

Wind Farms close to the Prom

The Commonwealth Government has proposed areas for offshore renewable energy projects, including offshore wind farms, in Commonwealth waters in Bass Strait off Gippsland. See graphic below.

It recently invited public feedback on the possible impacts of these projects which would be in addition to Star of the South

offshore windfarm project, about 40 km off the Prom's east coast, which we have talked about in previous newsletters.

The Committee is concerned that some of the proposed areas would have a high environmental impact on the Prom and has forwarded a submission to Government –

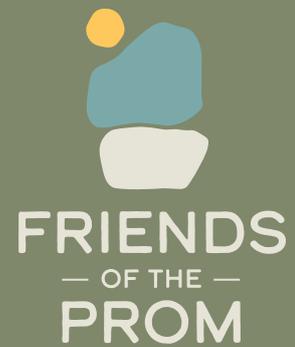
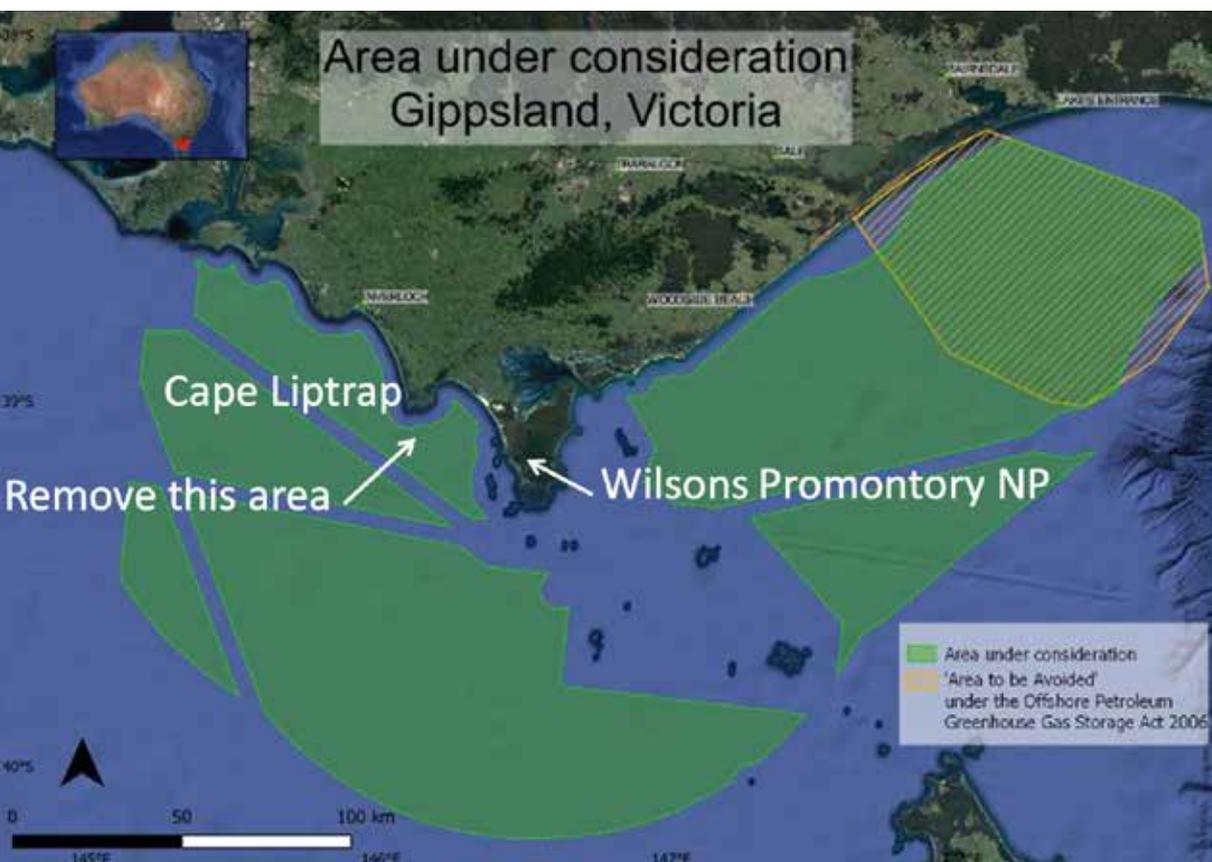
Submission by Friends of the Prom to the 'Offshore renewable energy infrastructure area proposal: Bass Strait off Gippsland'

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal.

