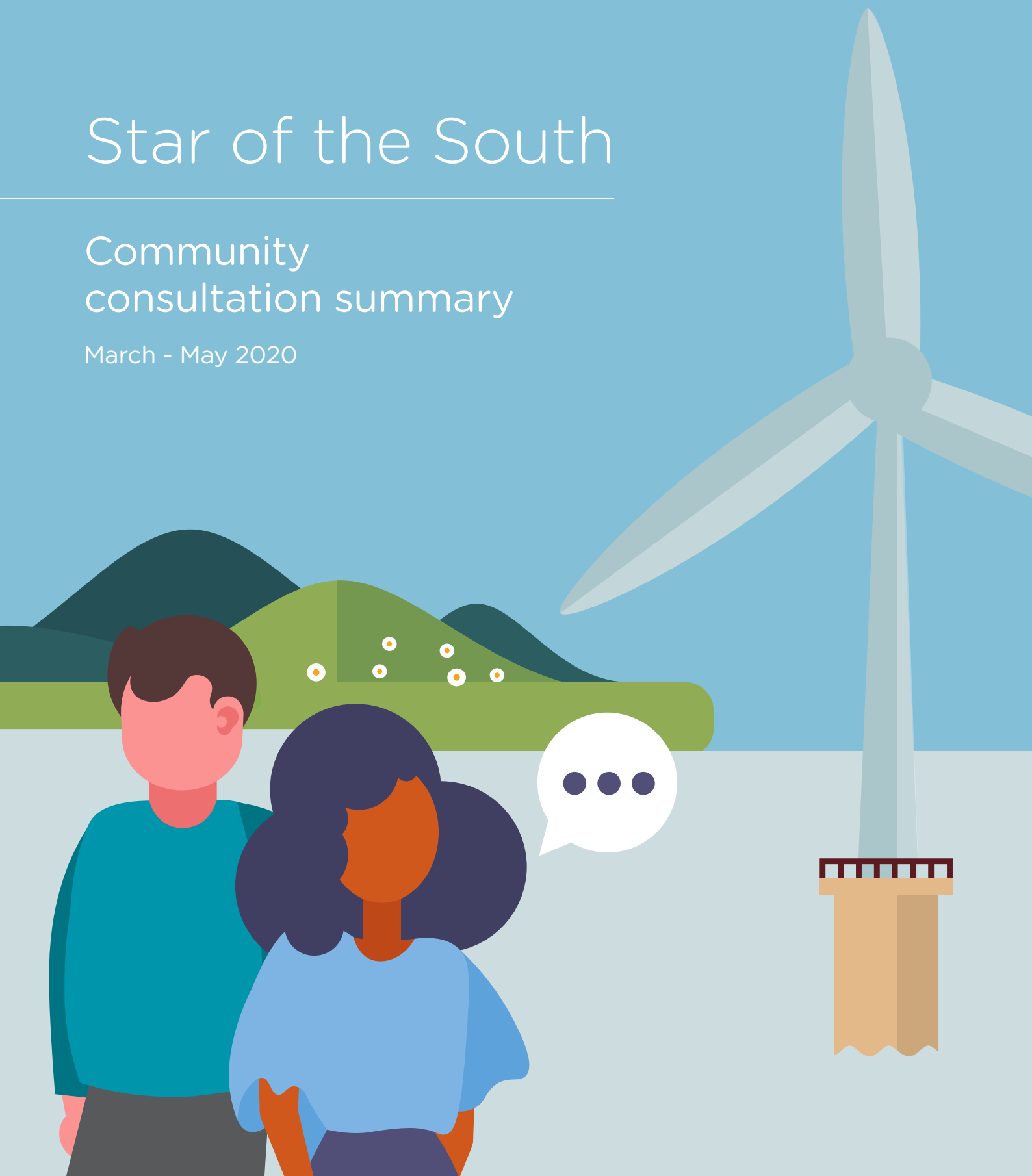


# Star of the South

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## Community consultation summary

March - May 2020



StaroftheSouth

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We acknowledge the Gunaikurnai people as Traditional Owners of the area in which the Star of the South would be located and pay our respect to their elders past, present and future.

