

**Senate Standing Committee on Economics**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE**

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio

Budget Estimates

28 May 2012

**Question:** BR14

**Topic:** Reoffering of Acreage not previously taken up

**Proof Hansard Page:** 130

**Senator Siewert asked:**

**Senator SIEWERT:** Would you go back to a particular area that had not been taken up through a previous release and look at it to try to prove it up some more?

**Dr Pigram:** We may well do that with another work program, where we try it. We consult with industry and work out what it is that they feel is missing and we will see if we can fill in that piece of the puzzle.

**Senator SIEWERT:** So, for example, have you been back to look at the Mentelle Basin off the coast of WA?

**Dr Pigram:** We have not, no.

**Senator SIEWERT:** Would you go back to look at that?

**Dr Pigram:** Well, industry is telling us there is not adequate information there at the moment. But if there was sufficient interest from industry and there was sufficient interest from WA, we would consider looking at it again.

**Senator Chris Evans:** He might have put it on his list then.

**Senator SIEWERT:** I am sure that anything I could say about prospectivity would not put it on the list. How many of those areas have you gone back to?

**Dr Pigram:** In time frame, Senator? Recently?

**Senator SIEWERT:** Over the last, say, 10 years - the last decade.

**Dr Pigram:** I would have to take that on notice.

**Answer:**

Over the last 10 years, Geoscience Australia has undertaken petroleum prospectivity studies of offshore, mostly frontier, basins under the *New Petroleum Program* and *Offshore Energy Security Program*. This work ranged from comprehensive, multi-disciplinary basin studies that included the acquisition of pre-competitive seismic data, to targeted geophysical data acquisition or geochemical studies. As a result of this work, exploration areas have been released in the Arafura, Mentelle, North Perth, Southern Carnarvon, offshore Canning, Bight and Sorell Basins and the Bremer and Vlaming sub-basins. Of these, only the Arafura Basin release in 2006 relates to work undertaken to address perceptions of prospectivity following an unsuccessful acreage release, within the timeframe of the last 10 years.

In 2002, four areas in the under-explored and un-tested northern Arafura Basin were released by the Government, however permits were not awarded. Geoscience Australia considered that the prospectivity of the basin was poorly understood, and that due to the presence of hydrocarbon

shows in wells in the southern part of the basin, the region warranted further investigation. Geoscience Australia undertook a comprehensive basin study, utilising recently acquired industry seismic data, to better assess its prospectivity. The results of the study indicated that there was good potential for active petroleum systems in the northern Arafura Basin, and in 2006, four exploration areas were released. Two of these areas were subsequently granted to Samson International in 2007, who held the permits for three years. In 2012, two areas, partially covering the earlier release areas, were released; this release was supported by industry nomination.