

RESPONSE TO PETITION

Petition No. 4 of 2026 House of Assembly

In relation to the proposed Bell Bay Wind Farm, the petitioners ask the House to:

1. Commission an independent environmental impact assessment, including species-specific modelling, a review for raptors, migratory/coastal birds, wildlife.
2. Require a government-led consultation process before any approval, to ensure residents receive clear, accessible information and opportunities to respond.
3. Withhold approvals until environmental, community impact, and governance concerns have been independently and satisfactorily resolved.
4. Strengthened environmental protections for large scale energy projects, especially in ecologically sensitive coastal areas.
5. Ensure strict, independent oversight of any perceived or potential conflicts of interest relating to elected representative or their families in the context of this project.

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE:

1. The Bell Bay Wind Farm is undergoing independent environmental assessments at the state and national levels.

There are strong independent environmental assessment processes at the State and Commonwealth levels, and these assessments are being progressed in parallel.

At the state level, the project was formally declared a Major Project under the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* (LUPA Act). This declaration automatically places the assessment in the hands of an independent Development Assessment Panel (the Panel) appointed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPC). The Panel:

- operates independently of government, councils, and the project proponent
- seeks input from the public, relevant regulators and state agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Authority and the Aboriginal Heritage Council

- sets the assessment criteria for the project with opportunity for public input
- requires expert technical studies be submitted as evidence
- publicly exhibits the proposal and the initial assessment report
- holds public hearings before making the final decision.

The Major Projects Process provides for a rigorous, independent planning assessment which requires submission of expert technical evidence and public participation. Further details on the project's progress through the Major Projects process can be found on the Tasmanian Planning Commission website:

<https://www.planning.tas.gov.au/assessments-and-hearings/current-assessments-and-hearings/bell-bay-wind-farm-major-project-permit>

The project is also being assessed separately at the Commonwealth level and will be considered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) has determined the project is a Controlled Action and will be assessed via an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. Further information on the EPBC process can be found on the EPBC Portal website:

<https://epbcpublicportal.environment.gov.au/all-referrals/project-referral-summary/?id=22aaa555-fe08-ef11-9f89-000d3ad0035f>

The assessment processes require detailed, species-specific ecological studies, including impacts on raptors and migratory bird species where relevant, and consideration of the cumulative effects of broader environmental, social, and community impacts. These assessment processes ensure all statutory, regulatory and community requirements are addressed before a project can be taken forward.

2. Consultation is already a requirement of State and Commonwealth statutory processes

Public consultation and input are an essential part of all approvals. State and Commonwealth environmental approval processes include public consultation processes. These are formal, statutory consultation processes—not optional or proponent-led activities.

Community input is guaranteed and cannot be bypassed. The Government expects this engagement to be meaningful.

At the State level, the Major Projects process includes multiple mandatory public consultation stages, including exhibition of draft assessment criteria, exhibition of the proposal and initial assessment report, and public hearings conducted by the independent Panel.

At the Commonwealth level, the EPBC Act processes mandate public consultation stages, including once a project has been referred for assessment and through the EIS processes.

3. The petition requests that approvals be withheld until environmental, community impact, and governance concerns have been independently and satisfactorily resolved.

The project is being assessed through the Tasmanian Major Projects statutory framework and through the EPBC Act.

Under the Major Projects Process, no approvals can be issued until the full assessment process is complete. This includes:

- assessment of environmental matters
- submission and public exhibition of the MPIS
- input from the relevant regulator (for example, the Tasmanian EPA and the Aboriginal Heritage Council)
- public exhibition of the panel's final assessment report
- public hearings before a decision can be made.

The project is currently in the assessment phase. The submission by Equis of its MPIS will be the next stage in the process, expected in the second half of 2026. Further details on the assessment steps can be found on the TPC website.

DCCEEW will also assess the project in accordance with the EPBC Act. This process is ongoing. Further details on the assessment steps can be found on the DCCEEW website.

Clear and robust independent processes are in place to ensure decisions consider all relevant factors, including input from community consultation. The statutory decision makers for environmental and planning approvals are independent from Government, and Government does not intervene in these decisions.

4. The project is subject to assessment under both State and Commonwealth environmental legislation

The project is subject to two layers of environmental assessment and regulation, ensuring robust State and Commonwealth protections apply.

The Major Projects process requires the following:

- A Major Project Impact Statement (MPIS). The MPIS is prepared by the proponent to address the assessment criteria, and it is used by the Panel and regulators to assess whether the project should proceed.

- Tasmania's independent Environment Protection Authority (EPA) provided detailed guidance to the Panel on information related to environmental assessment and the EPA is required to carry out an assessment of the project and provide advice to the Panel.

As the project has been determined to be a Controlled Action under the EPBC Act, DCCEE sets assessment guidelines that specify how impacts to Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) must be assessed. The proponent then prepares a comprehensive EIS addressing those impacts and proposed avoidance, mitigation, and offset measures. Following assessment, the Commonwealth Environment Minister (or delegate) may approve the action, approve it with conditions (including requirements to avoid, mitigate, manage, or offset impacts), or refuse approval.

5. Ensure strict, independent oversight of any perceived or potential conflicts of interest

Conflict of interest safeguards are required by law. The Major Projects process includes strict requirements:

- The TPC is independent of Government and panel members must declare any actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest before participating in hearings or assessment processes.
- Declarations are required to include any personal, financial, family, or professional interests that could influence—or appear to influence—the panel member's decision-making.
- All assessment criteria, submissions, and decisions are published publicly.
- Input from regulators is provided independently.

The proposed Bell Bay Wind Farm is currently subject to independent, transparent, scientifically rigorous assessment process requiring scrutiny at both the State and Commonwealth levels. The measures requested in the petition— EIAs, community consultation, robust approvals, strong environmental protections, and conflict-of-interest disclosure requirements —are provided for within the existing statutory frameworks. The current process ensures that environmental, social, and community impacts will be thoroughly and independently assessed before any decision is made.

The Tasmanian Parliament has clear and well-established processes in place to declare all relevant interests of MPs and their families. In line with these processes, the Member for Bass, the Hon Bridget Archer MP, has declared her spouse owns land proposed to form part of the project site for the Bell Bay Wind Farm. These details are publicly available and can be viewed on the Parliament of Tasmania website. Minister Archer is not currently, nor has she ever been, a decision maker in relation to any aspect of this project. Minister Archer has been clear, that should these circumstances change, she will declare a conflict and excuse herself from any discussions or decision-making around it. I have been advised by the George Town

Council that Mr Winston Archer recuses himself from any Council discussions on the Bell Bay Wind Farm project.

I thank Mr Nicholas Wigg and the Member for Lyons, Mr Carlo di Falco MP, for raising this matter.

The Government recognises the strength of community interest in this proposal and the importance of ensuring environmental and community concerns are addressed transparently.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nick Duigan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon Nick Duigan MLC

Minister for Energy and Renewables

Date: 19th June 2026