# About the project

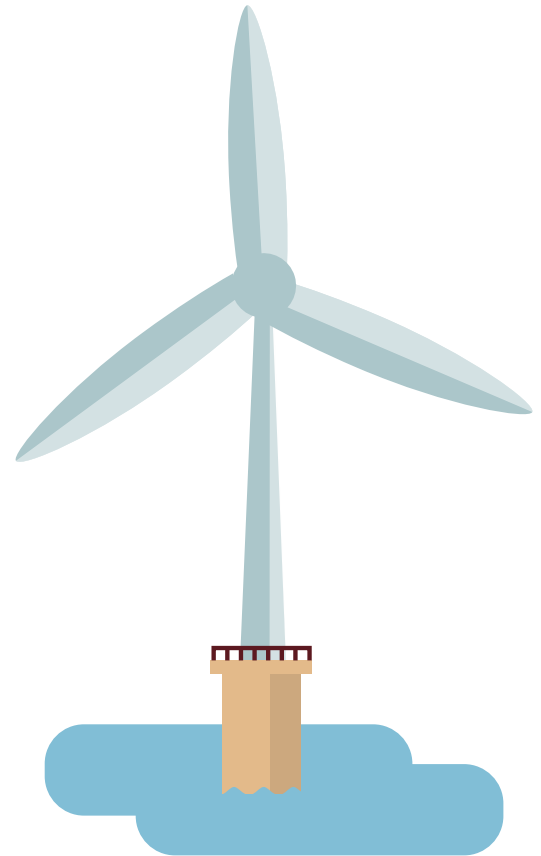
The Star of the South is Australia's first offshore wind project, proposed to be located off the south coast of Gippsland.

At up to 2200MW, it could provide around 20 percent of Victoria's energy needs, powering 1.8 million homes.

Built to its full potential, it would be one of the largest offshore wind farms in the world. As a major infrastructure project, it would create thousands of jobs in construction and hundreds of regional jobs once it's up and running.

Our team is investigating the potential to bring this project to Gippsland. We are currently in the feasibility and development phase.

Victorian and Australian government approvals would be needed to construct and operate this project.



## Project phases



# Consultation

We believe that involving people from the very beginning of a project is important for achieving great outcomes.

Engagement with Traditional Owners, stakeholders, local communities and landholders, is continual and ongoing. At key stages, we also run formal consultations to seek feedback on specific activities or decisions which can be influenced by community feedback.

Formal consultation took place during March-May 2020 to share new information and collect feedback about:

- Site investigations
- Transmission corridor options
- Offshore wind and fishing
- How we're communicating and consulting.

During March, we contacted and met with local landholders whose properties could be affected by the project's transmission infrastructure. This was followed by community consultation in April and May.

# How people got involved

We communicated opportunities to get involved widely and collected feedback in different ways.

Most feedback was collected through a survey, available online and in hard copy. We also held meetings to hear from landholders and other stakeholders.



Advertising and articles in local newspapers and radio



Project newsletter to 50,000 households and monthly e-news



Live online Q&A sessions



Information packs and hard-copy surveys posted on request



30 meetings and presentations and 150 direct emails to stakeholders



Regular social media posts and e-news



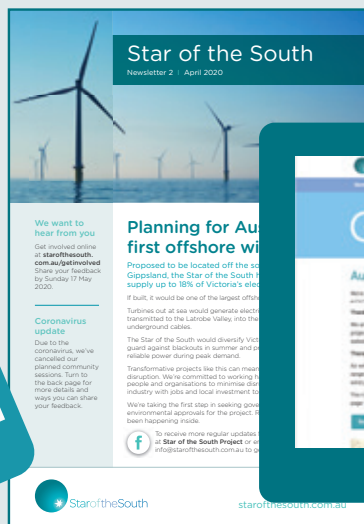
96 online and hard copy surveys completed



Over 2,300 people visited our website



Videos and fact sheets on consultation topics



# What we heard

Here's a snapshot of what we heard. More detail on key topics is provided over the following pages.



75% of respondents believe our site investigations are going well



Respondents would like us to select a transmission route which has the least impact on the environment, farms and local communities



There is strong interest in environmental studies, what we're finding, and how potential impacts will be addressed



50% of respondents were recreational anglers



There is general support from recreational anglers for sensible safety rules which enable fishing to continue safely in the proposed wind farm



