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Senate Committee majority supports Great Australian Bight exploration

After hearing evidence from regulators, community groups and the industry, another Senate Inquiry has reported with a clear majority of its voting members supporting oil and gas activities in the Great Australian Bight, subject to robust regulatory standards.

The Senate Environment and Communications References Committee today tabled its report into oil or gas production in the Great Australian Bight, with chair Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young predictably the only one of six voting members to oppose exploration and development.

The report follows the March report from the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee which rejected Senator Hanson-Young's Private Member's Bill seeking to ban oil exploration.

APPEA Director South Australia Matthew Doman said it was pleasing that petroleum exploration in the Great Australian Bight continued to receive bipartisan support.

"Australia's offshore oil and gas industry has a long track record of safe operations and low environmental impact," Mr Doman said.

"In recent years, the regulatory framework has been enhanced by the creation of a strong, independent regulator, the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Authority (NOPSEMA), which does not allow petroleum activities to proceed without satisfying the highest standards of environment and safety management, and appropriate community consultation.

"Australia has had, for decades, a safe, sustainable offshore petroleum industry in Victorian and Western Australian waters. There is absolutely no reason to doubt that South Australia can also support exploration and development in harmony with its marine environment.

"The economic benefits could be enormous. While it is very early days, success in the Bight would attract substantial investment to South Australia and see significant local job creation – something the state desperately needs."

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