Friends of the Prom is an active group of volunteers who care for the Prom and work with *Parks Victoria* to maintain and improve its conservation values. We have 256 individuals and families currently registered to volunteer with us. The purposes of our association include supporting the conservation and protection of the park's natural environment and advocating on behalf of the park when issues arise that could affect its values.

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Wilson's Promontory is one of Australia's oldest and most iconic national parks. Its ancient mass of high granite peaks jut out into stormy Bass Strait at the southern-most part of the Australian mainland, giving the Park its renowned wild and remote feel. Visitors looking out from a granite peak, a windswept headland or a lonely beach take great pleasure and spiritual peace from the magnificent vistas out to sea, interrupted by only a few small and wave-swept rocky islands.

Your proposal as it stands would impact on the park's natural environment and destroy these values, especially so on the Prom's western side. The construction of 350 m high wind turbines at the distances from shore you propose would dominate the seascapes, dwarfing the islands which surround the Prom and imposing themselves on park visitors. Distances across the sea are notoriously foreshortened for an observer, so that a giant wind turbine 6 km off shore would seem hardly more than a stone's throw distant.

Likewise, the outlook from Cape Liptrap across Waratah Bay to the mountainous Prom is another seascape of national significance. Filling Waratah Bay with wind turbines as proposed and destroying this irreplaceable vista would be another act of inexcusable vandalism.

There is also the Wilsons Promontory Marine National Park to consider. The national significance of this Park has been impressed on us by Park staff as "home to one of the richest marine ecosystems off the coast of Australia – rivalling that of the Great Barrier Reef". While the environmental risks to marine life from the construction and existence of offshore wind farms are not as immediately obvious as the high visual impact discussed above, we urge you to consider risks such as whale migration routes and underwater noise pollution into your design of the development areas.

We understand that your proposal is conceptual and that any specific proposal would be subject to an assessment of positive and negative impacts. But if your current proposed areas for development are approved, the lines on your map just make it all the more likely that future development proposals within those areas will also be approved. It makes a lot more sense to make a considered decision at the outset and design the development areas to be in harmony with the unique national treasure we have in the Wilsons Promontory National Park/ Waratah Bay/Cape Liptrap zone.

For example, removing the near-coastal block to the west of the Prom (refer map below) would not greatly decrease the area available for renewable energy development. Wind farms in the remaining areas would still have a high visual impact from the Prom and Cape Liptrap, but the extra distance would make a big difference and the proposal would strike a better balance between preserving our precious seascapes and the need to build more offshore renewable energy infrastructure.

As a group, *Friends of the Prom* is highly supportive of renewable energy projects but we think their placement should not come at such a high cost to these rare and valuable environmental assets. ”

Karin Ruff
Secretary, *Friends of the Prom*

From your Committee — thanks for your feedback

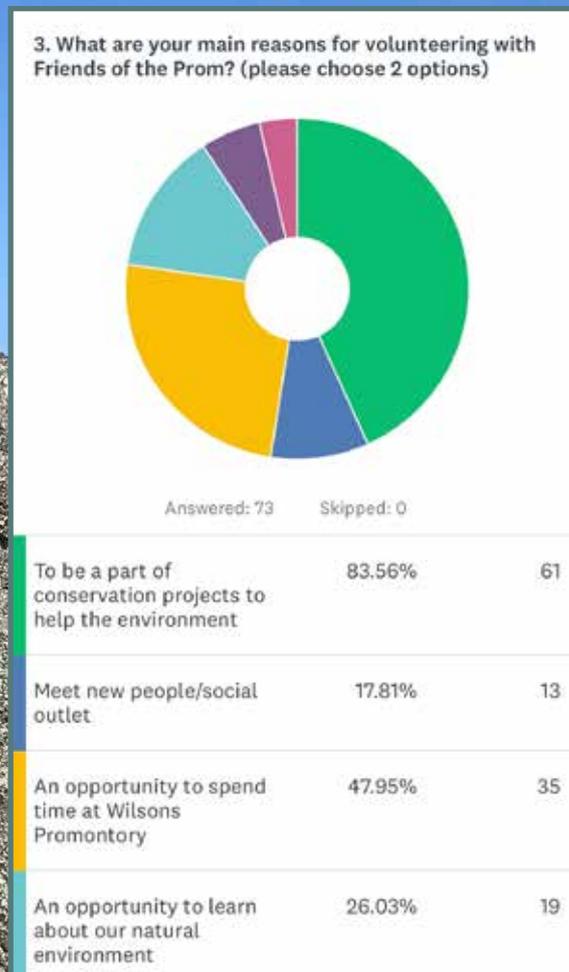
Our social media editor, Kelsey Fraser reports:

