approval of a project.

What is a Feasibility Licence?

A Feasibility Licence will allow developers to undertake detailed environmental assessments, geotechnical surveys, and any other research and investigations that are required as part of approvals processes. Importantly developers are required to undertake further consultation on their proposed projects before any further work can commence.

The maximum term for feasibility licences is 7 years; which allows for the due diligence that will be required to ensure all stakeholders are properly consulted, all investigations are completed, and necessary approvals are obtained, including under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

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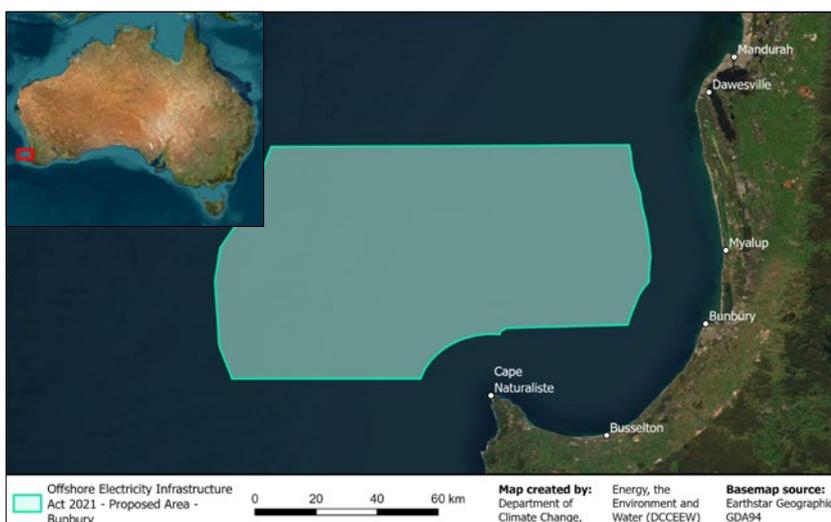
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Is offshore electricity infrastructure supported by the WA government as part of transitioning to net zero by 2050?

The WA Government supports mechanisms that assist in meeting the State's net zero targets in transforming energy generation and use to achieve the following outcomes as per the WA Climate Policy (2020):

- lower cost and better choices for consumers;
- enhanced reliability and security of energy supply;
- better integration of large-scale renewable and distributed energy resources and reduced carbon emissions; and
- support for new technologies, new businesses and new

Western Australian jobs in the fast growing clean energy sector
The WA Government supports projects that offer opportunities for new State industries, support workforce transition, and provide meaningful and lasting outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

Offshore electricity infrastructure, including offshore wind, is one possible component of Western Australia's future energy mix that can assist in the achievement of these objectives alongside large-scale solar, onshore wind energy, rooftop solar, renewable hydrogen, and energy storage solutions such as batteries.

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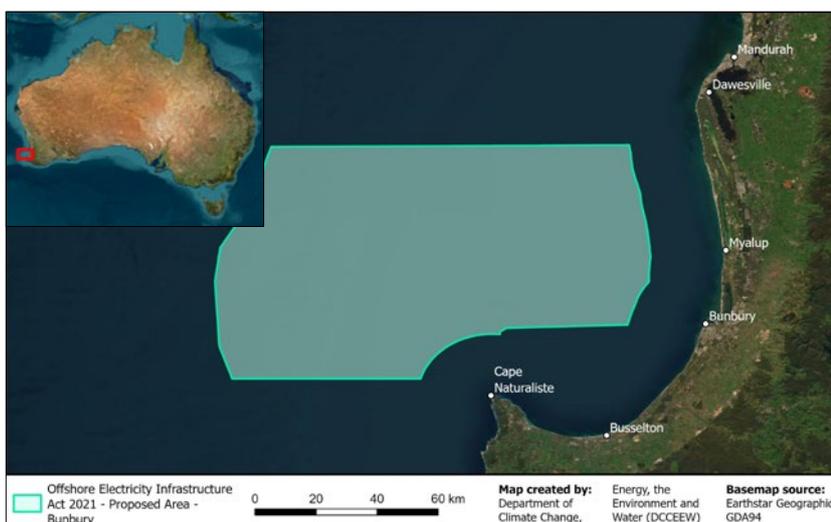
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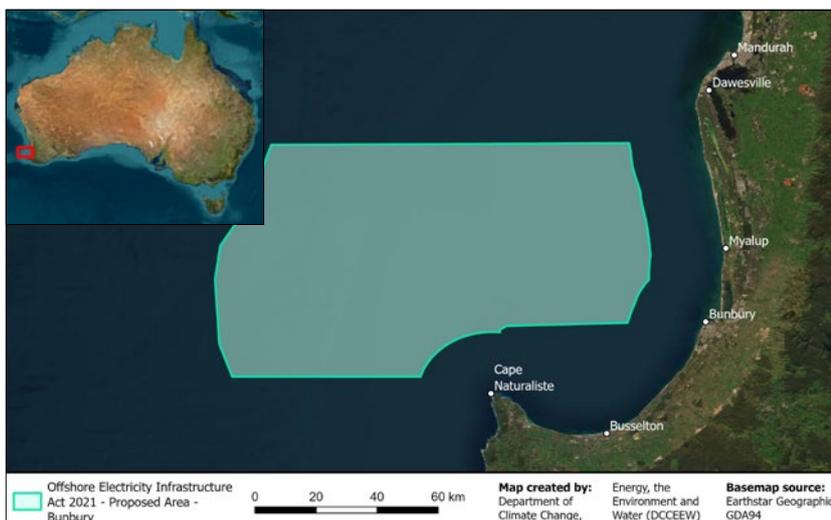
How is the WA government preparing for the potential development of offshore electricity infrastructure projects in WA?

