

Acceptance of the Gorgon Gas Development: Backfill Fields Offshore Project Proposal

Document No: A1268619

Date: Thursday, 6 November 2025

1. On Tuesday, 14 October 2025 I, Charmain FitzGerald, as the Acting Chief Executive Officer (**CEO**) of the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (**NOPSEMA**), decided, pursuant to s 13(1)(a) of the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2023 (Environment Regulations)*, to accept the Gorgon Gas Development: Backfill Fields Offshore Project Proposal (Document No: ACP-0000-RGL-PLN-CVX-000-00001-00, Revision 6.0, dated Friday, 26 September 2025) (**OPP**), as I was reasonably satisfied that the OPP met the criteria in s 13(4) of the Environment Regulations.
2. The decision to accept an OPP for the purposes of s 13 of the Environment Regulations is made by NOPSEMA. Pursuant to sub-s 666(2) of the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006 (OPGGG Act)*, anything done by the CEO in the name of NOPSEMA is taken to have been done by NOPSEMA.
3. The OPP was submitted by Chevron Australia Pty Ltd (**proponent**) to enable the proponent to undertake the offshore project described in the OPP, which involves the production of petroleum resources in the Carnarvon Basin, in offshore waters off Western Australia. The petroleum activities that are part of the offshore project include drilling, installation, commissioning, production, and decommissioning of infrastructure. The offshore project ties into existing offshore petroleum infrastructure, which is operated by the proponent, to supply hydrocarbon products to international and Western Australian domestic markets via the existing Gorgon Gas Treatment Plant (**the GTP**).
4. In this Statement of Reasons:
 - a. When I refer to NOPSEMA having considered or having had regard to a matter, whether it be expressed in those words or similar phrasing, I am referring to a matter that I have considered or taken into account; and
 - b. When I refer to NOPSEMA making a finding of fact or accepting a submission, I am referring to a finding made by me.
5. In making this decision, I have taken into account and accepted advice and recommendations from the assessment team within NOPSEMA. The assessment team comprised a Director, a Lead Assessor, and a team of Environment Specialists.



6. The assessment team scoped the assessment of the OPP in accordance with NOPSEMA's assessment policy and guidance material. The assessment scope consisted of:
 - a. a general assessment of the OPP
 - b. topic scope assessments comprising:
 - i. matters protected under Part 3 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*
 - ii. emissions and discharges (planned), with a focus on:
 - A. greenhouse gas emissions
 - B. discharges to the marine environment
 - iii. physical effects.
7. All references to a section are to the Environment Regulations unless otherwise stated.
8. Other terms used in this Statement of Reasons may be defined in the Environment Regulations and the OPGGS Act and have the same meaning as under the Environment Regulations or OPGGS Act.

Background

9. On Tuesday, 12 December 2023, the proponent submitted the OPP to NOPSEMA in accordance with s 6 of the Environment Regulations.
10. The OPP was published on Friday, 8 August 2024, having met the criteria in sub-s 9(4) of the Environment Regulations as being suitable for publication, with an 85 day (approximately 12 week) public comment period being found to be appropriate.
11. On Friday, 9 August 2024 the public comment period commenced.
12. On Monday, 4 November 2024 the public comment period concluded.
13. On Wednesday, 4 December 2024 the proponent revised and resubmitted the OPP following the public comment period in accordance with s 11 of the Environment Regulations.
14. The proponent was requested to provide further written information under s 12(1) of the Environment Regulations on Friday, 7 February 2025. The proponent revised the OPP in response to this request and resubmitted the OPP on Monday, 19 May 2025.
15. The proponent was requested to provide further written information under s 12(1) of the Environment Regulations on Thursday, 3 July 2025. The proponent revised the OPP in response to this request and resubmitted the OPP on Monday, 11 August 2025.
16. The proponent was requested to provide further written information under s 12(1) of the Environment Regulations on Tuesday, 10 September 2024. The proponent revised the OPP in response to this request and resubmitted the OPP on Friday, 26 September 2025.

Materials

17. The materials considered in making this decision are set out in **Appendix A** and are referenced, where relevant, in the reasons below.

Criteria for Acceptance of the Offshore Project Proposal

18. As the proponent had resubmitted the OPP under s 11 of the Environment Regulations, in order to accept the OPP, I had to be reasonably satisfied that the criteria in s 13(4) were met.

The OPP Adequately Addresses Comments Given During the Public Comment Period: Section 13(4)(a)

19. I was reasonably satisfied that the OPP meets the requirements of sub-s 13(4)(a) and adequately addresses comments given during the public comment period because of the reasons set out below.
20. I was reasonably satisfied that the OPP adequately addressed comments given during the period for public comment because Appendix G the OPP:
- a. comprehensively summarised the eight comments received during the public comment period.
 - b. clearly identified the objections and claims made in the public comments about the offshore project or any activity that is part of the offshore project.
 - c. assessed the merits of each objection or claim identified within the public comments about the project or any activity that is part of the project and considered the facts, reasons, and evidence to support the conclusions of the assessment.
 - d. included a statement of the proponent's response to each objection or claim raised through public comment and suitable reasoning to support the response
 - e. summarised the changes that were made to the OPP in response to the public comments.
21. I was also reasonably satisfied the proponent's responses to public comments were adequate because they had a basis in relevant facts, reasons, and evidence, which supported the response to the objections and claims and, where applicable, presented further information that had a basis in relevant facts and evidence from appropriate scientific literature.

The OPP is Appropriate for the Nature and Scale of the Project: Section 13(4)(b)

22. I was reasonably satisfied that the OPP meets the requirements of sub-s 13(4)(b) being appropriate for the nature and scale of the offshore project because of the reasons set out below.
23. In coming to my decision, I had regard the NOPSEMA Offshore Project Proposal Decision Making Guideline (N-04790-GL1816) which expects the level of rigour and effort applied to

addressing the various content requirements, and evaluating impacts and risks, to be commensurate to the potential impacts and risks to the environment.

24. Examples of how the OPP considers nature and scale include:

- a. identifying, and giving appropriate weight, to matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act when evaluating impacts and risks
- b. providing greater detail and analysis in the descriptions and evaluations of high consequence impacts and risks compared to lower consequence impacts and risks
- c. providing levels of environmental performance that protect particularly sensitive environments and outstanding environmental values, which include:
 - i. pygmy blue whales, which are known to migrate through the Development Area
 - ii. sediment quality, water quality, and benthic habitats within the Development Area, which are parts of the Commonwealth marine environment

25. I found that the OPP described a clear and logical process for identifying the various key characteristics and activities of the project, particularly those that have the potential to impact the environment. This is because the OPP:

- a. clearly and logically describes the process by which the OPP evaluates environmental impacts and risks, which aligns with recognised environmental impact and risk management standards (e.g., AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018 and HB 203:2012) (Section 7 of the OPP)
- b. applies the environmental risk management process described in Section 7 of the OPP consistently to the planned impacts and unplanned risks that may credibly arise because of the project
- c. clearly describes the activities that are part of the project, including the spatial and temporal extent of these activities (Section 4 of the OPP)
- d. identifies the environmental aspects of these activities and describes the pathways by which the aspects may cause an environmental impact (Section 8 of the OPP)
- e. describes the environment that may be affected by the aspects of the activities that are part of the project (Section 6.1 of the OPP).

