



Title:	Review of Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) approvals
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Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation approvals

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) approval process is instigated by a referral from State authorities to the Federal Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). This is based on whether there is a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance.

Projects are assessed on whether they are deemed to not be a controlled action or need approval. This analysis breaks down the project process and decisions as:

- **Approved** – full assessment completed with approval,
- **Not controlled** – proposed action is deemed unlikely to have a significant impact on protected matters, which may specify an action that should be taken by the project, and
- **Pending** – EPBC assessment is in process – these projects may be ‘Under Assessment’ or have an ‘Assessment Approach Determined’.

Historically, many projects have gone through the EPBC process in less than a year. On average, it was 103 days for solar projects and 73 days for wind projects.

Projects currently undergoing the EPBC process are taking longer, which may be due to greater complexity with more threatened and migratory species being part of the more recent evaluations. While no specific species was associated with longer assessments, there is evidence that a higher number of species identified per project has occurred in recent years.

This analysis was conducted using data for 188 projects that were referred for EPBC assessment from the start of 2017 to August 2024. Project stages were captured on 6 August 2024, so some projects may have changed status since then.

Overview

All 107 solar and wind projects that have been approved or were deemed to not be a controlled action went through the EPBC process in less than a year.

For the period between the start of 2017 to August 2024, 12 solar projects were approved with an average of 103 days taken. 21 wind projects were approved with an average 73 days taken. Most solar projects were deemed to not be a controlled action (59 projects) with an average of 95 days. Only 14 wind projects were deemed to not be a controlled action and these assessments had an average 75 days.

Numerous projects pending have been in the EPBC process for more than a year.

As of 6 August 2024, there were 23 solar projects pending and 58 wind projects pending. There is no clear pattern of a specific endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species resulting in longer approval times. But, on average, there are more species being reported for these pending projects.



Key statistics - solar projects

Approvals, decisions on not controlled actions and projects pending – days taken/pending

- **Approved – 12 projects** – mean of 103 days (min: 19, max: 311)
- **Not controlled – 59 projects** – mean of 95 days (min: 23, max: 303)
- **Pending – 23 projects** – mean of 638 days (min: 139, max: 2566)

Endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species – number of species

- **Approved** – mean of 1 vulnerable and 1 endangered species.
- **Not controlled** – mean of 1 vulnerable and 1 endangered species.
- **Pending** – mean of 3 vulnerable and 1 endangered species.

Migratory species – number of species

- **Approved** – mean of 0 migratory species.
- **Not controlled** – mean of 1 migratory species.
- **Pending** – mean of 1 migratory species.

Key statistics - wind projects

Approvals, decisions on not controlled actions and projects pending – days taken/pending

- **Approved – 21 projects** – mean of 73 days (min: 36, max: 229)
- **Not controlled – 14 projects** – mean of 75 days (min: 36, max: 134)
- **Pending – 58 projects** – mean of 707 days (min: 48, max: 2277)

Endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species – number of species

- **Approved** – mean of 3 vulnerable, 2 endangered species and 1 critically endangered species.
- **Not controlled** – mean of 1 vulnerable and 1 endangered species.
- **Pending** – mean of 5 vulnerable, 3 endangered species and 1 critically endangered species.

Migratory species – number of species

- **Approved** – mean of 3 migratory species.
- **Not controlled** – mean of 1 migratory species.
- **Pending** – mean of 4 migratory species.



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Comparison of days taken for approvals, decisions on controlled action, and days pending

Figure 1 compares the days taken for three types of project status:

- projects that have been approved (days taken for approval),
- projects deemed to not be a controlled action (days taken for decision), and those
- projects pending based on their status as of 6 August 2024 (days pending).

All projects approved or deemed to not be a controlled action before 6 August 2024 had a decision within a year. There are numerous projects pending and many of them have been in the EPBC process for longer than a year. Table 1 provides summary statistics for each project status.

