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JULIE DAVIES

Senior Impact Assessor
in Impact Assessment,
DTP



**MARCO GUTIERREZ
GONZALEZ**

Senior Impact Assessor,
DTP

Presentation materials
[| accessible here](#)

ABSTRACT

Project impact assessment plays a crucial role in advancing the energy transition, but can we address its limitations

Project impact assessment plays a crucial role in advancing the energy transition. Rigorous project assessments examine potential impacts of renewable energy projects on ecosystems, biodiversity values, cultural values and natural resources early in project development. Since the early 2000s the expansion of wind energy industry in Victoria has relied upon project-based impact assessment processes to examine impacts and enable decision-making. Developers have for the large part completed robust assessments, sound project refinement and elicited defensible decision-making, which in turn has supported investment decisions and project delivery. Project specific impact assessment does however face limitations. It does not readily address the broader, cumulative challenges of balancing impacts and benefits of the energy transition. Wind energy facilities should minimise adverse effects on critical environmental values, including flora, fauna and habitat, which are also at risk from climate change. There are also other impacts of wind energy facilities important for the community, such as on the landscape, which needs assessment and consideration. Socio-economic effects need to be evaluated to ensure impacts and project benefits are known and costs/ externalities are not unfairly borne by affected communities.

Addressing this from project to project, rather than at a regional or landscape scale has limitations:

- Project assessments do consider cumulative impacts, but focus on the individual project.
- Data collection and assessment at a project scale rather than a regional or landscape scale limits the understanding of broader ecosystem trends and uncertainties.
- Project assessments struggle to adequately examine the trade-offs between impacts, biodiversity protection and energy transition.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY

Julie Davies

Julie Davies is a Senior Impact Assessor in Impact Assessment at Victoria's Department of Transport and Planning (DTP). The Department administers the state's environmental impact assessment (EIA) system, under the Environment Effects Act 1978 and Victoria's Bilateral Agreement with the Commonwealth under the EPBC Act.

Julie has 20 years' experience working in the environment field. In Impact Assessment, Julie facilitates assessments of complex major projects through the state's EIA system across renewable energy, transport and mining sectors. She also provides advice on referrals and accredited processes under the EPBC Bilateral Agreement. Julie loves fostering genuine relationships with proponents and their stakeholders to facilitate a positive culture, where technical solutions can be interrogated in a constructive way so that risk-based project solutions can be balanced with positive environment outcomes.

Marco Gutierrez Gonzalez

Marco Gutierrez Gonzalez is a Senior Impact Assessor at the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP). The Department administers the statutory environmental impact assessment system for major projects in Victoria. He has been involved in assessment processes for complex projects in the renewable energy, transport, and water sectors. Before his role at DTP, Marco completed his PhD which investigated the outcomes, challenges and opportunities that strategic environmental assessment presents to the conservation of biodiversity and provision of ecosystem services. He also has experience as an environmental impact assessment regulator in Mexico.