26. I found Section 4 of the OPP contained an adequate description which defines the scope and bounds of the offshore project. The description provided a sound basis for the proponent to evaluate all environmental impacts and risks, including the potential for cumulative impacts. This is because the OPP provided details on the petroleum activities, including their location,

spatial extent, timing, and duration. Key activities noted in the OPP that are part of the offshore project include:

- a. geophysical and geotechnical seabed surveys, including pre-installation and as-built surveys, throughout the development
- b. drilling of up to 40 wells
- c. installation and commissioning of the subsea infrastructure for gathering and transporting the produced hydrocarbons to the existing Gorgon Foundation Project pipelines
- d. operation of the project infrastructure, including inspection, maintenance, and repair activities as required
- e. decommissioning of the subsea infrastructure and plugging of wells
- f. support activities (e.g., vessel, helicopter, and remotely operated vehicle operations) throughout all phases of the project.

27. I found the OPP bound activities for which there is uncertainty by clearly defining the Development Area and limiting all petroleum activities that are part of the offshore project to within the Development Area.
28. I found the OPP identified uncertainty in some details of the project's activities which were not resolved at the time of this decision, such as the exact locations of wells and subsea infrastructure and the timing of the development activities. I found the proponent cannot reasonably resolve uncertainty in some details of the project's activities at the time of the submission of the OPP to NOPSEMA. Where aspects of the offshore project and the activities that are part of the offshore project are uncertain, I found that assumptions made such as for source levels and durations for activities that generate underwater noise, were appropriate and supported with adequate reasoning.
29. I found Section 7 of the OPP described a clear and logical process for identifying environmental aspects of the petroleum activities that are part of the project. The environmental aspects of these activities are described in Section 8 of the OPP in appropriate detail. The descriptions of benthic habitats, hydrocarbon spills, underwater noise emissions, and greenhouse gas emissions, are informed and supported by a series of technical reports which are appended to the OPP.
30. I found Section 7 of the OPP set out a clear and logical process for identifying and describing relevant values and sensitivities of the environment that may be affected by the project and provides a description of the environment that is adequate to inform the evaluation of impacts and risks. For example, the OPP:
- a. defined the environment that may be affected by hydrocarbon spill scenarios based on stochastic hydrocarbon spill modelling studies. These studies considered the worst-case credible hydrocarbon spills that may occur during the project and aggregated the results of



hundreds of deterministic model runs with varying meteorological and oceanographic conditions. Results of these studies are presented in Appendix D of the OPP

- b. used the environment that may be affected to define spatial extent for the description of the environment in Section 6 of the OPP
- c. used the EPBC Act protected matters search tool (PMST) reports (Appendix B to the OPP) to identify matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act and other matters protected by the EPBC Act in the Development Area and the environment that may be affected by a worst-case hydrocarbon spill
- d. used environmental survey reports commissioned by the proponent (Appendix A to the OPP) to characterise the benthic habitats and communities, sediment quality, and water quality in the Development Area
- e. used modelling studies to predict the spatial extent of the environment that may be affected by underwater noise emissions, light emissions, and hydrocarbon spills, using appropriate impact thresholds to estimate the nature and scale of these environmental aspects and their associated impacts and risks.

31. I found the process described in paragraph 30 of this statement of reasons was applied appropriately throughout Sections 8 and 9 of the OPP when considering the nature and scale of the environmental impacts and risks associated with the project.

32. I found the description of the environment that may be affected by the project includes adequate supporting information to inform the evaluations of environmental impacts and risks, with greater detail provided on environmental sensitivities most likely to be impacted or at risk due to the project, including descriptions of:

- a. the physical characteristics of the environment, such as water quality, sediment quality, and bathymetry, supported by the environmental survey report provided as Appendix A of the OPP
- b. ecosystems, habitats, species, and biological communities
- c. Commonwealth and state protected areas
- d. socio-economic features such as shipping, defence, petroleum exploration and production, tourism and recreation, and Commonwealth and State managed commercial fisheries.
- e. cultural features and heritage values.

33. I found the OPP describes relevant values and sensitivities of the environment listed under Part 3 of the EPBC Act that may be affected by the project (Section 6 of the OPP), including:

- a. World Heritage Properties and National heritage Places, none of which occur in the Development Area

- b. relevant values of the Commonwealth marine area described in the *Marine Bioregional Plan for the North-west Marine Region* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012), including water quality, sediment quality, bathymetry, seabed features, benthic habitats and communities, and key ecological features
- c. species listed as threatened or migratory under the EPBC Act, including biologically important areas and habitats critical for the survival of a species for threatened and migratory species, and relevant information from plans, policies, and guidance published under the EPBC Act.

34. I found the OPP identified and described the key ecological features defined in the *Marine Bioregional Plan for the North-west Marine Region* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012) that overlap the Development Area and the environment that may be affected (Table 6-20 of the OPP). Environmental survey results of parts of the key ecological features within the Development Area are presented in Appendix A of the OPP. Each key ecological feature is appropriately considered in the impact and risk evaluations in the OPP for these aspects:

- a. seabed disturbance (Section 8.1 of the OPP)
- b. planned subsea discharges (Section 8.7 of the OPP)
- c. drilling discharges (Section 8.8 of the OPP).
- d. hydrocarbon spill evaluations (Sections 8.14 and 8.15 of the OPP).

35. I found that the OPP identified and described the feasible alternatives to the project and the activities that are part of the project (Section 5 of the OPP), including:

- a. clearly describing an appropriate decision-making process and assessment criteria used to compare the feasible alternatives (Section 5.1 of the OPP)
- b. identifying and comparing the feasible concept alternatives for the project, with appropriate justifications presented for:
 - i. the selected development concept (i.e., Option 4 in Table 5-3 of the OPP, which is a subsea development tying back to existing infrastructure)
 - ii. rejection of alternative development concepts
- c. identifying and comparing the feasible design and activity alternatives for the selected development concept.

36. Where more than one design alternatives are being carried as an option (e.g., mobile offshore drilling unit type selection), the OPP includes appropriate descriptions of the alternatives being carried and evaluations of the environmental impacts and risks.

The OPP Appropriately Identifies and Evaluates the Environmental Impacts and Risks of the Activities that are Part of the Project: Section 13(4)(c)

37. I was reasonably satisfied that the OPP meets the requirements of sub-s 13(4)(c) and appropriately identifies and evaluates the environmental impacts and risks of the activities that are part of the project for the reasons set out below.
38. As described in paragraph 30 of this statement of reasons, I found the OPP described a clear and logical process for identifying, describing, and evaluating environmental impacts and risk, which has been consistently applied to the environmental aspects of the project.
39. I found that Section 7 of the OPP sets out a logical, evidence-based process consistent with relevant standards (e.g., AS/NZS ISO 31000:2018 and HB 203:2012) to identify, describe, and evaluate environmental impacts and risks arising from the project. The OPP applies the process described in Section 7 of the OPP to each of the environmental aspects of the project, which results in the OPP providing:
- a. descriptions of impacts and risks arising from the project's aspects supported by appropriate reference to evidence, such as technical studies and scientific literature
 - b. outcomes and conclusions of the impact and risk evaluation supported with logical, clear and well-founded evidence and reasons
 - c. a comparison of the predicted environmental impacts of the project, and the activities that are part of the project, with the defined acceptable levels and the considerations listed in paragraph 52 of this statement of reasons
 - d. an assessment of the potential cumulative impacts of the project with other activities.
40. In deciding the OPP met the requirements of s 13(4)(c), I placed considerable weight on the following:
- a. Sections 6, 8 and 9 of the OPP which appropriately identified and described the key physical, biological, social, economic, and cultural features, values and sensitivities of the environment that overlap with the environment that may be affected by the project and the Development Area. I considered that the OPP considered relevant information sources to adequately inform and support the descriptions, such as contemporary peer-reviewed scientific literature and studies undertaken by the proponent.
 - b. Sections 8 and 9 of the OPP appropriately identify and describe the environmental aspects of the project which may result in environmental impacts and risks, with the level of detail commensurate to the potential consequences of the impacts and risks
 - c. Each environmental aspect of the project is consistently evaluated using the process described in Section 7 of the OPP. Each evaluation considers the context provided by the descriptions of the environmental aspects and the descriptions of the environmental values and sensitivities that may be impacted by the aspects.