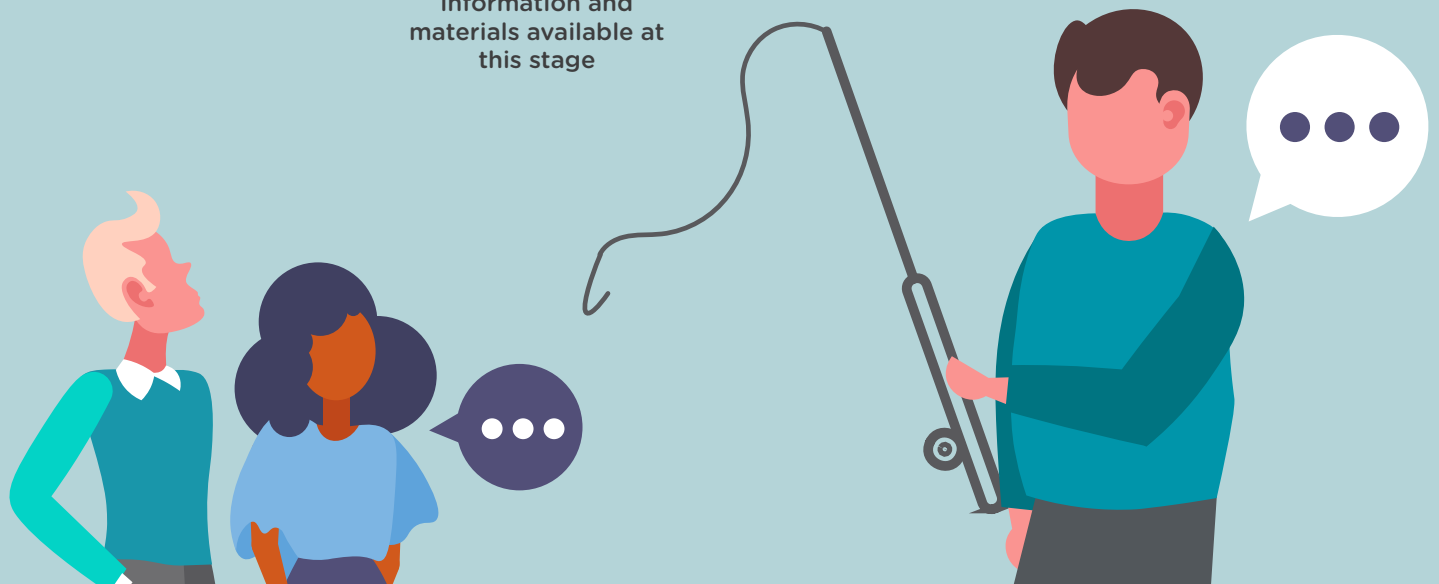
Recreational anglers want fishing to continue within the wind farm and many see the project as an opportunity to improve fishing and boost tourism



81% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with opportunities to have a say



70% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with information and materials available at this stage



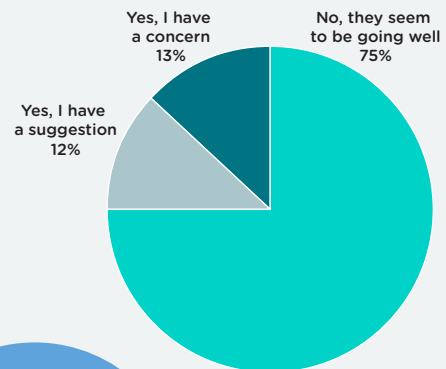
# Feedback on site investigations

## What we asked

We asked for feedback on how our site investigations are going, to understand if we can improve the way we undertake and communicate investigations.

## What we heard

**The majority of respondents believe our site investigations are going well.** Some raised suggestions or concerns with questions and comments about the project. There is interest in how environmental studies are being undertaken, what we are finding, how information will be used and when findings will be available.



You have communicated with all parties, this is a key factor

Will data be available for the public to view?

Came across your wind monitor offshore, not sure of rules of navigation

How are impacts to migrating fish stock from Corner Inlet being investigated?

## Our response and next steps

Our program of engineering and environmental investigations will continue for several years.

You can find current information about these investigations on our website or by contacting our team.

Details of marine investigations, including the location of sea-based equipment and Notice to Mariners, are also posted on the project and Australian Hydrographic Office websites, and shared with commercial fishers by SMS.

As part of our investigations, we are studying and collecting data on the local environment on land and at sea. These studies will form the basis of our environmental assessments and will be used to understand impacts that could result from the project's construction, operation and decommissioning.

All investigations are designed by specialists, in line with any relevant standards or government requirements, industry best practice and in consultation with stakeholders. We are partnering with specialist researchers including Deakin University, Curtin University and CSIRO.

The project is required to go through comprehensive environmental assessment processes - a Victorian Environment Effects Statement (EES) and a Commonwealth Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). A range of topics will be considered including vegetation, birds, marine mammals and fish.

Many people are curious about what our investigations are finding. We will share videos, photos and preliminary findings as these become available. More detailed findings and analysis will be included in our environmental assessments, which will be available for review and comment when complete.

