

Position Paper: **Offshore Wind Farm Development and Maritime Safety**

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Executive Summary

The Boat Owners Association of NSW (BOA NSW) supports Australia's transition to renewable energy but holds serious concerns regarding the consultation process and maritime safety implications of proposed offshore wind developments in the Illawarra and Hunter regions. This paper outlines the shortcomings in stakeholder engagement, identifies key risks to recreational and commercial boating, and presents recommendations to ensure future offshore wind planning is inclusive, transparent, and safe for all maritime users.

Background

In 2023–2024, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) initiated public consultation on offshore wind zones in NSW. While thousands of submissions were received, the Senate inquiry into the consultation process—finalised in June 2025—found that maritime stakeholders, including boaters, were not adequately consulted. The inquiry revealed a lack of targeted outreach, technical barriers to participation, and insufficient consideration of navigational safety.

Key Concerns

1. Lack of Direct Consultation

- Boaters, marina operators, and recreational clubs were not proactively engaged.
- Consultation relied heavily on digital platforms, excluding many older or regionally based boaters.
- Forums and materials were overly technical, limiting meaningful input from everyday maritime users.

2. Navigational Safety Risks

- Offshore turbines may interfere with radar systems, compromising vessel safety and emergency response.
- There is no publicly available plan detailing how turbines will be lit or marked for visibility in low-light or poor weather conditions.

- The proposed Exclusion zones and turbine layouts will obstruct traditional boating routes and emergency access corridors.
- The proposed Exclusion zones may be expanded to include no anchoring between the shore and exclusion zones to protect cabling.

3. Access and Economic Impacts

- Proposed developments may restrict anchoring areas, fishing grounds, and recreational zones.
- Charter operations and coastal tourism could suffer due to reduced access and visual disruption.
- Insurance and liability implications for vessels operating near turbine zones remain unclear.

Recommendations

BOA NSW urges DCCEEW and project proponents to adopt the following measures:

1. Establish a Maritime Stakeholder Panel
Include representatives from BOA NSW, marina operators, charter services, and recreational boating clubs.
2. Improve Transparency and Mapping
Publish clear, accessible maps showing turbine locations, exclusion zones, and known boating routes.
3. Address Safety Protocols
Release detailed plans for turbine lighting, radar interference mitigation, and emergency access provisions.
4. Conduct In-Person Engagement
Host consultation sessions at marinas, boat ramps, and sailing clubs to ensure broad and inclusive participation.

Conclusion

The Boat Owners Association of NSW remains committed to constructive engagement and supports responsible renewable energy development. However, maritime safety and access must not be compromised. We call for a more inclusive, transparent, and

technically sound consultation process that respects the rights and expertise of Australia's boating community.