41. I found the OPP does the following in relation to environmental impacts and risks to matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act:

- a. applies a logical process to identify and describe the matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act that may be present within the project area and the environment that may be affected by the project
- b. includes relevant information to adequately inform and support the descriptions, such as the Bioregional Plan for the North-west Marine Region (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012), threat abatement plans, threatened species recovery plans, and marine bioregional plans
- c. describes the environmental aspects, including impact pathways, which may impact upon matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act
- d. considers plans of management, recovery plans, policy statements, and other material created under the EPBC Act relevant to the evaluation of impacts and risks to matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act.

42. I found the OPP does the following in relation to environmental impacts and risks arising from greenhouse gas emissions:

- a. identifies and describes the greenhouse gas emissions that may arise from the project, including indirect emissions from the transportation and end use of the hydrocarbon produced by the project
- b. provides credible estimates of the amount of greenhouse gas emissions that may occur as a result of the project using appropriate quantification methods
- c. describes the key international arrangements, Australian legislative framework, and the company strategy and actions relevant to greenhouse gas emissions. For example, the OPP considers:
 - i. the Paris Agreement, which Australia has ratified
 - ii. the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (NGER) Scheme
 - iii. the Safeguard Mechanism, under which the Gorgon Operations facility is registered; the GTP is part of the Gorgon Operations facility and will process and store the hydrocarbons produced by the project
 - iv. the proponent's measures to monitor and manage greenhouse gas emissions from the project.
- d. describes the impacts of climate change on the Australian environment with reference to literature such as the *State of the Climate 2024* (Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO, 2024) and the Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

- e. evaluates the impacts from the project's contribution to the inventory of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (Section 8.3.13 of the OPP).
43. In coming to my decision, I had regard to s 527E of the EPBC Act and the EPBC Act Policy Statement 'Indirect consequences of an action: Section 527E of the EPBC Act', in relation to greenhouse gas emissions. I considered the indirect downstream scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions that will be generated by transport and use of the petroleum products produced by the project to be indirect consequences of the project that would likely fall within the definition of 'impact' under the Environment Regulations and within the context of s 527E of the EPBC Act.
44. I found the OPP acknowledges the project will contribute to the concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and that greenhouse gases in the atmosphere contribute to climate change. The OPP claims that the physical effects of climate change on Australian environmental values and sensitivities cannot reasonably be attributed to any single development's greenhouse gas emissions, and that the effects of climate change are cumulative from all emissions sources (Section 8.3.12 of the OPP). I accept this claim. I found the descriptions of the effects of climate change in the OPP provide context for the associated impact evaluation, but I did not take these descriptions to be indicative of the effects of the project's emissions alone.
45. I found the OPP does the following in relation to environmental impacts and risks resulting from planned discharges to the sea considered in Sections 8.6, 8.7, and 8.8 of the OPP:
- a. describes the features of the environment, such as water quality, benthic habitats, and marine fauna, that may be impacted by planned discharges
 - b. identifies, quantifies, and describes discharges to sea, with greater detail provided for discharge streams that have higher potential consequences
 - c. evaluates the environmental impacts and risks from the planned discharges to the sea with appropriate consideration of relevant literature and the context described above in paragraphs 45.a and 45.b of this statement of reasons
46. I found the OPP does the following in relation to environmental impacts and risks resulting from physical effects, such as seabed disturbance (Section 8.1 of the OPP):
- a. identifies and describes the benthic habitats within the Development Area in an appropriate level of detail, making reference to the environmental survey results presented in Appendix A of the OPP
 - b. acknowledges uncertainty in benthic habitats that may be impacted by the project as the Development Area has not been completely surveyed and the locations of activities that will disturb the seabed have not been finalised
 - i. this uncertainty is appropriately considered and addressed through control measures and is considered in paragraph 47 of this statement of reasons.



- c. identifies and describes environmental values identified in the Bioregional Plan for the North-west Marine Region (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012), including the key ecological features within the Development Area (Section 6.3.1.1 and 6.3.6.1 of the OPP), that may be impacted by the physical effects aspects of the project
- d. evaluates the environmental impacts and risks from the physical effects aspects of the project with appropriate consideration of relevant literature and the context described above in paragraphs 46.a, 46.b, and 46.c of this statement of reasons.

47. I found the OPP acknowledges and accounts for uncertainty associated with predicted environmental impacts of the project. Uncertainty arises from the level of detail available at the time of submission of the OPP on the petroleum activities (see paragraph 28 of this statement of reasons) which compounds as uncertainty in the evaluations of environmental impacts and risks because the evaluations are predicated on the high level descriptions of the activities. The OPP considers uncertainty commensurate with the degree of predictive uncertainty, intensity, severity and duration of impacts and the environmental value of the receptors that may be affected. The OPP includes commitments to resolve uncertainty, such as committing to undertaking seabed surveys (EPO-02) and adaptive management of potential underwater noise impacts to pygmy blue whales (Section 10.4 of the OPP).

The OPP Demonstrates that the Environmental Impacts and Risks will be Managed to an Acceptable Level: Section 13(4)(d)

48. I was reasonably satisfied that the OPP meets the requirements of subsection 13(4)(d) and demonstrates that the environmental impacts and risks of the project will be managed to an acceptable level for the reasons set out below.
49. The demonstrations that the environmental impacts and risks of the project will be acceptable rely on the appropriate identification, characterisation, and evaluation of the environmental impacts and risks. Refer to paragraphs 37 to 47 of this statement of reasons where I explain why I was reasonably satisfied the OPP appropriately identifies and evaluates the environmental impacts and risks of the activities that are part of the project.
50. I found the description of the project in Section 4 of the OPP limits the activities that comprise the project. These include limitations on the location, duration, and types of activities that may be undertaken.
51. Subsection 26(3)(a) of the Environment Regulations provides that environment plans for activities that are part of an offshore project can only be submitted if the activities in the environment plan are included in an OPP, which ensures that the project activities described in subsequent environment plans will be consistent with, and limited to, those described in the OPP. By limiting the activities to those described in in Section 4 of the OPP, I was reasonably satisfied that unacceptable impacts arising from activities that are not described would not occur.