# Feedback on transmission corridor options

## What we asked

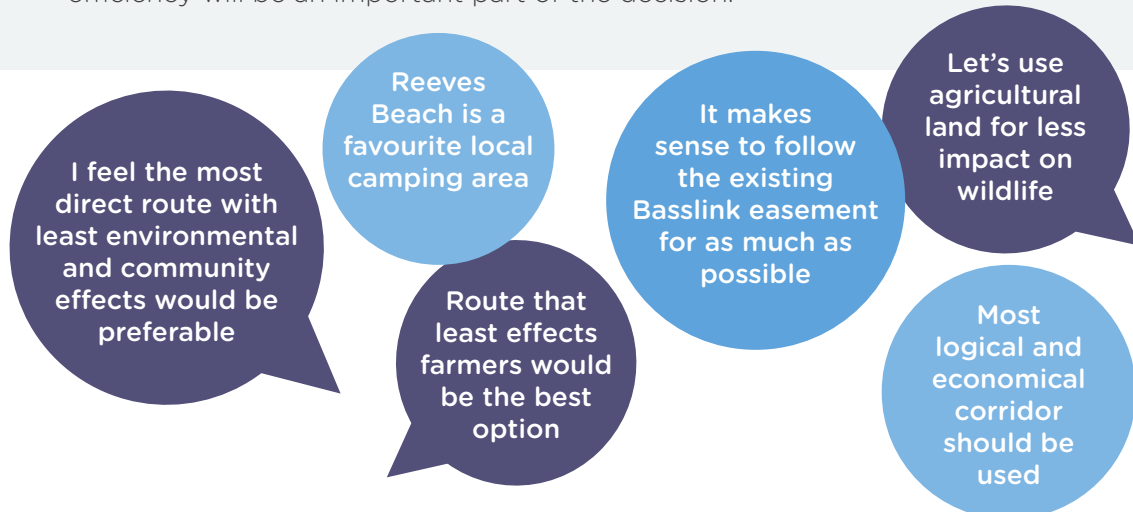
We asked people to share local knowledge and what's important to consider when deciding which option to progress through planning and design.

## What we heard

**Overall, respondents would like us to select a transmission route which has the least impact on the environment, farms and local communities.**

The following key themes were identified in feedback:

- Support for using underground cables
- Select the corridor with the least environmental impact on land and at sea
- Select the corridor with the least impact to farms and private landholders
- Design the route to avoid native vegetation removal wherever possible
- Support for following Basslink as much as possible
- Consider opportunities to share infrastructure with other projects
- Maintain recreational use of Reeves Beach
- Recognition that practical considerations such as constructability, access, cost and efficiency will be an important part of the decision.



## Our response and next steps

We are continuing to collect data and assess the merits of each corridor, considering community and landholder feedback alongside engineering, commercial, environmental, heritage and land use considerations.

We are currently collecting more environmental data to help inform a decision on which corridor to take forward into detailed planning and we will communicate our decision and how we reached it.

We will work closely with landholders along the corridor selected to refine the underground cable route, with a focus on reducing impacts to land and farm operations. Landholder views will be taken on board and we will be open, fair and respectful in our dealings with them. By using underground cables, grazing and other typical farming activities could continue above the cables after construction.

We are working to minimise the need to remove native vegetation through corridor selection, route design and alternative construction methods.

We understand that Reeves Beach is a popular camping and fishing spot. We would use 'no trench' construction to install cables under the beach and dunes, to reduce disruption for beach users and campers as much as possible if this option is taken forward. No long-term changes to the beach, fishing and camping are expected.

Some people noted that sharing infrastructure with other projects could help reduce impacts. We are open to exploring opportunities to see what might be possible.

Potential impacts from the construction and operation of the project's transmission system will be assessed through comprehensive environmental assessments. These assessments will consider the underground cables, any overhead lines required (if under-grounding is not technically feasible or has greater impacts), and above ground substations.