Figure 1 – Number of days taken for approval/decision on controlled action or the number of days pending for project pipeline – by technology type

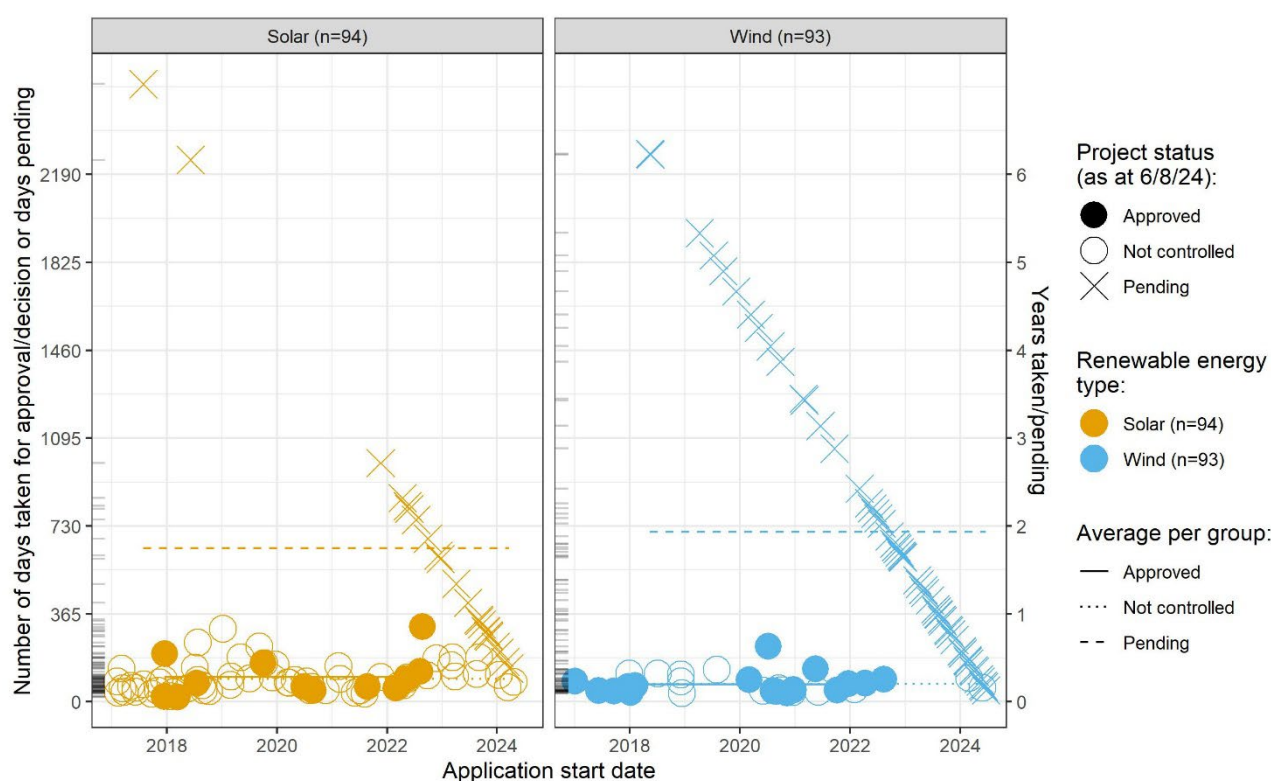
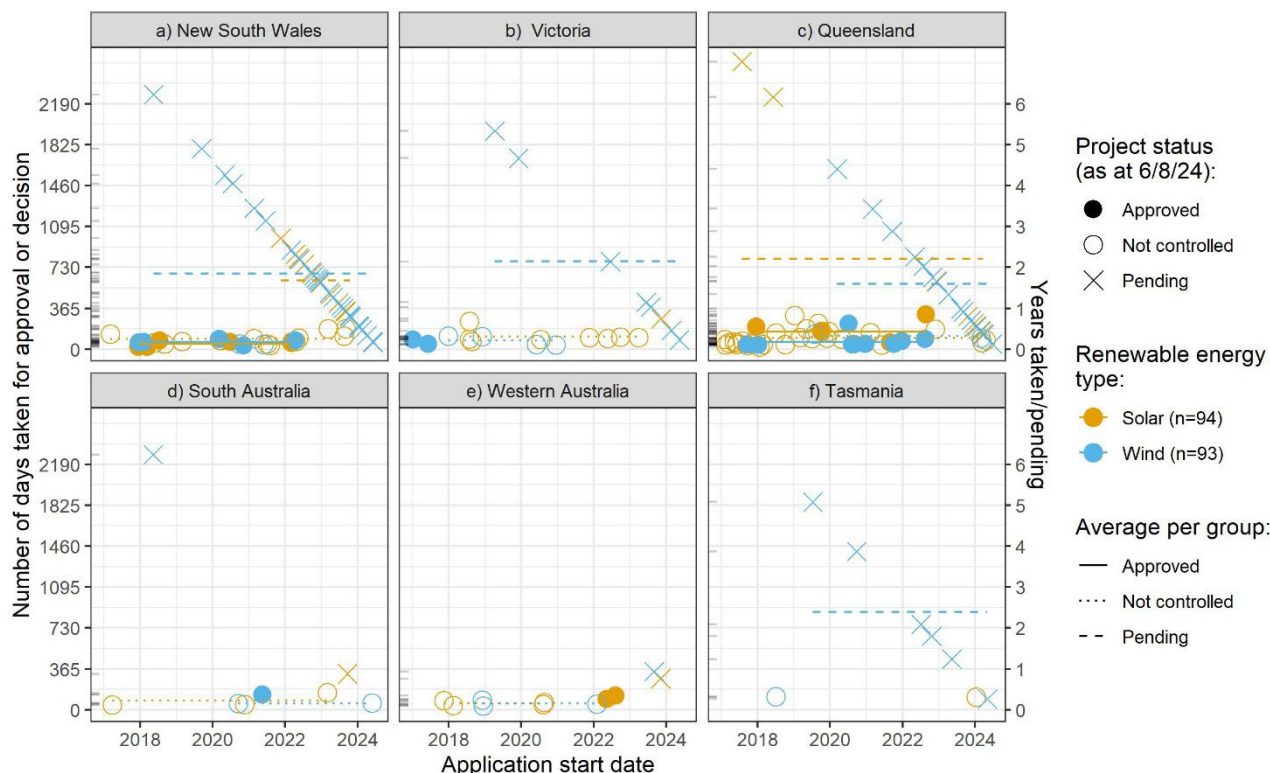