52. I found the OPP applied a clear and logical process for determining whether the environmental impacts and risks of the project are acceptable. The OPP describes this process in Section 7.7 of the OPP and applies the process to each environmental aspect considered in the OPP. The process in Section 7.7 describes:
- a. comparing the predicted levels of environmental impact and risk with the acceptable levels of impact and risk set out in Section 7.6 of the OPP
 - b. evaluating whether the predicted levels of environmental impact and risk are consistent with the relevant principles of ecologically sustainable development
 - c. evaluating whether the predicted levels of environmental impact and risk, along with the environmental performance outcomes and control measures, are consistent with the identified relevant requirements
 - d. demonstrating how the predicted levels of environmental impact and risk, along with the environmental performance outcomes and control measures, are consistent with the proponent's internal context (e.g., policies, processes, etc.)
 - e. demonstrating how the proponent has considered the external context provided by public comments and stakeholder engagement (described in Appendix G and Section 3 of the OPP respectively) in evaluating the environmental impacts and risks of the project.
53. The proponent sets out acceptable levels of environmental impact and risk in Section 7.6 of the OPP, which I take to define the point beyond which environmental impacts and risks may be unacceptable. The process by which the proponent defined the acceptable levels of environmental impact and risk considered:
- a. principles of ecologically sustainable development
 - b. legislative and other requirements
 - c. environmental policy objectives from recovery plans, threat abatement plans, and conservation advice made under the EPBC Act
 - d. internal context, such as the proponent's policies, culture, processes, standards, and systems
 - e. external context of the existing environment and stakeholder expectations.
54. I found the acceptable levels of impact and risk set out in Section 7.6 and Table 7-6 of the OPP are:
- a. based on analysis of relevant facts and evidence, which is described in the 'justification' column of Table 7-6 of the OPP
 - b. consistent with the process, and have appropriate regard for the considerations which are described in paragraphs 52 and 53 above of this statement or reasons

55. Examples of relevant considerations made in the justifications for the acceptable levels of impact include:

- a. the Marine Bioregional Plan for the North-West Marine Region (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012), including the key ecological features established by the plan that are relevant to the project
- b. the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- c. relevant requirements in legislation, such as the *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018*, the *National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007*, the EPBC Act, and the OPGGS Act
- d. relevant plans of management, recovery plans, policy statements, and other material made under the EPBC Act

56. I found the OPP includes a demonstration of acceptability in the evaluation of each environmental aspect of the project (Section 8 of the OPP). Each demonstration:

- a. compares the predicted impacts and risks to the relevant defined acceptable levels in Section 7.6 of the OPP and demonstrates that the predicted levels are equal to, or less than, the defined acceptable levels
- b. consistently applies the process set out in Section 7 of the OPP for each environmental impact and risk evaluation; refer to paragraph 39 of this statement of reasons for why I found this process appropriate
- c. establishes environmental performance outcomes for each environmental aspect which, supported by control measures, provide the assurance that the environmental impacts and risks will be managed to an acceptable level.

57. I found the environmental performance outcomes established by the OPP set measurable levels of environmental performance that are relevant to the management of the environmental impacts and risks of the project. By setting measurable levels of environmental performance, the environmental performance outcomes limit the environmental impacts and risks of the project. I consider environmental performance outcomes further in paragraphs 74 to 81 of this statement of reasons.

58. I found the OPP consistently sets out the acceptable levels of impact and risk and the environmental performance outcomes (and associated control measures) for each environmental aspect. In reviewing these, I found that the environmental performance outcomes consistently set a level of environmental performance equal to, or better than, the limits established by the acceptable levels. I was reasonably satisfied that the environmental impacts and risks would be acceptable through the proponent achieving the environmental performance outcomes.

59. Subsection 21(7)b) requires environment plans for activities to set out environmental performance outcomes. Section 3.7.2 of NOPSEMA's Environment Plan Content Requirements Guidance Note (N-04750-GN1344) states that environmental performance outcomes in an

environment plan under an OPP must be consistent with those set out in the OPP. I was reasonably satisfied that this guidance, in conjunction with NOPSEMA's environment plan assessment processes, will result in the environmental performance outcomes set out in the OPP being given effect in the environment plans for the activities described in the OPP.

60. I found the OPP sets out control measures in association with the environmental performance outcomes. Control measures as defined in s 5 are not required be included in an OPP. However, this OPP includes control measures which, although not strictly consistent with the definition, I considered to be useful to show how the proponent may achieve the associated environmental performance outcomes. I therefore gave weight to them when deciding whether the OPP demonstrates that the impacts and risks of the project will be managed to an acceptable level.
61. I found the OPP makes clear commitments to achieve the environmental performance outcomes and then implement the controls associated with the outcomes. Section 10 of the OPP outlines key parts of the environmental management system that will be applied when undertaking the project and activities that are part of the project. Key parts of the proponent's environmental management system described in the OPP include:
- a. the Operational Excellence management system described in Section 10.1 of the OPP and supported by the management systems described in Sections 10.2 and 10.3 of the OPP.
 - b. the adaptive management framework for managing underwater noise impacts to pygmy blue whales described in Section 10.4 of the OPP. I placed considerable weight on this adaptive management framework when deciding that impacts and risks from underwater noise to pygmy blue whales were acceptable and consistent with the requirements of the EPBC Act Program; refer to paragraphs 85 to 92 for further consideration of the EPBC Act Program.
 - c. the assurance and investigation and reporting arrangements described in Sections 10.6 and 10.7 of the OPP. I was reasonably satisfied that these arrangements will result in the proponent verifying the commitments in the OPP will be met and, in the event they are not met, undertake appropriate corrective actions
62. I found the OPP demonstrates that the environmental impacts of the project would not contravene a plan of management for a World Heritage property; a plan of management for a National Heritage place; or a plan of management for a Ramsar wetland.
63. The requirement for environment plans to be accepted by NOPSEMA prior to commencing petroleum activities that are part of the offshore project, which is acknowledged repeatedly in the OPP, provided me with further assurance that impacts and risks will continue to be managed to an acceptable level over the life of the project.



64. I found NOPSEMA's assessment of the OPP in relation to s 13(4)(d) focussed on the acceptability of higher order environmental impacts and risks which are covered in the detailed assessment topics listed in paragraph 6 of this statement of reasons.
65. In relation to environmental impacts and risks to matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act, I found:
- a. the OPP defines acceptable levels of impacts and risks that are applicable to matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act that may be impacted by the project which, among others, are set out in Table 7-6 of the OPP.
 - b. the sources and justifications for these acceptable levels of impact set out in Table 7-6 include consideration of, or are consistent with, documents published under the EPBC Act, such as:
 - i. the Marine Bioregional Plan for the North-west Marine Region (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012)
 - ii. recovery plans for the threatened species
 - iii. the Threat Abatement Plan for the Impact of Marine Debris on the Vertebrate Wildlife of Australia's Coasts and Oceans (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018).
 - c. the demonstrations of acceptability for environmental aspects that may impact upon matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act appropriately consider relevant material published under the EPBC Act, such as conservation advice, recovery plans, threat abatement plans, and guidelines, and show that the offshore project will not be inconsistent with such material.
 - d. the environmental performance outcomes in the OPP provide for an acceptable level of impact to World Heritage Properties, National Heritage Properties, Ramsar Wetlands, and Threatened Ecological Communities. None of these protected matters occur within the Development Area. These protected matters would only measurably be impacted by the project through accidental hydrocarbon spills. Environmental performance outcomes EPO-37 and EPO-38 set the level of environmental performance at 'no spills', which provides an appropriate level of environmental performance to protect these matters.
 - e. EPO-11 to EPO-23, EPO-34, and EPO-36 to EPO-38, and their associated control measures, are appropriate to manage impacts and risks to species listed as threatened or migratory under the EPBC Act to an acceptable level.
 - f. EPO-01 to EPO-06, EPO-10 to EPO-32, and EPO-34 to EPO-38, and their associated control measures, are appropriate to manage impacts to the Commonwealth marine environment to an acceptable level.
 - g. the offshore project will not be carried out in a way that is inconsistent with relevant EPBC Act recovery plans for listed threatened species. For example, AL-13 establish that impacts from the project that are inconsistent with recovery plans are unacceptable.