### Map of transmission corridor options



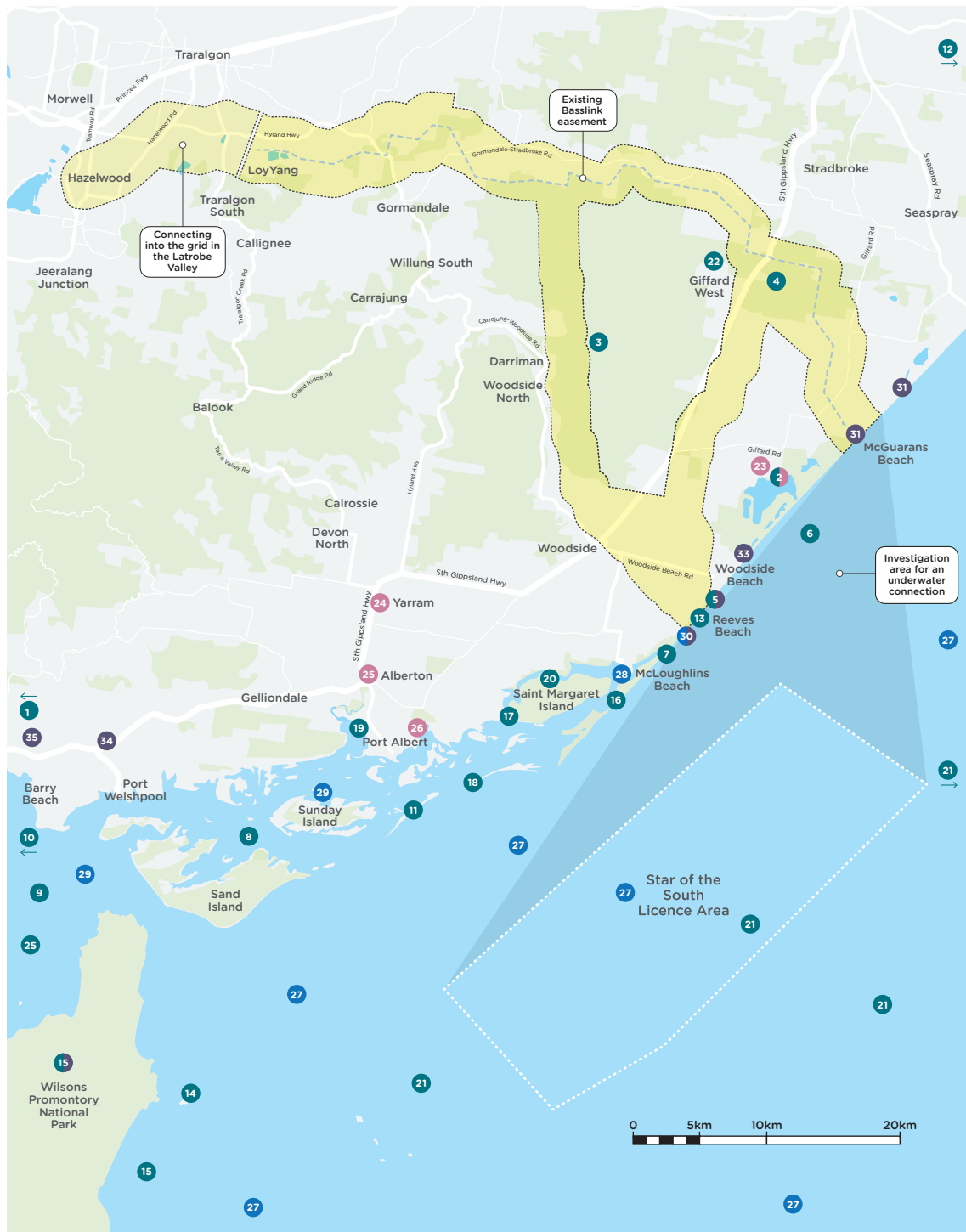


# Feedback on important places for the community

## What we asked

We asked to hear about local places that are important to local people. By understanding places of value, we can ensure these are considered in project design and assessments.

## What we heard



## Environment

Place	Why it's important
1 Western Port	Ramsar site, bird and fish habitat
2 Jack Smith Lake State Game Reserve	Native plants and animals
3 Mullundung State Forest	Native plants and animals
4 Giffard (Rifle Range) Flora Reserve	Native plants and animals
5 Ninety Mile Beach	Bird habitat
6 Ninety Mile Beach Marine National Park	Marine habitat, biodiversity, bird feeding grounds
7 McLoughlins Beach-Seaspray Coastal Reserve	Bird habitat
8 Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park	Ramsar site
9 Corner Inlet Marine and Coastal Park and wetlands	Ramsar site, bird and fish habitat
10 Doughboy Island	Bird habitat, Mutton Bird colony
11 Clonmel Island	Bird habitat
12 Gippsland Lakes Reserve	Ramsar site, bird and fish habitat
13 Reeves Beach Nature Reserve	Bird habitat
14 Rabbit Island	Fairy Penguin colony
15 Wilsons Promontory National Park and Marine Park	Native plants and animals, marine habitat
16 McLoughlins Beach entrance	Bird and fish habitat and migratory path
17 Manns Beach entrance	Bird and fish habitat and migratory path
18 Kate Kearney entrance	Bird and fish habitat and migratory path
19 Port Albert entrance	Bird and fish habitat and migratory path
20 Saint Margaret Island	Sea Eagle nesting area
21 Bass Strait, various locations	Whale foraging area and migratory path; bird feeding grounds and migratory flight paths; marine habitat including reefs, towers and sea grass beds; Southern Calamari spawning ground; invertebrate species; Great White Shark nursery area
22 Stradbroke Flora and Fauna Reserve	Native plants and animals