Table 1 – Summary statistics – Number of days taken for approval/decision on controlled action or the number of days pending for project pipeline – by technology type

Type	Status	Variable	Minimum	Median	Mean	Maximum	Count
Solar	Approved	Days taken for approval	19	70	103	311	12
	Not controlled	Days taken for decision	23	83	95	303	59
	Pending	Days pending	139	412	638	2,566	23
	All	Days	19	101	229	2,566	94
Wind	Approved	Days taken for approval	36	49	73	229	21
	Not controlled	Days taken for decision	36	58	75	134	14
	Pending	Days pending	48	552	707	2,277	58
	All	Days	36	210	468	2,277	93

Figure 2 provides the days taken for three types of project status by State. Most projects pending are in NSW and Qld. Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia have a high proportion of projects deemed to not be a controlled action.

Figure 2 – Number of days taken for approval/decision on controlled action or the number of days pending for project pipeline – by state



Endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species

Figure 3 shows the number of endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species reported by each project. Figure 4 breaks these numbers down into the threatened status categories. Using the average, there are more species being reported for these pending projects. Figure 5 provides detail by State.

Table 2 shows summary statistics to accompany these graphics. On average, approved solar projects had a mean of 1 vulnerable and 1 endangered species. This was the same for not controlled projects. Solar projects pending had a mean of 3 vulnerable and 1 endangered species.

For approved wind projects, there was a mean of 3 vulnerable, 2 endangered species and 1 critically endangered species. Not controlled wind projects had a mean of 1 vulnerable and 1 endangered species. Wind projects pending had a mean of 5 vulnerable, 3 endangered species and 1 critically endangered species.

Table 3 and Table 4 show the most common endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species. There is no clear pattern of a specific endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species resulting in longer approval times. Future analysis will focus on the statistical association of the number of species and time taken for approvals.



Figure 3 – Number of endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species – by technology type

