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Robbins Island decision leaves the fate of important bird habitat to Minister Plibersek

TASMANIA: BirdLife Australia says the fate of one of Australia's most important shorebird sites and habitat for the critically-endangered Orange-Bellied Parrot on Robbins Island, Tasmania, now rests solely in the hands of the Federal Environment Minister. This morning, Tasmania's Supreme Court ruled in favour of a destructive windfarm development after the Circular Head Coastal Awareness Network referred the matter on multiple grounds.

BirdLife Australia agrees with the group's central objection that Robbins Island is the wrong place for a windfarm. The Island provides critical habitat for shorebirds and the Orange-bellied Parrot which migrates across Bass Strait twice a year, breeding in Southwestern Tasmania. Fewer than two hundred Orange-bellied Parrots remain in the wild.

Federal Environment Minister Plibersek now has less than a fortnight to make a final decision on whether to approve or reject the proposal.

"Saving the Orange-bellied Parrot from extinction has been the focus of significant investment from state and federal governments, and the community have worked tirelessly to try to pull this bird back from the brink. Placing more than 100 wind-turbines across their migration route would be an insult to all those who have collaborated on their conservation, and to the taxpayers who have funded it." said Kate Millar, CEO of BirdLife Australia.

"BirdLife Australia, recognising the fundamental threat of climate change to Australia's birds, supports the renewable energy transition. However, we regard it as vitally important that sensible, evidence-based decisions are made about where these projects are built. The evidence at this site shows too many threatened birds, including the Orange-bellied Parrot, will be put at serious risk.

"We shouldn't be in a situation where we have to choose between saving a species from extinction or addressing climate change. This could have been easily avoided with better planning tools in place to help companies and governments ensure renewable energy projects are not situated in areas critical to endangered birds."

Robbins Island is a haven for migratory shorebirds. The globally significant Robbins Passage – Boullanger Bay wetlands are recognised as a [Key Biodiversity Area \(KBA\)](#) and listed on the Australian National Directory of Important Migratory Shorebird Habitat – supporting up to 25,000 migratory and resident shorebirds every summer.

The Federal Government delayed its decision to approve or reject the proposal for a fourth time, following requests by Minister Plibersek for more information from project proponent ACEN regarding the potential impact to the island's Tasmanian Devil population.

"Last year, Minister Plibersek listened to the community and saved important migratory bird habitat in Queensland's Toondah Harbour from destruction. Rightly, she called it one of her proudest achievements. We're asking the Minister to show the same leadership and save this critical habitat for Tasmania's birds, including the Orange-bellied Parrot."

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