## Heritage

Place	Why it's important
2 Jack Smith Lake State Game Reserve	Aboriginal cultural heritage
23 Warrigal Creek	Site of massacres of Aboriginal people by Angus McMillan and his men
24 Yarram	Historic town
25 Alberton	Historic town
26 Port Albert	Historic town

## Fishing

Place	Why it's important
27 Bass Strait, various locations	Offshore fishing grounds recreational and commercial, passage making
28 McLoughlins Beach	Estuary, surf and offshore fishing, boat ramp and jetty
29 Corner Inlet, inter-tidal zone and inland waterways	Fishing area, important for recreational and commercial fishing
30 Reeves Beach	Surf fishing

## Tourism, recreation and community

Place	Why it's important
30 Reeves Beach Caravan Park	Popular camping spot
31 McGauran's Beach	Recreation
5 Ninety Mile Beach	Recreation, tourism, scenic coastline
32 Woodside Beach	Recreation
15 Wilsons Promontory National Park	Wilderness area, walking, hiking, camping, tourism, Tidal River
28 McLoughlins Beach	Local community
33 Woodside Beach Surf Lifesaving Club	Community facility and service
34 Great Southern Rail Trail Leongatha to Welshpool	Cycling trail, tourism, recreation
35 South Gippsland Highway	Views of Wilsons Promontory

## Our response and next steps

We will carefully consider these places in project planning and avoid impacting them where possible. If places of value are affected by the project, we will work with locals to identify suitable ways to minimise or mitigate our impact.

There may be opportunities to help protect or enhance important places, including through community investment initiatives and local partnerships, if the project proceeds to construction.

# Feedback on fishing and offshore wind

## What we asked

We asked about ideas for sharing the waters safely and how offshore wind might improve fishing in the area. Feedback will be used to inform project development and our approach to sharing the waters safely.

## What we heard

### Sharing the waters safely

The proposed project area is valued as a high-quality recreational fishing ground.

Respondents mostly support sensible rules to keep people, vessels and assets safe. Most expect to see 'safety zones' around individual towers but are strongly opposed to any blanket exclusion of recreational boating and fishing. This is in keeping with Star of the South principles on sharing the waters.

We heard that clear and accessible communication of any new rules would be critical.

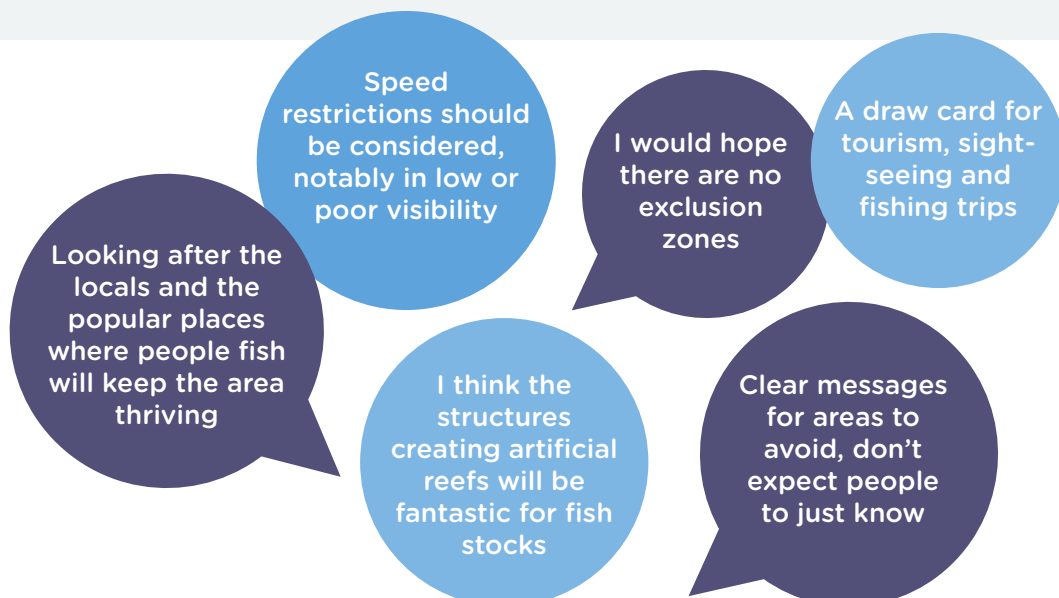
Practical suggestions for safe navigation were raised, including lighting and labelling turbines, markers, mapping and GPS apps. Other important safety considerations include protocols for search and rescue operations, vessel speed limits and management of hazardous conditions such as fog, wind and large swells.

