

Parliamentary Submission

Inquiry: the Oil or Gas Production in the Great Australian Bight

I am an Australian resident and current University of Melbourne student studying a Masters of Environment. I am writing to express my deepest concern regarding the potential environmental, social and economic impacts of planned exploratory oil drilling projects and any future oil or gas production in the Great Australian Bight. I felt urged to complete personal research on this matter as I have an interest in environmental protection and in Australia's action towards becoming a more sustainable society.

In my Masters course we have learnt that a major aspect of environmental action relies on the interaction and collaboration between academics, professionals, members of society, and the government. Without various stakeholders working together, taking action towards protecting our environment becomes more challenging. In relation to the Great Australian Bight, there is clear resistance from activists, environmental organisations, local residents, and members of different industries who believe their business will be impacted by oil production activities. Most are fearful of potential oil spills, the effect on marine ecosystems, and the environmental damage increased emissions will bring to Australia's environment.

Plans put forth for the Great Australian Bight appear to be a step backwards in Australia's progression towards a cleaner, more sustainable society. The development of oil production facilities will give off greater levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and encourage further development of these industries on our shores.

Australia is experienced in shallow sea offshore drilling, however are inexperienced in deep sea drilling, especially in the Southern region. The wells being proposed will be Australia's deepest drilled wells and with that, many new risks arise for our waters and communities. The weather at the Great Australian Bight is also a factor to consider, as it is wild and extreme, with high winds and rough seas. This has the potential to impact operations and pose engineering challenges to offshore drilling equipment, posing risks to the functionality of the rigs and thereby more likely contributing to oil spills.

When investigating deep-water wells, one can't look past the horrific example of the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010. This incident exposed the vast range of effects that can come from a spill and the lengthy process that is required to stop a well from spilling. If this sort of blowout was to occur in the Great Australian Bight, many coastal communities and industries would be affected, such as fishing, tourism and surfing industries. This would have social as well as environmental impacts. Effects to the marine environment

include increased underwater noise, effect of oil spills, loss of sea life, pollution, and a disruption to migratory flows.

Essentially, the effect of a blowout would be devastating to Australia and therefore the project is a risk we shouldn't be willing to take. The effects are largely irreversible and long-term, and will bring many economic and ecological impacts. Australia should be working together to protect our environment and not developing industries that impair this progress. I strongly urge the Australian government to reconsider their stance in this project and to listen to the resistance of the local population.

Regards,
Olivia Bakonyi