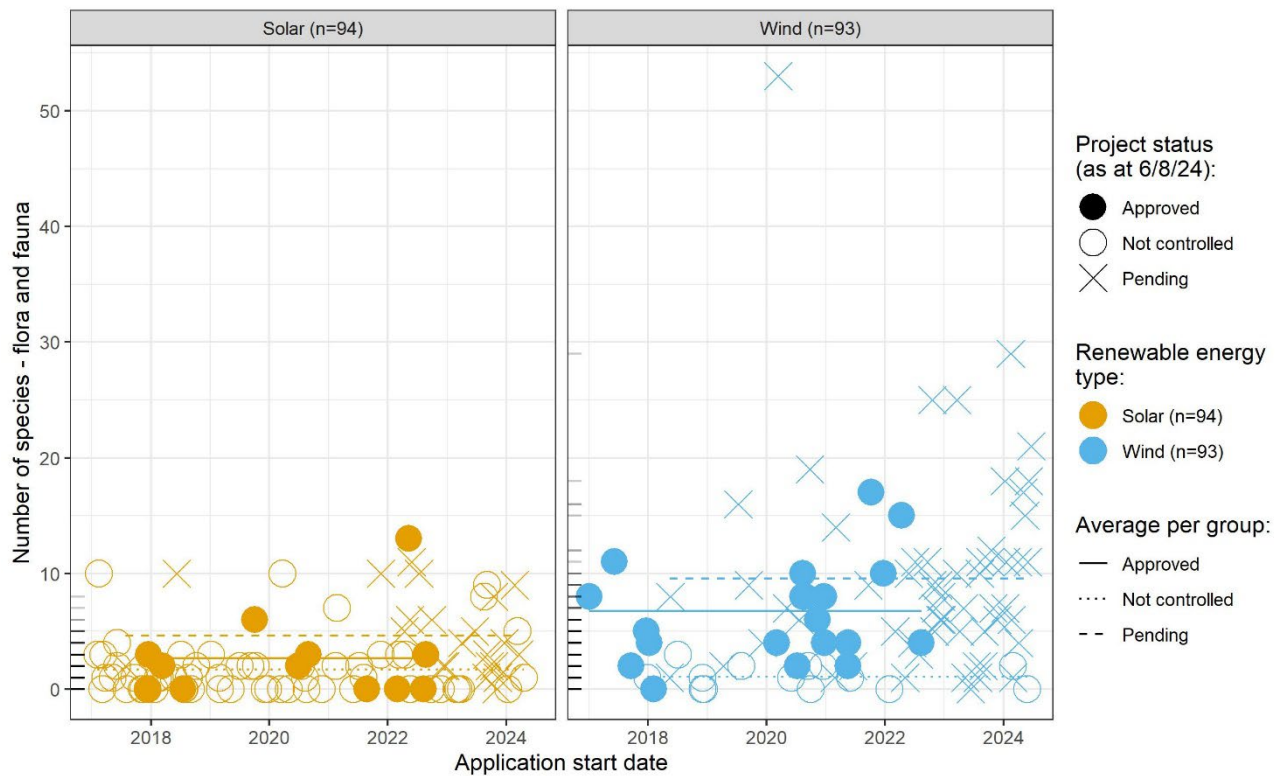


Figure 4 – Number of endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species – by threatened status