### Opportunities to improve fishing

Many respondents stated that turbine foundations could create new habitat and attract fish to the area.

Some noted that the project would attract visitors to the region and generate new economic opportunities related to fishing. This is generally seen as a positive but could place pressure on existing facilities such as boat ramps, wash down areas, public toilets and picnic areas. There is interest in how the project could help develop new, or maintain existing, facilities.

Some would prefer that the area does not change or that the project is moved elsewhere so that conditions for fishing do not change.



## Our response and next steps

The main concern we heard was about exclusion zones. We believe that many types of fishing, particularly recreational fishing, could continue within an operational wind farm. This already occurs in other countries like the UK, where offshore wind has been in use for over a decade.

As we develop our proposed approach to sharing the waters, we will consider:

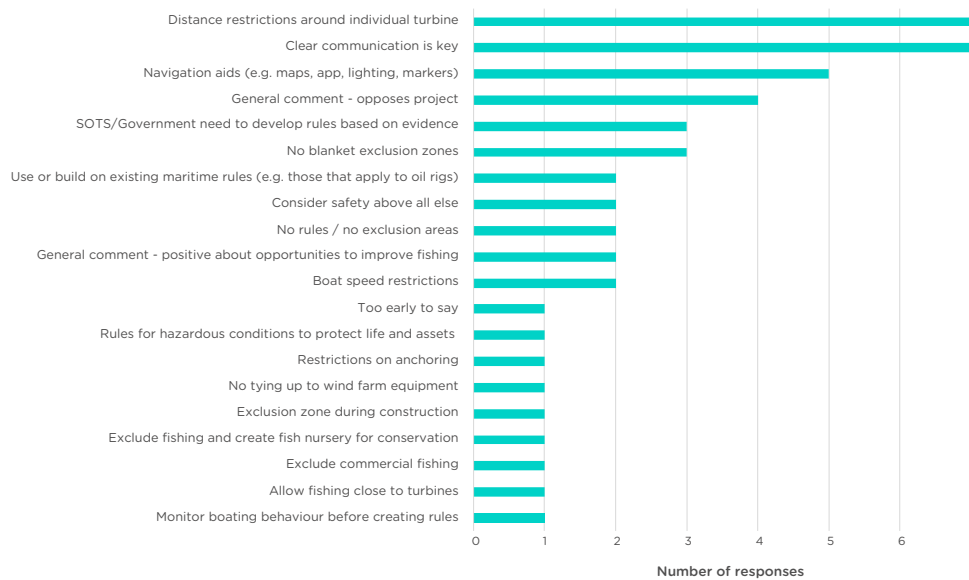
- Feedback from recreational and commercial fishers
- Findings from fish surveys
- Global research and learnings.

We will consider opportunities to improving fishing in the area through project design, environmental assessments and community initiatives and partnerships, if the project proceeds to construction.

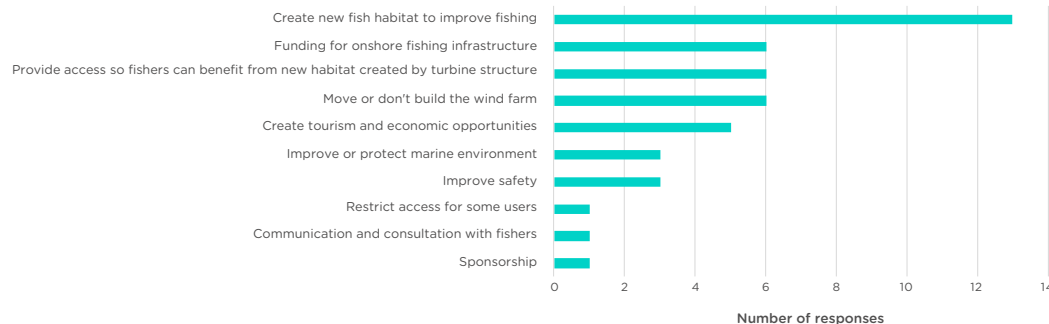
Potential changes to fishing during construction and operation of the wind farm will be assessed through comprehensive environmental assessments. These matters would also be considered in our application for a licence to construct, operate and decommission an offshore wind farm in Commonwealth waters. These processes will provide further opportunities for fishers to get involved.

