

Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021 – Registrar’s report

The OEI Act commenced on 2 June 2022 and provides the legislative framework for licensing and regulating offshore renewable energy infrastructure and electricity transmission infrastructure in the Commonwealth offshore area. The OEI Act also establishes the Offshore Infrastructure Registrar.

The Registrar’s functions relate to administration of the licensing scheme, including managing the assessment process for licence-related applications, providing advice and recommendations to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, overseeing compliance and administration, and maintaining a register of licences. The Registrar is also the decision-maker for the approval of a change in control of a licence holder under the OEI Act.

In December 2022, under section 153 of the OEI Act, the Secretary of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water appointed the General Manager of the National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator Branch within the Department of Industry Science and Resources as the Registrar. The Registrar must present the Minister for Climate Change and Energy with a report outlining its activities for the previous financial year to present to Parliament.

In February 2024, the Minister for Climate Change and Energy issued the Registrar with a statement of expectations. The Registrar responded with a statement of intent in April 2024. These are published on the Registrar’s website at offshoreregistrar.gov.au.

Registrar’s activity report for 2023–24

In 2023–24, the Offshore Infrastructure Registrar:

- finalised the assessment and provided advice to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy in relation to the 37 feasibility licence applications received in response to the invitation to apply for the Gippsland declared area OEI-01-2022
- managed the overlapping application group process under the Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Regulations 2022, which resulted in 6 applicants in the Gippsland licensing round revising and resubmitting their applications to remove the overlap with equally meritorious applicants
- provided advice to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy in relation to the granting of 12 feasibility licences in the Gippsland declared area OEI-01-2022, with up to 25 gigawatts of wind generation capacity proposed under these licences
- received, assessed and provided advice to the Minister for Climate Change and Energy in relation to 8 feasibility licence applications received in response to the invitation to apply for the Hunter declared area OEI-01-2023, which closed on 14 November 2023
- established the Register of Offshore Infrastructure Licences under section 162 of the OEI Act, which includes details of licences granted by the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, available at neats.nopta.gov.au
- collaborated with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water on the implementation of the licensing framework, including in relation to the development of regulations and guidance
- updated a range of regulatory guidance materials and forms to assist eligible persons, and other stakeholders, to understand the requirements and processes relating to feasibility licence applications
- engaged with a range of external stakeholders and held or attended more than 100 meetings with industry and government stakeholders
- expanded the functionality of the National Electronic Approvals Tracking System to allow for electronic submission and tracking of feasibility licence applications.