

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio
2016 - 2017 Additional Estimates
2 March 2017

DEPARTMENT: DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND SCIENCE

TOPIC: Interest in Sorrell Basin

REFERENCE: Question on Notice (Hansard, 2 March 2017, page 120)

QUESTION No.: AI-48

Senator BUSHBY: I have just a couple more question. I asked Geoscience Australia immediately before you came in, and I have asked them on a number of occasions, about the Sorell Basin. You probably do not have the map now, but it is on the west coast of Tasmania, so not in Bass Strait. If you follow the Great Australian Bight all the way round, it is south of King Island, basically, and west of Tasmania. That has apparently shown reasonable signs of prospectivity according to Geoscience Australia. A few years ago it was put out as part of the acreage release but did not attract much, if any, interest. I was just wondering, and I asked Geoscience Australia whether they knew why it did not, and they suggested that you might have some knowledge. Take that on notice, please.

Mr Waters: I think I would need to, because I am not familiar with it. There are a number of disparate reasons why a company may indicate interest in a particular area in the precompetitive phase of acreage release but then not actually bid for it once it is released.

Senator BUSHBY: I do not even know if anybody showed any interest at the precompetitive level, so can you have a look at that and let us know whether there was any interest at that point as well.

Mr Waters: Yes, I am happy to look at that.

Senator BUSHBY: Thank you.

ANSWER

An area in the Sorell Basin was nominated by a petroleum exploration company and subsequently released as T15-3 as part of the 2015 Offshore Petroleum Exploration Acreage Release. Bidding closed on 21 April 2016 and one company lodged a bid and was offered a petroleum exploration permit but subsequently declined the offer and did not state its reasons for doing so.

According to Geoscience Australia's data repository records, five petroleum and five service provider companies expressed interest in data from the five main seismic surveys that intersect the T15-3 release area. It is not possible to comment on whether the information obtained from Geoscience Australia translated into a decision-making process about bidding on the release area or not.

Geoscience Australia views the Sorell Basin as a 'lightly explored' region that deserves a closer look. Previous exploration identified the presence of a liquid petroleum system (oil shows in Cape Sorell 1) and modelling suggests that source rocks in the region mature enough in parts of the basin to be capable of expelling hydrocarbons. From a geological inventory point of view the sedimentary succession filling the basin is largely similar to that of the Otway Basin. However, more work is needed to improve the understanding of the nature and distribution of sedimentary rock types and geological ages in the Sorell Basin.