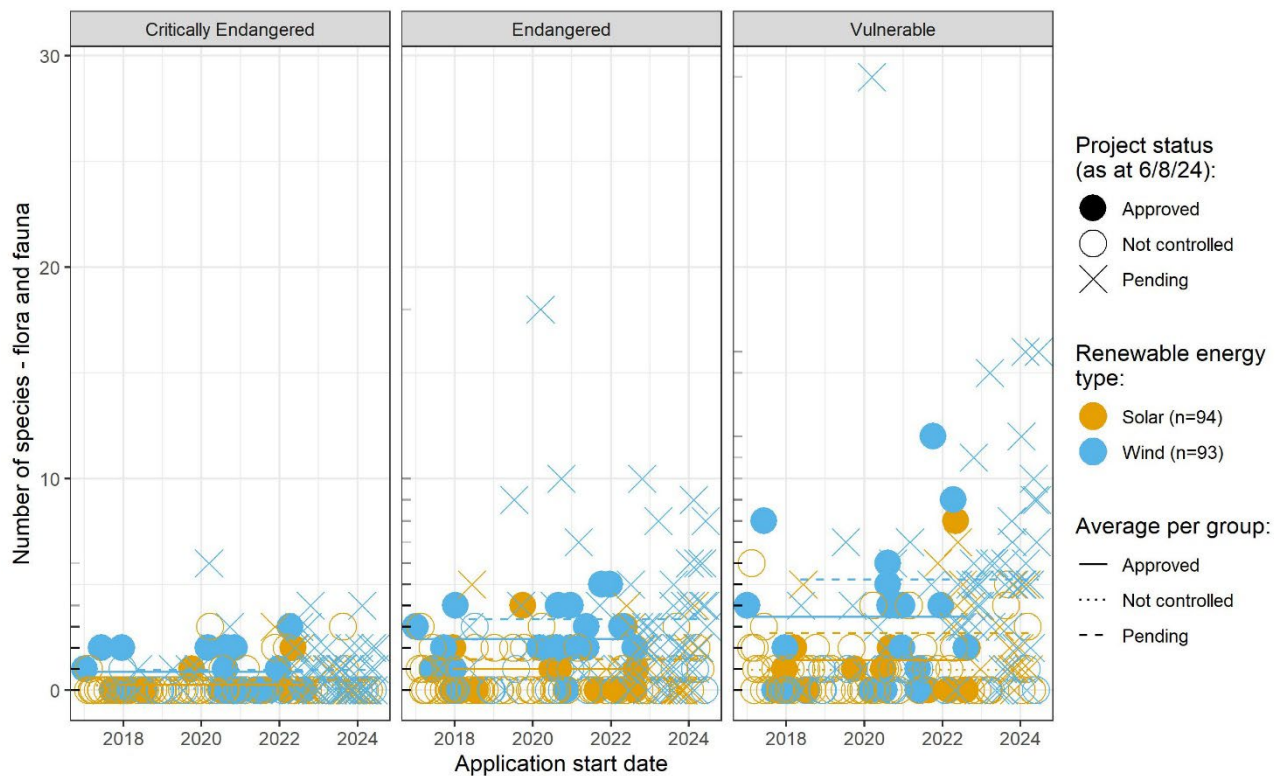




Table 2 – Summary statistics – Number of endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species – by technology type and threatened status

Type	Project status	Threatened status	Minimum	Median	Mean	Maximum	Count
Solar	Approved	Vulnerable	0	1	1	8	12
		Endangered	0	1	1	4	12
		Critically Endangered	0	0	0	2	12
	Not controlled	Vulnerable	0	0	1	6	59
		Endangered	0	0	1	3	59
		Critically Endangered	0	0	0	3	59
	Pending	Vulnerable	0	2	3	7	23
		Endangered	0	1	1	5	23
		Critically Endangered	0	0	0	3	23
	All types	Vulnerable	0	1	1	8	94
		Endangered	0	0	1	5	94
		Critically Endangered	0	0	0	3	94
Type	Project status	Threatened status	Minimum	Median	Mean	Maximum	Count
Wind	Approved	Vulnerable	0	4	3	12	21
		Endangered	0	2	2	5	21
		Critically Endangered	0	0	1	3	21
	Not controlled	Vulnerable	0	1	1	1	14
		Endangered	0	0	1	3	14
		Critically Endangered	0	0	0	1	14
	Pending	Vulnerable	0	5	5	29	58
		Endangered	0	3	3	18	58
		Critically Endangered	0	1	1	6	58
	All types	Vulnerable	0	3	4	29	93
		Endangered	0	2	3	18	93
		Critically Endangered	0	0	1	6	93



Figure 5 – Number of endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species – by state