- h. relevant policy and guidance documents have been used by the proponent to support the evaluations of environmental impacts and risks to demonstrate that the offshore project is able to be managed to ensure environmental impacts and risks will be of acceptable levels. These include:
 - i. the National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023)
 - ii. the Threat Abatement Plan for the Impacts of Marine Debris on the Vertebrate Wildlife of Australia's Coasts and Oceans (Commonwealth of Australia, 2018)
 - iii. the Guideline: Offshore Petroleum Decommissioning (Department of Industry and Resources, 2022)
 - iv. the 2024 Update to: Technical Guidance for Assessing the Effects of Anthropogenic Sound on Marine Mammal Hearing (Version 3.0): Underwater and In-Air Criteria for Onset of Auditory Injury and Temporary Threshold Shifts (National Marine Fisheries Service, 2024).

66. In relation to environmental impacts and risks arising from greenhouse gas emissions, I found:

- a. the OPP appropriately identifies and describes the greenhouse gas emissions that may occur as a result of the project, as stated in paragraph 42 of this statement of reasons
- b. the greenhouse gas emissions from the processing, transportation, and end use of the hydrocarbons produced by the project are secondary actions that are likely to be indirect consequences, and hence impacts, of the offshore project when considering the Policy Statement 'Indirect consequences' of an action: Section 527E of the EPBC Act (see also paragraphs 91 and 92 below). Accordingly, I must be reasonably satisfied the OPP demonstrates that impacts from processing, transportation and end use of the hydrocarbons produced by the project will be managed to an acceptable level.
- c. the OPP defines four acceptable levels (AL) of impact for greenhouse gas emissions (AL-08, AL-09, AL-10, and AL-11 in Table 7-6 and Section 8.3 of the OPP) and provides analysis as to why the proponent considers these levels are acceptable (Table 7-6 of the OPP). I found:
 - i. AL-08 applies to the emissions from the processing and storage of the project's hydrocarbons at the Gorgon Operations facility, which includes the Gorgon GTP. AL-08 is appropriate because it is derived from relevant requirements that apply to the downstream emissions from processing of the project's hydrocarbons at the Gorgon GTP as follows:
 - A. as a designated large facility under the *National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007*. The safeguard mechanism in the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (Safeguard Mechanism) Rule 2015 (Safeguard Mechanism) requires the emissions of the Gorgon Operations facility to be managed over time to give effect to, and achieve Australia's commitments under the Paris Agreement.



- B. as a proposal assessed under Part IV of the Western Australian *Environmental Protection Act 1986* subject to the conditions in Ministerial Statement 1198 which requires Chevron to implement the Gorgon Gas Treatment Plant Greenhouse Gas Management Plan; the greenhouse gas emissions estimates presented in the OPP are consistent with those presented in the plan.
- ii. AL-09 requires the project's emissions associated with the transport and third-party end use of products from the project to not represent a significant proportion of cumulative global greenhouse gas emissions. The reasoning set out in the impact evaluation (Section 8.3.13 of the OPP) and the justification for AL-09 in Table 7-6 of the OPP acknowledge the link between anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and climate change and sets the project's emissions in the context of global carbon budgets. I found Section 8.3.13 the OPP describes that the project's emissions will not in isolation materially or substantially contribute to increased concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and hence will not constitute a significant proportion of the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Based on the material presented in Section 8.3.13 of the OPP, I concluded that the project's emissions are a relatively small portion of the remaining global carbon budget to limit warming in line with the Paris Agreement goals, and hence would not substantially contribute to increased global concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. I found the OPP also presents a reasoned argument that the project's emissions are not inconsistent with the goals of the Paris Agreement.
- iii. AL-10 sets out the obligations for the Gorgon Gas Development to reserve and market domestic gas under the Gorgon State Agreement. The OPP argues this obligation results in greenhouse gas emissions from domestic gas being inherently acceptable. I found this logic to be flawed and placed no weight on this conclusion in making my decision. However, AL-10 further states that domestic emissions from the project are managed under relevant Australian law. I considered the relevant law to include the safeguard mechanism, and that the safeguard mechanism was established to meet Australia's commitments under the Paris Agreement.
- iv. acceptable level AL-11 relies on greenhouse gas emissions from the transport and third-party end use of the project's hydrocarbons beyond Australia to be managed under relevant laws of the respective customer countries.
- d. the Safeguard Mechanism relevant to my consideration of acceptable levels AL-08 and AL-10 is regulated by the Clean Energy Regulator (**the CER**). I am reasonably satisfied the CER is a competent regulator for the purposes of implementing the Safeguard Mechanism. As a result, I am reasonably satisfied that the proponent's obligations under the Safeguard Mechanism will be achieved through CER's regulatory functions.
- e. Section 8.3.10 the OPP describes the Australia's Future Gas Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia, 2024), which confirms the role of gas in firming Australia's electricity generation,



the need for gas within Australia beyond 2050, and the commitment to being a reliable trading partner. The OPP points out that the project is consistent with this strategy.

- f. Section 8.3.7.2 of the OPP describes the anticipated customers for LNG (which constitutes the majority of the project's emissions) as being in Japan, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), the People's Republic of China (China), and the Republic of China (Taiwan), with potential for relatively small volumes of LNG to be sold on the spot market. The OPP also identifies potential emerging markets for the sale of LNG. The OPP notes that each of these customer countries is a party to the Paris Agreement and has established Nationally Determined Contributions, with the exception of Taiwan. Taiwan is not a member of the United Nations and as such cannot be a party to the Paris Agreement; however, Taiwan has made commitments equivalent to Nationally Determined Contributions and has established legislation to give effect to the commitments. I placed considerable weight on these facts when deciding that the impacts of greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation and end use of the project's hydrocarbons beyond Australia are acceptable.
- g. that AL-09 is an appropriate and acceptable level of impact because the OPP sets out, with appropriate reference to the International Energy Agency's World Energy Outlook 2024, the ongoing demand for liquefied natural gas which will in part be met by the project. I concluded that greenhouse gas emissions from the combustion of natural gas will occur because of this need being met. In recognising the necessity of liquefied natural gas and the associated emissions, the OPP also sets out the physical basis for climate change as a result of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and the contribution of anthropogenic emissions to these concentrations. Section 8.3.13 of the OPP does this through reference to the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report. I found that AL-09 balances the need for liquefied natural gas predicted in the International Energy Agency's World Energy Outlook 2024 and the environmental impacts of climate change described in the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change's Sixth Assessment Report.
- h. the OPP estimated the greenhouse gas emissions from the project in Table 8-13 of the OPP, and states in Section 8.3.13 these emissions represent approximately 0.005-0.14% emissions of the remaining global carbon budget to limit warming to 1.5 °C-2 °C. I consider this contribution will not constitute a significant proportion of cumulative global greenhouse gas emissions to compromise international efforts to meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement.