“You may have seen our social media posts or received an email earlier in the month requesting your input on a short survey. This came about after several discussions at committee meetings. We realized there hasn’t been an easy avenue for our volunteers to give us feedback about their experiences with Friends of the Prom. As our group grows, we want to continue to make sure your time with us is enjoyable and has meaningful benefit to you and to the Prom. This anonymous survey was taken as a quick snapshot to start a conversation about what our members want to get out of their experience with us and how we can

look at making volunteering with us easier for you. We’re so grateful for your input and were blown away by a total of 73 respondents within the 7 days the survey was open. There was quite a lot of positive feedback about our ongoing projects as well as a wealth of ideas and constructive information that we can now look at implementing into future projects. Our results indicated that a lot of our members have come to us through word of mouth and that Tree Planting activities are a crowd pleaser. What was also very pleasing to see in the results is that most of our respondents are motivated by a passion for the conservation and environment of Wilsons Prom.

This quick survey was also instigated to gather research and to get the ball rolling for our group development project (refer to the report by Deb, below). It was the first of two surveys that will be distributed to our members in the hopes of building a stronger community within Friends of the Prom, one that allows our members easier input and better volunteering experiences. We’d like to remind everyone that our group exists on the passion and altruism of our members so if you have any bright ideas, please don’t hesitate to contact us via our website or better yet, come and have a chat next time you’re volunteering with us.”

Below: Tidal Overlook (Lynne Muir)



Group Development project for FOTP

Our Vice President, Deb Henry reports:

"Friends of the Prom is always looking for ways to improve upon the capabilities and experience of its environmental volunteers. Earlier on this year we had the opportunity to apply for a Coastcare grant which would help us to develop the future volunteer capacity of our organisation. I'm happy to say that the application was successful.

Many of you have already participated in a general survey of Friends of the Prom members which was designed to take a snapshot of the motivations and

goals of our members (refer Kelsey Fraser's report above). In the next few weeks, we will ask you to take another survey in preparation for a proposed workshop on growing our volunteer capacity. In a nutshell, what this means is that we are looking for ways to improve the operation of Friends of the Prom. To this end, we have engaged a professional facilitator to lead us in a group workshop scheduled for 26th November.

As you all are probably aware, we have many knowledgeable people who have spent many years working in our organisation. We would like to know what it takes to

encourage the next generation to step up and take Friends of the Prom into the future.

I hope that many of you will take part in this second and final survey so we can plan for this workshop at Tidal River. Our hope is that what we learn from our volunteers will help us to improve upon the running of our committee and the group experience in general.

So please help us by participating in the second survey and put November 26th in your diary."

Below: Spring Orchids on Tidal Overlook track (Lynne Muir)



Grazer Monitoring Project

This year's monitoring program commenced in June when the volunteers cleared all animal dung from the 45 sampling sites. Counts have continued since then at six week intervals. Since the last newsletter, 13 volunteers conducted a count on the 6 September. It was another beautiful early spring day out at Varneys Grasslands amongst the wildflowers and the musical but elusive larks.

Photos: Ranger Jim handing out maps to identify site numbers; sites at one of the swales; Robin and Lynne identifying, counting and recording animal pellets at one sampling point; convoy entering a site; ranger Brooke Love (Lynne Muir and Bill Hansen)



Sea Spurge weeding coming up

Our final work activity for 2022 is a 3-day Sea Spurge weeding at Picnic Bay in early November.

Since 2017, we have been systematically removing Sea Spurge from Prom beaches to restore the habitat of the threatened Hooded Plovers. After our success on Squeaky Beach in reducing Sea Spurge to a manageable level, our attention is now focused on Picnic Bay. The beach was initially sprayed with weedicide by

contract in September 2021, paid for with a grant from the Victorian Government via Coastcare. The spraying was followed up by several volunteer weeding activities, most recently in March this year.

We are hoping to make a big impression on the remaining areas of infestation on Friday 4th, Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th November. Volunteers can attend all or any of these days, it is up to you. Our only expectation is that you make the

set starting time on the days you are attending to receive the safety briefing and instructions for that day.

We would love to see a big turnout on all of these three days.