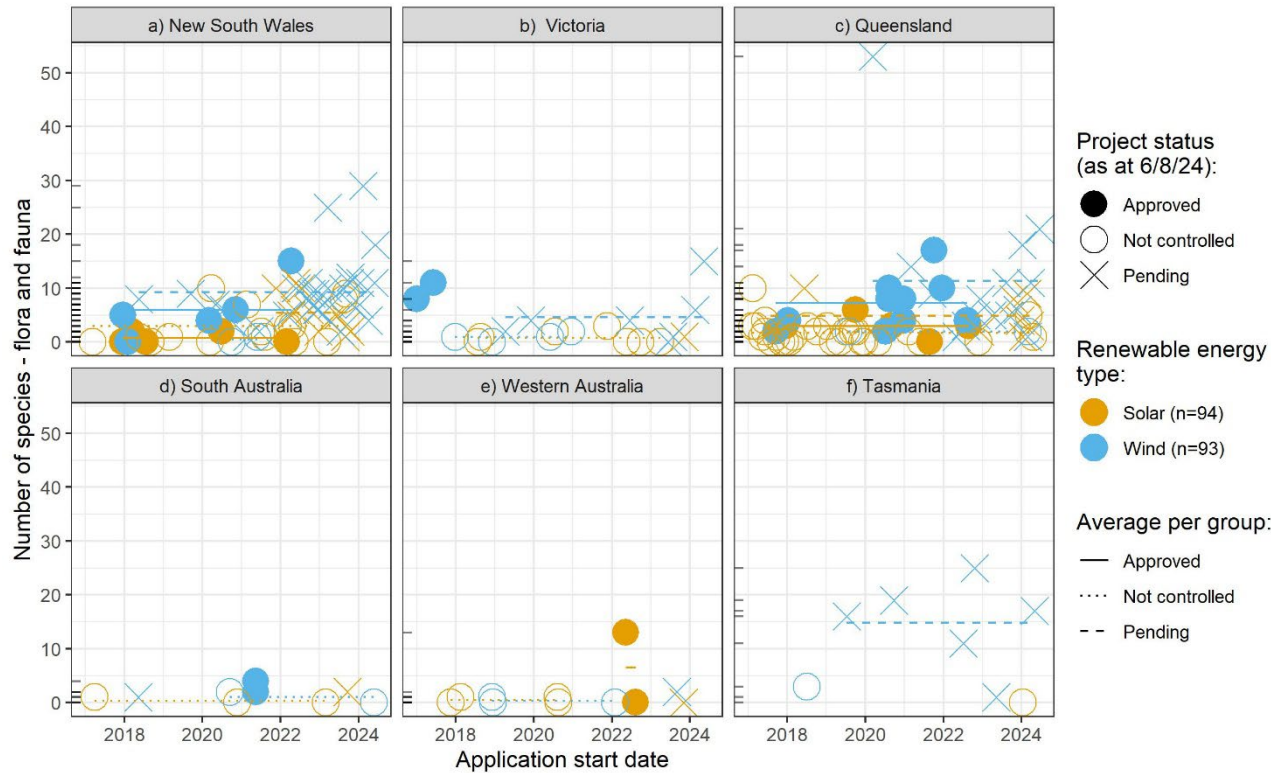




Table 3 – Most common endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species – Solar projects

Process status	Number of projects	Species
Approved	5	Koala - <i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i> - Endangered
	2	Australian Painted Snipe - <i>Rostratula australis</i> - Endangered
	2	Squatter pigeon - <i>Geophaps scripta scripta</i> - Vulnerable
	2	Curlew Sandpiper - <i>Calidris ferruginea</i> - Critically Endangered
	2	Northern Quol - <i>Dasyurus hallucatus</i> - Endangered
	1	19 different species
Not controlled	15	Koala - <i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i> - Endangered
	8	Painted Honeyeater - <i>Grantiella picta</i> - Vulnerable
	7	Swift parrot - <i>Lathamus discolor</i> - Critically Endangered
	6	South-eastern Long-eared Bat - <i>Nyctophilus corbeni</i> - Vulnerable
	6	Superb Parrot - <i>Polytelis swainsonii</i> - Vulnerable
	4	Regent honeyeater - <i>Anthochaera phrygia</i> - Critically Endangered Squatter pigeon - <i>Geophaps scripta scripta</i> - Vulnerable Greater glider - <i>Petauroides volans</i> - Endangered
Pending	12	Koala - <i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i> - Endangered
	6	South-eastern Long-eared Bat - <i>Nyctophilus corbeni</i> - Vulnerable
	5	Grey-headed Flying-fox - <i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i> - Vulnerable
	5	White-throated Needletail - <i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i> - Vulnerable
	4	White-throated Needletail - <i>Pedionomus torquatus</i> - Critically Endangered Pink-tailed worm-lizard - <i>Aprasia parapulchella</i> - Vulnerable Painted Honeyeater - <i>Grantiella picta</i> - Vulnerable Squatter pigeon - <i>Geophaps scripta scripta</i> - Vulnerable

Table 4 – Most common endangered or vulnerable flora and fauna species – Wind projects

Process status	Number of projects	Species
Approved	13	Koala - <i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i> - Endangered
	11	Greater Glider - <i>Petauroides volans</i> - Endangered
	9	White-throated Needletail - <i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i> - Vulnerable
	8	Swift Parrot - <i>Lathamus discolor</i> - Critically Endangered
	7	Regent Honeyeater - <i>Anthochaera phrygia</i> - Critically Endangered
	6	Squatter pigeon - <i>Geophaps scripta scripta</i> - Vulnerable Painted Honeyeater - <i>Grantiella picta</i> - Vulnerable
Not controlled	2	White-throated Needletail - <i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i> - Vulnerable
	1	12 different species
Pending	29	Koala - <i>Phascolarctos cinereus</i> - Endangered
	25	White-throated Needletail - <i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i> - Vulnerable
	16	Grey-headed flying fox - <i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i> - Vulnerable
	16	South-eastern Long-eared Bat - <i>Nyctophilus corbeni</i> - Vulnerable
	16	Greater Glider - <i>Petauroides volans</i> - Endangered
	15	Swift Parrot - <i>Lathamus discolor</i> - Critically Endangered

Migratory species

Migratory species are a key reason for wind projects being referred to the EPBC process. Almost all wind projects report an impacted migratory species.

There is no clear pattern of a specific migratory species resulting in longer approval times. The number of migratory species reported is slightly different with some pending wind projects having more migratory species. Lower migratory species is a factor in evaluations that deemed projects to not be a controlled action.

Figure 6 shows the number of migratory species. Accompanying summary statistics are presented in Table 5. The key difference is the number of migratory species reported between solar and wind projects. Figure 7 provides the breakdown by State. Table 6 and Table 7 show the most common species.