As the regulator of Commonwealth waters, the government will ultimately decide if the project can go ahead and what fishing activities could occur inside an offshore wind farm. We will abide by any government regulations and work closely with government, industry and individual fishers.

### What rules (if any) do you think are needed to help offshore wind and fishing safely share the waters?



### Do you have ideas for how the Star of the South project could help make fishing in the local area even better?



# Feedback on our communications and consultation

## What we asked

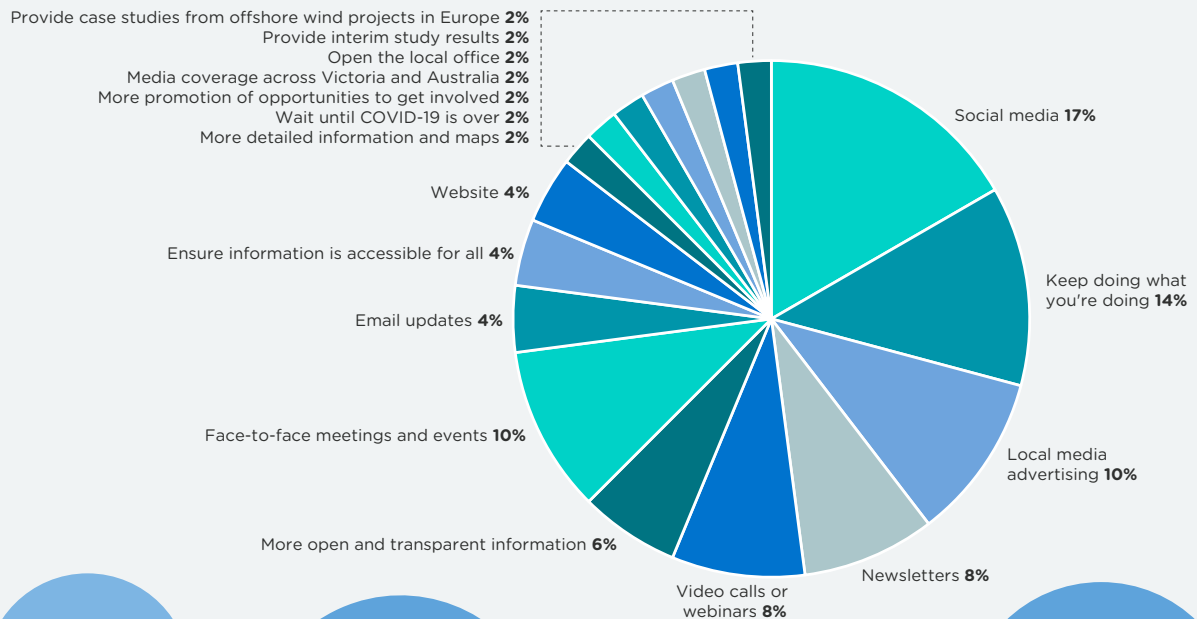
We asked people if they are satisfied with our current communications and consultation, and for suggestions on how we could improve.

## What we heard

Most respondents are satisfied with what we are currently doing.

The majority of survey respondents are satisfied with how the project is communicating (70%) and opportunities to get involved (81%). COVID-19 restrictions caused the cancellation of face-to-face meetings and information sessions, resulting in a lower level of satisfaction with opportunities to talk with the team (63%).

### Do you have suggestions on how we can improve?



- Be upfront and tell it like it is
- Information pamphlets to coastal towns that are affected
- Looking forward to the Yarram office opening
- Accessibility to people involved is most important but difficult at the moment
- This is a 1 in 100 year pandemic, I think you are doing an amazing job
- Not everyone uses social media or the internet
- Your facebook event was a great way to engage
- More live chats and sharing to local journalists
- Have smaller meetings, but still keep social distancing



## Our response

Feedback about how people want to be kept informed and involved will be used to improve our future communication and consultation activities.

We encourage people to keep in touch with us and follow our updates:

- Call us on 1800 340 340 or email [info@starofthesouth.com.au](mailto:info@starofthesouth.com.au) with any questions
- Follow us on at Star of the South Project Facebook or LinkedIn at Star of the South
- Subscribe to email updates and find all the latest information at [starofthesouth.com.au](http://starofthesouth.com.au)
- Look out for project newsletters in the letterbox.

We will continue to keep people updated, including through our Community Advisory Group, meetings and presentations to community groups and at our Yarram office.

## Thank you

Thank you to everyone who got involved and shared their local knowledge and advice with us.

