

Economics Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
Industry, Innovation and Science Portfolio
2015-16 Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearing
22 October 2015

AGENCY: NOPSEMA

TOPIC: Assessment Process

REFERENCE: Written Question – Senator Xenophon

QUESTION No.: SI-76

Under the OPGGS Act, it appears that consultations on environment plans are the responsibility of the proponent. While in cases where an Offshore Project Proposal is required (in addition to an environment plan), NOPSEMA manages a more structured consultation period process (Section 5C). Exploration drilling does not however require an Offshore Project Proposal.

On what basis is this distinction, as to the robustness and management of public consultation processes, made between exploration and production drilling?

ANSWER

Requirements for consultation under the environment plan process apply equally to both exploration and production drilling activities. The consultation process provides for iterative two way consultation between titleholders and persons whose functions, interests or activities may be affected by an offshore petroleum activity. This robust consultation process applies equally to all activities that are required to have an environment plan in place.

Offshore project proposals (OPP) are an additional requirement placed on offshore projects which are defined under the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2009 as: *“one or more activities that are undertaken for the purpose of the recovery of petroleum, other than on an appraisal basis, including any conveyance of recovered petroleum by pipeline (whether or not the activity is undertaken for other purposes)”*.

OPPs are project level documents that cover multiple activities over the full lifecycle of an offshore project from drilling through to decommissioning.

OPP's are ordinarily submitted to NOPSEMA in the concept select phase of large offshore developments before all of the detailed information on each of the activities covered by the OPP are finalised.

These early stage documents are subject to a mandatory public comment period of a minimum of four weeks. This public comment period is a one way communication mechanism by which any party may provide comment on a particular development concept covered by the proposal.

Once an OPP is accepted by NOPSEMA all activities under that OPP must also have a detailed activity specific environment plan accepted. Each of these environment plans are subject to the iterative consultation process described above.