Figure 6 – Number of migratory species – by technology type

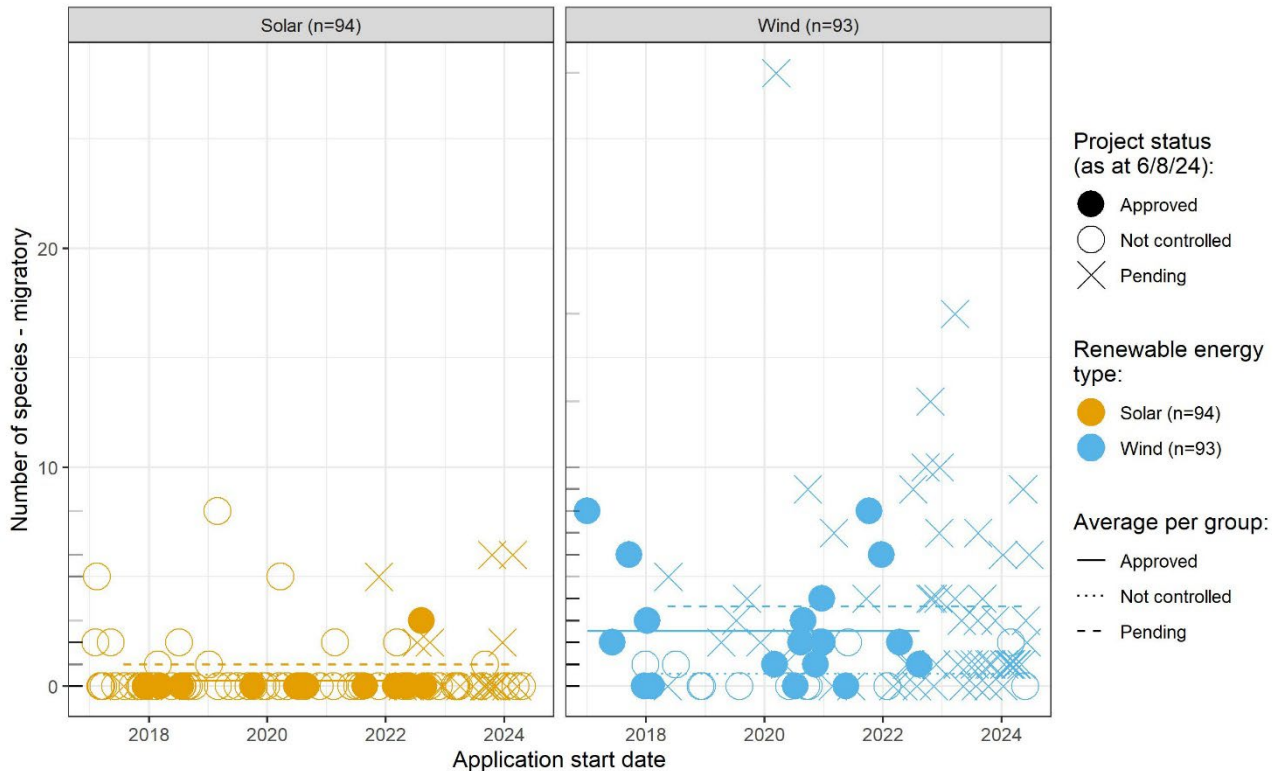


Table 5 – Summary statistics – Number of migratory species – by technology type and threatened status

Type	Status	Minimum	Median	Mean	Maximum	Count
Solar	Approved	0	0	0	3	12
	Not controlled	0	0	1	8	59
	Pending	0	0	1	6	23
	All types	0	0	1	8	94
Wind	Approved	0	2	3	8	21
	Not controlled	0	0	1	2	14
	Pending	0	2	4	28	58
	All types	0	1	3	28	93



