

Community & Environmental Reference Group – Meeting 4

Meeting objectives:

To seek the group's feedback on NOPSEMA's proposed process for facilitating and reporting on public comment for seismic and exploratory drilling environment plans, as proposed in amendments to the Environment Regulations.

Meeting details:

The meeting was held at NOPSEMA's Perth office at 1.00pm–3.00pm AWST on 14 March 2019.

Attendees included representatives of NOPSEMA and members of the Community and Environmental Reference Group (CERG), as listed in Attachment 1.

Meeting record:

Agenda Item 1 – Safety and introduction

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all participants. The agenda and objectives for the meeting were then confirmed with no changes.

Agenda Item 2 – Register of interests and recent community interactions

All members provided an outline of their recent work or community interactions relevant to offshore petroleum environmental management. Amongst a variety of activities reported, multiple group members had been involved in or aware of:

- Community discussions and protests relating to oil and gas development in the Great Australian Bight (GAB) as well as consultation by the titleholder (Equinor) for their proposal to conduct offshore exploratory drilling
- Active efforts by fishing industry and community groups to improve consultation methods and materials exchanged with petroleum titleholders, to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of consultation

Stuart Field declared to the group that he had been providing consulting services to Equinor, involving sensitivity analysis on Australian sea lions and southern right whales.

NOPSEMA invited the group to attend the upcoming *Transitioning to transparency* information session on 27 March 2019, which will include updates to legislation to improve consultation and transparency in environment plan assessment, good practice consultation advice from NOPSEMA and industry, and an outline of initiatives underway such as cooperative seismic environment plans. NOPSEMA will reiterate its learnings from the CERG on the ongoing frustrations of stakeholders with consultation, and use the forum to promote better practices.

ACTION: NOPSEMA to promote better consultation practices with the petroleum industry and its stakeholders at the Transitioning to transparency information session on 27 March 2019.



Agenda Item 3 – