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Streamlining offshore regulations will deliver dividend for Australia

The oil and gas industry has welcomed Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt's endorsement of streamlined approvals processes for offshore oil and gas operations that maintains existing high environmental safeguards.

Minister Hunt has endorsed making the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) the sole environmental approvals assessor for offshore petroleum activities in Commonwealth waters. This concludes a process initiated in 2013 by the Gillard Government.

Previously, companies required equivalent approvals from two Federal Government bodies – NOPSEMA and the Department of Environment. This change removes the unnecessary duplication. Industry and interested members of the public will now have one point of contact and one regulatory approval system.

APPEA Chief Executive David Byers said this streamlining of environmental approvals would mean clearer approvals processes and increase returns to project developers, suppliers, government and the Australian people.

"By eliminating unnecessary duplication, this move will save taxpayers and industry millions of dollars without impairing environmental outcomes. It will reduce costs and delays for companies undertaking offshore exploration and production activities. But it will also reduce costs for regulatory agencies and taxpayers.

"This is an important early step in the federal government's move towards 'one-stop shops' for environmental approvals and for its deregulation agenda as a whole.

"Policies that undermine the development of energy projects and curtail energy production impose real costs on Australia through lost jobs, forgone economic growth and higher energy bills.

"The oil and gas industry welcomes the bipartisan approach that the major parties have taken to this important issue."

Several independent reviews in recent years have recommended streamlining of processes, including the Productivity Commission Report on Mineral and Energy Resource Exploration, the Productivity Commission Report on Major Project Development Assessment Processes, and the Hawke Review.

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