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Oil and gas exploration is vital for Australia's energy security

Banning oil and gas exploration in the Great Australian Bight would potentially increase Australia's reliance on imported oil and deprive South Australia of much-needed new investment and jobs while delivering no environmental benefit.

APPEA Director South Australia Matthew Doman said legislation introduced in the Senate today by the Greens was unnecessary and economically damaging.

Mr Doman said any exploration in the Bight would only proceed under the highest environmental standards and only after intense scrutiny by the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA).

"NOPSEMA does not allow any petroleum activities to proceed without the highest standards of environment and safety legislation, and appropriate community consultation," Mr Doman said.

"The legislation proposed by the Greens would undermine NOPSEMA's independence and integrity and the regulatory certainty that is necessary to attract new investment in offshore exploration.

"Australia already imports most of its oil. Unless new discoveries are made, we will soon be relying on imports for all of our transport fuels.

"Companies that are prepared to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in exploration activity should be allowed to get on with the job.

"With proper regulatory oversight, there's no reason why South Australia cannot have a safe, sustainable offshore petroleum industry, just Victoria and Western Australia have had for several decades.

"The potential benefits in terms of jobs, investment and revenues to government could be significant."

Mr Doman said oil and gas exploration, as well as other commercial activities such as fishing, had been allowed in the Great Australian Bight marine reserve since 1995 and a recent government review had recommended no change to its multiple use status.

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