67. I considered the expected nature of the sale of hydrocarbons produced by the project for transportation and end use beyond Australia. As set out in paragraph 66.f of this Statement of Reasons, the expected countries in which consumption of the project's LNG will occur are parties to the Paris Agreement and have established nationally determined contributions. I placed considerable weight on Paris Agreement being the appropriate means by which parties to the agreement (and Taiwan) manage their emissions. The Paris Agreement provides for

economy-wide measures by which parties can tailor their emissions reduction methods to their own unique circumstances.

68. I considered the sale of the project's hydrocarbons for end use in countries that are not parties to the Paris Agreement. For example, this circumstance could arise through the sale of LNG cargoes on the spot market to countries that are not signatories, or by the withdrawal of a country from the Paris Agreement in which end-use of the hydrocarbons occurs. At the time of my decision, there are 195 parties to the Paris Agreement, with the Islamic Republic of Iran, Libya, and Yemen being the only signatories to not ratify the Paris Agreement. One country, the United States of America (USA), has signalled an intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement. The USA has not imported LNG from Australia since 2004. Except for the USA, the commitment to the Paris Agreement by parties that have ratified the agreement to date is strong. Based on these facts, I consider the end use of the project's hydrocarbons in countries that have not ratified the Paris Agreement to be unlikely.

69. I noted that restricting the project's downstream indirect emissions through restricting the sale of project's hydrocarbons could breach existing contracts and damage Australia's reputation as a reliable provider of energy, which the OPP identifies as an objective of the Australian Government's Future Gas Strategy in Section 8.3.10 of the OPP. I further noted that limiting the sale of the project's hydrocarbons would be unlikely to result in a reduction in emissions, as customer's demand would continue to exist and would be met by other providers of LNG, as described by the demand and supply considerations in Section 8.3.9 of the OPP. I determined that these matters were not relevant to making my decision to accept the OPP and hence gave them no weight in making the decision.

70. In relation to environmental impacts and risks resulting from planned marine discharges, I was satisfied that these impacts and risks will be managed to an acceptable level because:

- a. the OPP sets out appropriate acceptable levels of impact in Table 7-6 of the OPP which are relevant to the planned marine discharges considered in the OPP
- b. the justifications of the acceptable levels of impact draw upon appropriate reference material, such as the North-west Marine Bioregional Plan and the values described therein (e.g., environmental values of key ecological features)
- c. the demonstrations of acceptability for planned marine discharges in Sections 8.6, 8.7, and 8.8 of the OPP identify relevant requirements that apply to planned marine discharges and how the requirements will be met, including:
 - i. International Maritime Organization requirements for discharges from vessels and the Australian laws giving effect to such requirements
 - ii. relevant recovery plans and wildlife conservation plans that identify threats that may arise from planned marine discharges
 - iii. the proponent's internal context, such as standards for vessels and requirements of chemicals that may be discharges to sea



- iv. relevant external context, such as the Offshore Chemical Notification Scheme and Chemical Hazard and Risk Management process for the selection of chemicals that may be discharges to the sea
 - d. the OPP resolves uncertainty in the volume, location, and nature of hydrotest and drilling discharges by the commitments in EPO-27 and EPO-30 respectively to undertake dispersion modelling to inform impact evaluations in future environment plans.
 - e. the OPP includes environmental performance outcomes EPO-24, EPO-25, EPO-26, and EPO-28 that will limit the duration of impacts to water quality following cessation of the discharges to the sea
 - f. the OPP includes environmental performance outcomes EPO-29, EPO-31, and EPO-32 that will limit the spatial extent and nature of impacts to sediment quality and benthic habitats
 - g. the OPP appropriately characterises the environmental values – water quality, sediment quality, and associated biological communities – that may be exposed to planned marine discharges through reference to environmental studies and relevant scientific literature
 - h. the OPP demonstrates that the impacts from planned marine discharges will be acceptable because these impacts:
 - i. will be constrained in time (e.g., temporary impacts to water quality that recover within a set time upon cessation of a discharge) or space (e.g., impacts to sediment quality localised around drilling locations)
 - ii. will not impact upon particularly unique or sensitive environmental values
 - i. the OPP makes appropriate comparisons to demonstrate the predicted impacts and environmental performance outcomes for planned marine discharges will less than or equal to the acceptable levels of impact
71. In relation to environmental impacts and risks resulting from physical effects, I was satisfied that these impacts and risks will be managed to an acceptable level because:
- a. the OPP sets out appropriate an acceptable level of impact (AL-01) in Table 7-6 of the OPP which is relevant to the aspects of the project that may result in physical effects to the seabed
 - b. the justifications for AL-01 draw upon appropriate reference material, such as the North-west Marine Bioregional Plan and the values described therein (e.g., environmental values of key ecological features)
 - c. the demonstrations of acceptability for seabed disturbance in Section 8.1 of the OPP identifies relevant requirements that apply to physical effects on the seabed and how the requirements will be met, including requirements for the removal of property under s 572 of the OPGGS Act supported by EPO-06



- d. the OPP includes commitments to address the uncertainty of impacts to benthic habitats caused by seabed disturbance, including committing to additional seabed surveys to inform the design of the final locations of infrastructure on the seabed in EPO-02
- e. the OPP includes environmental performance outcomes EPO-02 and EPO-03 that will avoid disturbing benthic habitats and seabed features that may host relatively high abundance or diversity biological communities
- f. the OPP includes commitments to limit the spatial extent of seabed disturbance and ensure all disturbance is limited to within the Development Area in EPO-04 and EPO-05
- g. the OPP appropriately characterises benthic habitats that may be disturbed by the project through reference to environmental studies and relevant scientific literature
- h. the OPP demonstrates that the impacts from physical effects will be acceptable because these impacts:
 - i. will be constrained in space by limiting the size of the disturbance footprint extent and restricting the footprint to within the Development Area
 - ii. will not impact upon particularly unique or sensitive environmental values
- i. the OPP makes appropriate comparisons to demonstrate the predicted impacts and environmental performance outcomes for physical effects from seabed disturbance will less than or equal to the acceptable levels of impact

72. I considered the potential cumulative impacts described in Section 9 of the OPP. Refer to paragraphs 86 to 90 for reasons why I found cumulative impacts to be acceptable.

73. I found that the environmental performance outcomes for unplanned events, such as introduction of invasive marine pests, collisions between vessels and marine fauna, and hydrocarbon spills, are consistently set to prevent such outcomes from occurring. This provides a clear commitment by the proponent to prevent environmental risks from unplanned events from becoming realised.

The OPP sets out Appropriate Environmental Performance Outcomes for Each Activity that are Consistent with the Principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development: Section 13(4)(e)

74. I was reasonably satisfied that the OPP meets the requirements of subsection 13(4)(e) of the Environment Regulations and sets out appropriate environmental performance outcomes for each activity that are consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development and the definition of environmental performance outcome in section 5.

75. Where the proponent set out control measures in the OPP, I took these measures to be demonstrations of how the proponent may achieve the associated environmental performance outcomes and considered them in becoming reasonably satisfied the environmental



performance outcomes were appropriate. Refer to paragraph 60 of this statement of reasons for further consideration of control measures.

