

# Offshore Gas Victoria Drilling and P&A Activities Environment Plan

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## 1. Purpose of this report

NOPSEMA has accepted the Offshore Gas Victoria Drilling and P&A Activities Environment Plan (the EP) submitted by Beach Energy (Operations) Limited (“Beach Energy”) (the ‘titleholder’) for exploration drilling activities in the Otway Basin and plug and abandonment activities in the Otway and Bass Basins. The activity is scheduled to be completed between 1 January 2025 and 31 December 2028.

As required by the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2023 (the Environment Regulations), the public was provided with an opportunity to comment on the EP between 27 February 2024 and 28 March 2024. There were seven public comments received during the public comment period. After this period, Beach Energy took into account public comments and prepared a Report on Public Comment which is published on NOPSEMA’s website<sup>1</sup>.

Following the public comment period, the titleholder submitted the EP to NOPSEMA on 19 April 2024 for assessment. NOPSEMA has since completed its assessment of the EP and determined that it is reasonably satisfied that the EP meets the criteria for acceptance<sup>2</sup>. NOPSEMA made this decision on 06 February 2025.

This report summarises how NOPSEMA took public comments into account in making its decision. Where comments were received outside of the public comment period, these comments were not considered by NOPSEMA in its assessment of the EP<sup>3</sup>.

This report references the accepted Offshore Gas Victoria Drilling and P&A Activities EP (Document No. V-1000-P1-RP-0002, Revision 4) submitted by Beach Energy, which is available on the NOPSEMA website and should be referred to for further information.

### 1.1. Key matters that NOPSEMA took into account

During its assessment of the EP, NOPSEMA considered each public comment received during the public comment period<sup>4</sup> and identified the following relevant key matters:

- concerns about the identification and description of environment features in the EP;
- concerns about the identification, evaluation and management of environmental impacts and risks described in the EP;
- concerns about the suitability of information in the EP to support the evaluation and management of environmental impacts and risks;

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<sup>1</sup> Titleholder report on public comment – Offshore Gas Victoria Drilling Program, April 2024

<sup>2</sup> Environment Regulations, Regulation 34

<sup>3</sup> Environment Regulations, Regulation 30(6)(b)

<sup>4</sup> Environment Regulations, Regulation 30(6)(a)

- concerns about the impacts and risks of the activity specifically on shearwaters, penguins, diving birds, marine turtles, cetaceans, sharks, orange-bellied parrots and listed threatened species;
- concerns about the impact of the activity on tourism, commercial businesses and recreation;
- concerns about the impact of increased vessel traffic and the presence of exclusion zones on commercial and recreational fishing activities;
- concerns about the impacts of underwater noise emissions, light emissions, greenhouse gas emissions from the activity;
- concerns about the impacts of drilling discharges on the marine environment;
- concerns about the cumulative impacts of multiple activities occurring in the region;
- concerns about the risk of vessel strikes with marine fauna during the activity;
- concerns about the impacts of an oil pollution incident on the marine environment, including marine protected areas and sensitive receptors;
- concerns that the titleholder has not adequately evaluated the use of additional well control equipment to reduce impacts and risks to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP); and
- feedback relating to the titleholder's approach to identifying and consulting with 'relevant persons' for the purposes of regulation 25.

NOPSEMA took into account these public comments and relevant key matters, and also the Titleholder's Report on Public Comment<sup>5</sup> during the EP assessment process (in accordance with relevant NOPSEMA policies and procedures), in determining that it was reasonably satisfied that the EP met the criteria for acceptance<sup>6</sup>.

In relation to the key matters listed above, NOPSEMA concluded that the EP demonstrated that environmental impacts and risks of the activity will be reduced to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) and to an acceptable level. This is because, the EP demonstrated that:

- the costs of implementing any further control measures would be grossly disproportionate to the benefits to the environment that could be gained; and
- the defined acceptable levels of impact and risk were well informed (based on reasonable internal and external context, legislative and industry standards) and would be met for the duration of the activity.

In addition, NOPSEMA concluded that the EP demonstrated that the titleholder consulted with relevant persons in accordance with regulation 25 and that the measures that the titleholder has adopted, or proposes to adopt, because of the consultations are appropriate.

## **1.2. Information relevant to NOPSEMA's decision:**

In making the decision to accept this EP, NOPSEMA took into account:

- the Environment Regulations;

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<sup>5</sup> Titleholder report on public comments – Offshore Gas Victoria Drilling Program, April 2024

<sup>6</sup> Environment Regulations, Regulation 34

- NOPSEMA Assessment Policy (PL0050), Environment Plan Assessment Policy (PL1347), Environment Plan Decision Making Guidelines (GL1721), Environment Plan Content Requirement Guidance Note (GN1344) and Consultation in the course of preparing an Environment Plan Guideline (GL2086);
- the OGV Drilling and P&A Activities Environment Plan (Document No. V-1000-P1-RP-0002, Revision 4), which includes the titleholder's Oil Pollution Emergency Plan (Document No. CDN/ID 18986979, Revision 4) and Operational and Scientific Monitoring Plan (Document No. CDN/ID S4100AH717908, Revision 6b);
- the information provided and objections or claims raised by relevant persons through the relevant persons consultation process;
- the comments raised during the public comment period;
- relevant plans of management and threatened species recovery plans developed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and relevant guidance published by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW); and
- relevant legislative requirements that apply to the activity and are relevant to the environmental management of the activity.

## 2. Next steps

Responsibility for the ongoing environmental performance of the petroleum activity remains, at all times, with Beach Energy.

NOPSEMA has legislated responsibilities to inspect and investigate offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas storage activities, and to enforce compliance with environmental law. These functions will be applied to this activity in accordance with NOPSEMA's policies.

## 3. Sensitive Information

Sensitive information received during the public comment period, such as the names and contact details of commenters and specific information identified by the commenter or relevant person as 'sensitive', is not published in this report. Sensitive information is contained in a sensitive information part of the EP which has been considered by NOPSEMA during its assessment process.

## 4. Further information

If you would like further information about the activity, please contact the titleholder's nominated liaison person specified in the EP and on NOPSEMA's webpage for the activity.

If you would like to be notified of regulatory information on the activity, such as start and end dates and enforcement actions (if any), please subscribe to updates from the [Underway Offshore page](#) on NOPSEMA's website.