The WA government has established an Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Working Group (OEI Working Group) including representatives from WA government agencies with expertise in energy, environment, land use and planning, the maritime environment, transport, fisheries and industry development.

The OEI Working Group coordinates policy input from across relevant agencies to inform a position on WA's Offshore Electricity Infrastructure readiness. To date, the OEI Working Group has undertaken a regulatory review to determine the readiness for WA's regulatory regime to accommodate Offshore Electricity Infrastructure and helped identify the barriers to and benefits of an Offshore Electricity Infrastructure industry.

The OEI Working Group provides advice to the Commonwealth Government on potential areas. This group will also consider any state issues in regard to offshore wind energy, such as undersea cables in State waters, onshore transmission connection points and connection of offshore wind energy with the South West Interconnected System (SWIS).

To learn more about how renewable energy sources are being connected to the SWIS, see [PoweringWA](#).



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What is the WA Government doing to ensure that the development of an offshore electricity sector develops in alignment with the needs of WA?

The WA Government is committed to ensuring that the offshore electricity sector develops in alignment with Western Australia's broader economic, environmental, and social objectives. The WA Government recognises that this involves:

- working with the Commonwealth Government through the provisions of the Commonwealth's *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* (and Regulations) where OEI activities are being considered for, and potentially developed in, Commonwealth marine areas; and
- engaging, collaborating and empowering existing marine users and stakeholders with an interest in the marine environment to be a part of transparent government decision-making processes to build trust in the potential development of the sector.

Within this context, the concept of co-existence is considered a preferred way to integrate the development of the sector with the needs of existing marine users and marine interests.

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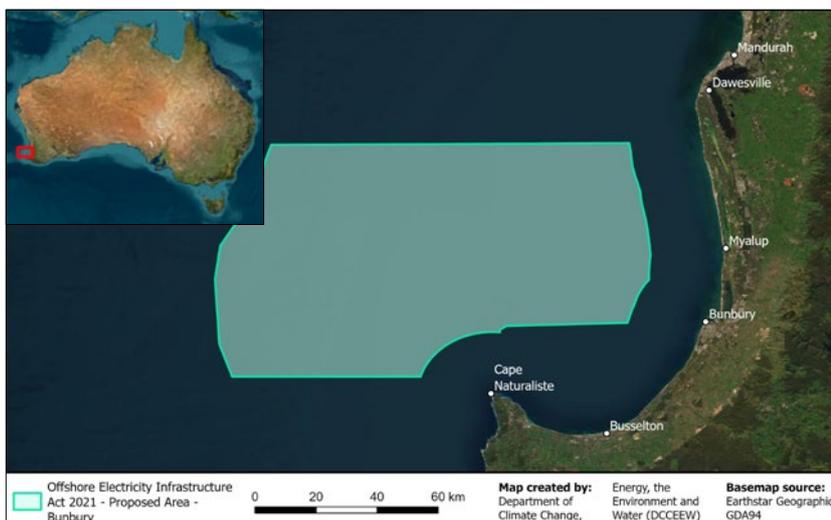
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How will co-existence work?

Co-existence is where a given marine area can safely and fairly be used by multiple users. This will enable the integration of the development of the offshore electricity industry with the needs of other marine users and marine interests.

For co-existence to be effective, it must be based on a genuine desire to ensure the rights of marine users and marine interests are considered; and informed by detailed spatial data and consultation with all affected stakeholders.

What if co-existence isn't possible?

There may be some zones within the proposed area where coexistence may not be possible. The WA Government will collaborate with the Commonwealth, existing marine users, and those with an interest in the marine environment to identify if such zones exist. Where these zones are identified, and the WA Government believes co-existence may not be possible, it will consider providing robust, evidence-based advice to the Commonwealth to that effect.

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