76. I found the environmental performance outcomes, with the associated control measures, in the OPP:

- a. were consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development
- b. demonstrate that environmental impacts and risks will be managed to an acceptable level in combination with the proponent's evaluation of environmental impacts and risks
- c. were relevant to the environmental impacts and risks of the project
- d. set measurable levels of environmental performance for the management of the environmental aspects of the project

77. I considered whether the proponent's decision-making processes to establish the environmental performance outcomes effectively integrated both long-term and short-term economic, environmental, social and equitable considerations (the 'integration principle'). In this regard:

- a. I considered the proponent's evaluation of the social, economic, and ecological values that may potentially be affected by the project. I found the OPP demonstrated an integrated approach in effectively considering all environmental features, including relevant social, cultural and economic features that make up the environment. Specifically, the OPP includes an evaluation of the potential environmental impacts and risks of the project on cultural features and heritage values, Commonwealth and State-managed fisheries, tourism and recreation, and marine and coastal industries, considering both long-term and short-term aspects. For example:
 - i. long-term considerations, such as decommissioning, have been made, including commitments to comply with s 572 of the OPGGS Act by removing property when no longer in use or securing permission for alternative arrangements through NOPSEMA
 - ii. EPO-08 ensures no impacts to declared underwater cultural heritage unless permissioned under the *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018*
 - iii. EPO-33 commits to no interference with other lawful marine users from planned activities associated with the Development to a greater extent than is necessary for the reasonable exercise of the rights and performance of duties.

78. I considered whether the environmental performance outcomes set out in the OPP used a lack of full scientific certainty as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage (the 'precautionary principle').

- a. I considered whether the environmental aspects of the project pose the threat of serious or irreversible environmental damage and how the proponent has addressed uncertainty.

- b. I found the proponent appropriately identified the environmental aspects that may cause serious or irreversible environmental damage (e.g., worst-case hydrocarbon spills) and hence require the consideration of the precautionary principle.
- c. Where there is uncertainty about the nature and scale of environmental impacts and risks (e.g. uncertainty in exact infrastructure location and timing of activities that are part of the project), I found the proponent has taken appropriate measures to address uncertainty, such as:
 - i. undertaking environmental surveys, which are presented in Appendix A of the OPP, to inform the evaluations of impact and risks in the OPP
 - ii. undertaking a range of modelling studies, which are based on appropriately conservative scenarios, to determine the nature and spatial extent of some emissions and discharges (e.g., greenhouse gas emissions, underwater noise emissions, and hydrocarbon spills).
- d. I found the OPP does not use lack of scientific certainty as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation. For example, the OPP includes commitments to manage degradation through environmental performance outcomes that will either resolve, or take into account, scientific uncertainty, such as:
 - i. identifying and avoiding impacts to benthic habitats that may support relatively high biodiversity or abundance communities (e.g., EPO-02, EPO-03, and CM-01)
 - ii. implementing adaptive management measures to reduce the risk of noise-related impacts to pygmy blue whales (CM-20, CM-21 and Section 10.4 of the OPP, which support EPO-23)
 - iii. reviewing and, if required, updating modelling studies to ensure they remain appropriate to inform the evaluations of impacts and risks (e.g., EPO-22 for underwater noise modelling, EPO-27 for hydrotest discharge modelling, and EPO-30 for drilling cuttings dispersion modelling).

79. I considered whether the environmental performance outcomes set out in the OPP ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations (the 'intergenerational principle'). In this regard:

- a. I considered the proponent's evaluations to ensure the health, diversity and productivity of the environment (as defined in s 5 to include social, economic and cultural features) is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations. I found that the evaluations appropriately considered the intergenerational principle, because the environmental management of the project will ensure that future generations may continue to use the environment. For example, I was reasonably satisfied the commitment to the requirements of s 572 of the OGPPS Act will not prevent future uses of the sea, such as commercial fishing, following the conclusion of the project. Further, the OPP includes measures to



ensure that environmental values, such as threatened and migratory species, are not degraded such that future generations cannot benefit from them.

- b. I found the OPP set out appropriate environmental performance outcomes to demonstrate that the project can be undertaken to ensure intergenerational equality. For example:
 - i. The OPP commits to meeting the requirements of s 572 of the OPGGS Act, which includes maintaining and removing property during decommissioning subject to the provisions in s 572(7) of the OPGGS Act. This will allow other future users of the sea, such as commercial fishers, to use the environment without restriction at the conclusion of the project.
 - ii. The OPP considers the impact of climate change from the project's emissions and commits to complying with the safeguard mechanism and ensuring the project's emissions do not represent a significant proportion of cumulative global greenhouse gas emissions, which will be managed under the respective customer countries' laws.

80. I considered whether the conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity was a fundamental consideration embodied by the environmental performance outcomes (the 'biodiversity principle'). In this regard:

- a. I considered the proponent's evaluation in the OPP of environmental impacts and risks to the biodiversity and ecological values of the Commonwealth marine area, including listed threatened and migratory species under the EPBC Act, and the environmental performance outcomes defined in the OPP.
- b. I found the environmental performance outcomes are not inconsistent with plans made under the EPBC Act for the conservation of biodiversity, such as recovery plans, conservation advice, threat abatement plans, and guidelines. For example, AL-13 requires the project's impacts to not be inconsistent with threatened species recovery plans made under the EPBC Act. AL-12, AL-14 and AL-15 constrain impacts to marine fauna listed as threatened or migratory such that the project will not:
 - i. interfere with the recovery of threatened species
 - ii. decrease the availability or quality of habitat such that it interferes with the recovery of threatened species
 - iii. decrease the availability or quality of important habitat such that it interferes with the survival of the population of migratory species.

81. I considered whether improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms were appropriately embodied by the environmental performance outcomes (the 'valuation principle'). For this:
- a. I considered that the proponent is required to bear the costs relating to management of environmental aspects of the project and its activities, such as:
 - i. the 'polluter pays' principle within the OPGGS Act and subsidiary legislation, which requires the proponent to be responsible for any damage to the environment through their activities
 - ii. the application of the safeguard mechanism to the project's greenhouse gas emissions that fall within the scope of the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (Safeguard Mechanism) Rule 2015, which incentivises safeguard facilities to reduce their emissions over time (EPO-10 and supporting control measures).
 - b. I found that the OPP makes appropriate commitments to comply with the requirements of s 572 of the OPGGS Act, which requires the proponent to remove their property from petroleum titles when no longer in use.

The OPP does not Involve an Activity, or Part of an Activity, being undertaken in a World Heritage Area: Section 13(4)(f)

82. I was reasonably satisfied that the OPP meets the requirements of s 13(4)(f) because I found the petroleum activities that comprise the offshore project will not occur in whole or in part within a World Heritage Area.

Other Considerations – The EPBC Act Program

83. The EPBC Act Program endorsed under s 146 of the EPBC Act outlines the environmental management authorisation process for offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas activities administered by NOPSEMA requiring NOPSEMA to comply with EPBC Act Program responsibilities and commitments.
84. In implementing the EPBC Act Program, NOPSEMA conducts assessments of OPPs against the requirements of the Program, which includes meeting the acceptance criteria and content requirements under the Environment Regulations. Specific EPBC Act Program commitments relating to matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act are outlined in Table 2 of the Streamlining Offshore Petroleum Environmental Approvals Program Report (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014) and must be applied during decision making with respect to offshore projects and activities.

