

14 August 2024

MAJOR STEP FORWARD FOR ILLAWARRA OFFSHORE WIND ZONE

The region's peak industry body Business Illawarra has welcomed the announcement that consultation would begin on an Illawarra Offshore Wind project zone, saying the starting gun has been fired for significant investment to flow into the region's economy which will allow it to reach its potential as a clean energy powerhouse.

The announcement was made today by the Minister for Climate Change and Energy, the Hon Chris Bowen MP, at the [Illawarra Clean Energy Summit & Expo](#) hosted by Business Illawarra at BlueScope in Port Kembla.

"Now we need the business community and Illawarra residents need to participate positively in the consultative process that will hopefully yield an offshore wind zone for the region which will generate clean and reliable energy for the region and beyond," said Adam Zarth, Executive Director of Business Illawarra.

"Large scale renewable energy projects are critical for the Illawarra's energy evolution. With the potential to support one of Australia's largest clean energy projects, this is a clear indication of the role the Illawarra will be expected to play in the new energy economy, and the opportunities and challenges that lie before us."

Mr Zarth said energy supply was a key concern for businesses across the region, and simultaneously, one of its biggest opportunities.

"The opportunities around manufacturing, securing labour supply and the logistics required to bring a project of this scale to reality will be enormous. But we have the measures in place to ensure we have a ready pipeline of skilled workers to support these endeavours, particularly the Energy Futures Skills Centre at the University of Wollongong supported by \$10 million in Federal funding."

"This is a 'once in a generation' opportunity that requires solid foundations to ensure children who are currently at school and considering their future can understand the opportunities available to them in new energy."

Mr Zarth said that the event also heard from an array of business leaders who detailed the scale of the opportunity, but also drew attention for the need for regulation to keep pace with the speed of development in this sector.

"Decades of knowledge and capacity building have created an immense energy pedigree in the Illawarra. While this offers a solid foundation to build on, our renewable energy ecosystem is still in its infancy and will require support to build momentum," said Mr Zarth.

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Business Illawarra Media Contact – Adam Zarth 0404 146 829

About Business Illawarra

Formerly the Illawarra Business Chamber, *Business Illawarra* is the region's peak business organisation, and the regional office of Business NSW responsible for the south-east of the

state, including the Southern Highlands.