

Frequently Asked Questions: Decommissioning

One of the commonly asked questions is what happens to wind turbines and associated infrastructure at the end of their lives.

What is the lifespan for wind farms?

Australia's wind farms are lasting much longer than expected. The Crookwell Wind Farm, commissioned in 1998, had a 20-year design life but continues to operate reliably at 27 years old. Now, wind turbines have a design life of between 30-40 years. The Limerick Wind Farm is expected to operate for 35 years.

What happens when a project reaches the end of its lifespan?

At the end of the project lifespan, the project would either be upgraded and recommissioned or decommissioned and components reused or recycled.

Have projects been decommissioned in Australia?

Yes, several wind farms in Western Australia have been decommissioned. The Salmon Beach Wind Farm commenced operating in 1987 and was decommissioned in 2002.

In 2022, Synergy commenced decommissioning the Ten Mile Lagoon Wind Farm and Nine Mile Beach wind farms which operated from 1993 and 2004 respectively. Synergy donated concrete foundations and road base materials to the Shire of Esperance to support local infrastructure projects. Six turbines were refurbished for use at other wind sites and two turbines were donated to the North Metropolitan TAFE.

Pacific Blue has announced plans to decommission the Codrington Wind Farm in Victoria, which has operated since 2001. Pacific Blue has been consulting with authorities and the community on plans for safely decommissioning the site.

Who pays for decommissioning?

The project owner is responsible for decommissioning costs. For the Limerick Wind Farm, this is the long-term project owner and operator, TagEnergy.

It will be a legal condition of the development consent, finance agreements and land contracts that the wind farm and associated infrastructure be decommissioned. To manage this requirement, a Decommissioning Fund will be established during the operations phase to cover the full costs of decommissioning the wind farm.

Is there a government led decommissioning fund?

Currently, no. Stromlo Energy is supportive of the establishment of a government led decommissioning fund. Until this is established, decommissioning is fully funded by the project owner under the land agreements.

How much does decommissioning cost?

The Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner has estimated that decommissioning costs could be \$400,000 to \$600,000 per turbine or more.

What happens if a project is sold before decommissioning?

If a project is sold before decommissioning, the project consent and project contracts travel with the project entity as a bundle. Any new project owner is bound by these agreements and cannot pick and choose which commitments they follow through on.

What happens if a project owner goes bankrupt?

Lending banks have the right to step in if the project owner defaults on any of their obligations. They then take on responsibility for project requirements including establishing the Decommissioning Fund and decommissioning the project.

What is a Decommissioning Plan?

When it is time to decommission a project, a Decommissioning Plan is submitted to the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure for approval. This considers the safest method of decommissioning, what materials can be refurbished, reused or recycled and where, and what materials will be disposed of and where.

How long does decommissioning take?

The length of the decommissioning process mainly depends on the number of turbines. For the Limerick Wind Farm, the decommissioning process is expected to take up to 24 months.

How recyclable are wind farm materials?

The major wind turbine suppliers have announced targets for 100% zero waste turbines. Currently, Vestas can recycle 85% of turbine components. ACCIONA Energía and the fashion company El Ganso have created the first sneaker with a sole made from recycled wind blade materials.



Image courtesy of ACCIONA Energía

Limerick Wind Farm Project Update

October 2025



Where can I find out more?

Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner, 'Commissioner's Observations and Recommendations (updated)' <https://www.aeic.gov.au/observations-and-recommendations/chapter-1-host-landowner-negotiations#further-information>

RE Alliance, 'Refurbishment, repowering or retirement. What happens when renewables approach end of life?' https://www.re-alliance.org.au/renewables_end_of_life

Feedback

You can provide feedback on the project by completing a feedback form on the website, or by emailing the project team.

Contact details

Email: contact@limerickwindfarm.com.au

Website: www.limerickwindfarm.com.au