The EPBC Act Program: Matters Protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act

85. I considered protected matters under Part 3 of the EPBC Act, including listed threatened and migratory species and the Commonwealth marine area, and was reasonably satisfied that the



activities described in the OPP met the requirements of the EPBC Act Program on the basis that:

- a. the OPP demonstrates the project will not result in unacceptable impacts on listed threatened species
- b. the OPP demonstrates the project is not inconsistent with relevant recovery plans, wildlife conservation plans, and threat abatement plans for listed threatened and migratory species
- c. the OPP has appropriate regard for relevant conservation advice published for threatened species
- d. the OPP contains appropriate environmental performance outcomes and control measures to ensure that impacts to threatened or migratory species, and to the Commonwealth Marine Area, will be of an acceptable level
- e. the impacts and risks of the project will not result in unacceptable impacts to the following, noting that none occur within the Development Area:
 - i. world heritage values of declared World Heritage Properties
 - ii. national heritage values of declared National Heritage Places
 - iii. the ecological character of wetlands of international importance (Ramsar wetlands)
 - iv. listed threatened ecological communities
 - v. the environment on Commonwealth land

The EPBC Act Program: Cumulative Environmental Impacts

86. In the context of the EPBC Act Program, cumulative impacts refer to the direct and indirect impacts of a number of different petroleum activity actions that may influence the natural environment or other users within a locality or region which, when considered together, have a greater impact on the offshore marine environment than each action or influence considered individually.
87. In the context of NOPSEMA's Decision Making Guidelines for offshore petroleum activities, cumulative environmental impacts are successive, additive, or synergistic impacts of collectively significant activities or projects with material impacts on the environment that have the potential to accumulate over temporal and spatial scales.
88. I found the OPP sets out an appropriate process for identifying cumulative impacts in Section 9.1 of the OPP. I found this process was consistently applied to the environmental aspects and environmental values relevant to the consideration of cumulative impacts in Section 9.2 of the OPP
89. I considered the potential for cumulative environmental impacts to the Commonwealth marine area as required by the EPBC Act Program, noting the proponent had specifically evaluated



cumulative impacts to environmental values and sensitivities in Section 9 of the OPP. For example, the OPP:

- a. considers where multiple aspects of the offshore project's activities may interact to cause cumulative impacts in Section 9.2.1 to Section 9.2.6 of the OPP
- b. considers where aspects of the offshore project's activities may interact with third-party activities to cause cumulative impacts in Sections 9.2.7 to Section 9.2.14 of the OPP.

90. I am reasonably satisfied that the cumulative impacts will be acceptable because Section 9 of the OPP demonstrates that these impacts will be managed to an acceptable level through the environmental performance outcomes and control measures outlined in Section 8 of the OPP.

The EPBC Act Program: Indirect Consequences of an Action

91. Under the EPBC Act Program, NOPSEMA must have regard to relevant EPBC Act policies, including EPBC Act Policy Statement – 'Indirect consequences' of an action: section 527E of the EPBC Act (indirect consequences policy). NOPSEMA considers the policy to determine where indirect consequences may be considered an 'impact' of an activity under s527E. This consideration is on a case-by-case basis against the circumstances of the activity in accordance with the criteria set out in the policy.

92. In assessing the OPP, I had regard to the indirect consequences policy in relation to greenhouse gas emissions. I considered that indirect downstream greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation and end use of the hydrocarbons produced by the offshore project are likely to be an indirect consequence of the offshore project (refer to paragraph 43 of this statement of reasons). I found that the OPP demonstrated that the impact of these emissions will be managed to an acceptable level, as described in paragraphs 66, 67, and 68 of this statement of reasons.

Signed

Charmain FitzGerald
Acting Chief Executive Officer

6 November 2025



Appendix A: Key Materials Considered in Making the Decision

93. The key materials that I considered in making this decision included:

- a. The OPP, comprising the proposal submitted to NOPSEMA by Chevron Australia Pty Ltd (Document Number ACP-0000-RGL-PLN-CVX-000-00001-00, Revision 6.0, dated Friday, 26 September 2025 and the supporting appendices, which include a summary of the public comments received.
- b. The legislative framework relevant to OPP assessments:
 - i. the OPGGS Act
 - ii. the Environment Regulations
 - iii. the EPBC Act
 - iv. the Endorsed EPBC Program¹.
- c. Policies and Guidelines:
 - i. NOPSEMA Assessment Policy (N-04000-PL0050)
 - ii. NOPSEMA Offshore Project Proposal Assessment Policy (N-04790-PL1650)
 - iii. NOPSEMA Offshore Project Proposal Decision Making Guideline (N-04790-GL1816)
 - iv. Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities' (DSEWPaC) 'Indirect consequences' of an action: Section 572E of the EPBC Act (2013).
- d. Guidance:
 - i. NOPSEMA Offshore Project Proposal Content Requirements Guidance Note (N-04790-GN1663)
 - ii. NOPSEMA Oil Pollution Risk Management Guidance Note (N-04750-GN1488)
 - iii. NOPSEMA Decommissioning Compliance Strategy 2024 – 2029 (2024)
 - iv. NOPSEMA Considerations when Assessing Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Associated Impacts to the Environment through Global Climate Change Assessment Guide (2025)
 - v. Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources, Guideline: Offshore Petroleum Decommissioning (2022)
- e. Procedures:
 - i. NOPSEMA Offshore project proposal assessment standard operating procedure (N-04790-SOP1678).

¹ <https://www.environment.gov.au/protection/assessments/strategic/offshore-petroleum-greenhouse-gas>

f. Information papers:

- i. NOPSEMA Making Public Comment on Offshore Project Proposals Information Paper (N-04790-IP1664)
- ii. NOPSEMA Reducing Marine Pest Biosecurity Risks through Good Practice Biofouling Management Information Paper (N-04750-IP1899)
- iii. NOPSEMA Acoustic Impact Evaluation and Management Information Paper (N-04750-IP1765).

g. Bulletins:

- i. NOPSEMA Oil Spill Modelling Environment Bulletin (2019)

h. The findings and briefings provided by the assessment team

i. Technical advice from CER and DCCEEW

j. 2024 Update to: Technical Guidance for Assessing the Effects of Anthropogenic Sound on Marine Mammal Hearing (Version 3.0): Underwater and In-Air Criteria for Onset of Auditory Injury and Temporary Threshold Shifts (National Marine Fisheries Service, 2024)

k. Relevant policies, plans of management, recovery plans, conservation advice and other guidance for matters protected under the EPBC Act, including:

- i. Commonwealth of Australia, Threat Abatement Plan for the Impacts of Marine Debris on the Vertebrate Wildlife of Australia's Coasts and Oceans (2018)
- ii. Commonwealth of Australia, Recovery Plan for Marine Turtles in Australia 2017–2027 (2017)
- iii. Commonwealth of Australia, Conservation Management Plan for the Blue Whale 2015–2025 (2015)
- iv. Commonwealth of Australia, Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds (2015)
- v. Director of National Parks, North-west Marine Parks Network Management Plan (2018)
- vi. Commonwealth of Australia, Wildlife Conservation Plan for Seabirds (2020)
- vii. Commonwealth of Australia, National Recovery Plan for Albatrosses and Petrels (2022)
- viii. Commonwealth of Australia, National Recovery Plan for the Southern Right Whale *Eubalaena australis* (2024)
- ix. National Light Pollution Guidelines for Wildlife, including Marine Turtles, Seabirds and Migratory Shorebirds (DoEE, 2023)

