



16 March 2018

Offshore oil and gas exploration should be supported

Oil and gas activity in the Great Australian Bight would mean significant economic benefits for South Australia but will only proceed under the strictest environmental safeguards.

APPEA Director South Australia Matthew Doman said claims by the Greens and activist groups on the eve of the state election had grossly overstated the risk from underwater seismic testing.

“Seismic testing is a low-risk, well understood technology that is the first step in understanding what lies beneath the ocean floor,” Mr Doman said.

“Seismic has been used for decades in Australian waters with no evidence of whales being harmed. In fact, whale populations are increasing significantly, including in areas with long-standing oil and gas operations.

“Likewise, fisheries in regions that host oil and gas activities continue to be some of the most productive in Australia.”

Mr Doman said South Australians could be confident that any oil and gas activity in the Bight would only be allowed following rigorous and independent scientific assessment by Australia’s regulator, the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Authority (NOPSEMA), which has been operating since 2012.

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

“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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