Figure 7 – Number of migratory species – by state

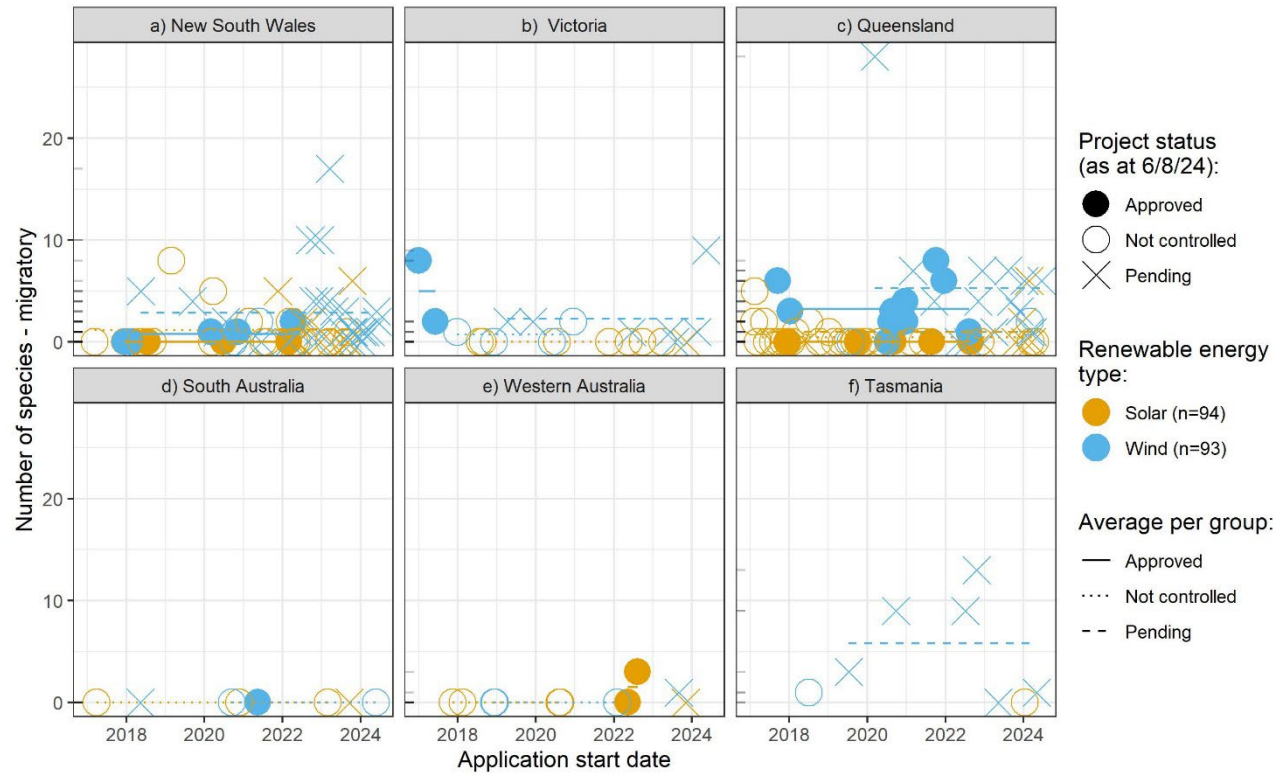




Table 6 – Most common migratory species – Wind projects

Process status	Number of projects	Species
Approved	11	Rufous Fantail - <i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>
	10	Fork-tailed Swift - <i>Apus pacificus</i>
	7	White-throated Needletail - <i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>
	6	Satin Flycatcher - <i>Myiagra cyanoleuca</i>
	4	Black-faced Monarch - <i>Monarcha melanopsis</i> Oriental Cuckoo - <i>Cuculus optatus</i>
Not controlled	4	White-throated Needletail - <i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>
	1	Satin Flycatcher - <i>Myiagra cyanoleuca</i>
	1	Common Greenshank - <i>Tringa nebularia</i>
	1	Fork-tailed Swift - <i>Apus pacificus</i>
	1	Latham's Snipe - <i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>
Pending	30	Fork-tailed Swift - <i>Apus pacificus</i>
	29	White-throated Needletail - <i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>
	19	Satin Flycatcher - <i>Myiagra cyanoleuca</i>
	15	Rufous Fantail - <i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>
	15	Latham's Snipe - <i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>

Table 7 – Most common migratory species – Solar projects

Process status	Number of projects	Species
Approved	1	Oriental Pratincole - <i>Glareola maldivarum</i>
	1	Bridled Terns - <i>Onychoprion anaethetus</i>
	1	Oriental Plover - <i>Charadrius veredus</i>
Not controlled	9	Fork-tailed Swift - <i>Apus pacificus</i>
	5	White-throated Needletail - <i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>
	3	Latham's Snipe - <i>Gallinago hardwickii</i>
	3	Yellow Wagtail - <i>Motacilla flava</i>
	3	Satin Flycatcher - <i>Myiagra cyanoleuca</i>
Pending	5	White-throated Needletail - <i>Hirundapus caudacutus</i>
	3	Fork-tailed Swift - <i>Apus pacificus</i>
	2	Oriental Cuckoo - <i>Cuculus optatus</i>
	2	Rufous Fantail - <i>Rhipidura rufifrons</i>
	1	11 different species