Photos: Hooded Plover pair and chicks (Parks Vic); volunteers weeding sea spurge at Picnic Bay, Nov 2021 (Bill Hansen); abundant grass trees overlooking Skull Rock (Lynne Muir)



Tree planting at Tidal River

Saturday 8th October was our third planting activity at Tidal River campsite this season. In typical Prom style, the gloomy wet start to the morning turned into sunshine and a perfect day for working outdoors.

26 volunteers turned up to revegetate degraded areas between campsites on both sides of 33rd Avenue.

This area was recently opened up for campers after being closed

for the winter, and there were few campers around our work area when we started. However during lunch break, one large 4WD and caravan combo decided to intrude on our space, setting up camp right in the midst of us onlookers and giving cause for a few heads to shake in wonder.

On a similar head shaking theme, Olga and Michelina were planting out paths made by campers as shortcuts up the steep slope to

the road. At one stage, a passing family on mountain bikes asked why they were blocking the paths which the family were using to practice their down-hill mountain bike skills.

By day's end we had planted close to 400 trees and grasses and ruined some mountain bikers' fun. We also maintained some of the previous plantings by removing guards from the mature trees and rescuing plants smothered by weeds.

Photos: Cam and Mary briefing the tree planters; Anda and Yianni planting trees; Karin and Alex maintaining previous plantings (Bill Hansen); group photo (Olga Wilkinson)



Nursery News

The nursery crew recently began doing its bit for Parks Victoria's Wilsons Prom Landscape Traps Restoration Project. Restoration Ecologist, Brooke Love is leading this project to develop a method to restore old-growth forest at two trial landscape trap sites at the southern end of the Prom (not far from Roaring Meg campsite) each with an area of 16 ha.

There are a number of landscape traps dotted throughout the Prom. They are noticeable as sizeable discontinuities in the tree canopy and there is evidence they once supported damp old-growth

forest. But after several fires in succession (possibly before the 1950s), the natural re-growth of canopy trees within these areas was suppressed, allowing dense scrub to replace the old-growth forest, creating areas that are dry and fire-prone.

The nursery's task is to process Eucalyptus fruit collected by professional arborists from a sample of mature trees in the canopy surrounding several of the landscape traps. We will extract the seeds from the fruit and test the viability of seed for each batch collected. The aim is to collect

enough seed for aerial sowing, about 16 kg.

Brooke delivered the first three batches of eucalyptus fruit to the nursery on Thursday 6th October and instructed the group on the steps for seed processing, viability testing and keeping records. We collected just over 700 grams of seed and chaff (chaff = unviable seed) from these three batches – although more seed is expected from two of the batches as the fruit dries out more. This task will keep us busy for some time and we could do with extra hands.



Top: Brooke explains the seed processing and recording to the nursery crew (Ailsa Batey); below: the nursery crew sieving Eucalyptus fruit (Ailsa Batey); Eucalyptus fruit drying under heaters in the Yanakie office (Brooke Love)



EVENTS CALENDAR FOR 2022

Except for the nursery, which is every 2 weeks throughout the year, we will email out details of all activities before the dates shown.

WEEKEND ACTIVITIES

FRIDAY 4, SATURDAY 5 & SUNDAY 6 NOVEMBER

3-day sea spurge removal –
Picnic and Squeaky beaches

WEEKDAY ACTIVITIES

EVERY SECOND THURSDAY

Tidal River nursery – meet 9.30 am
at the nursery compound in Tidal River
(Register on *ParkConnect* or contact Mary Walker).

REGISTERING WITH PARKCONNECT

Please remember to register for all activities on ParkConnect and make sure you have a Working with Children Check loaded on to ParkConnect. WWCCs are now compulsory (unless you are volunteering with us for the first time). If you need assistance with navigating your way through ParkConnect or the WWCC process, you can contact Friends of the Prom's Peter McDowell by email pdmcdowell101@gmail.com.

NEW MEMBERS

**We extend a warm welcome to new members —
Chris and Greta Law
Atticus Bastow**

MEMBERSHIP FEES

You don't have to be a financial member to participate in our activities. But we urge those of you who have attended more than one or two activities to become financial.

Your membership fees keep us afloat (just) – without them we cease to exist. The fees we receive are low and only just cover our basic running costs, most importantly our public liability insurance.

To renew your membership, please contact our Treasurer Peter Wilson at membership@friendsoftheprom.org.au

You can pay via Direct Deposit to our Westpac account:
Account Name:
Friends of the Prom Inc.
BSB: 033 152
Account Number: 188795

Single: \$15, Couple: \$20,
Family: \$25

Please remember to provide your full name as a reference so we can identify you on the bank statement.

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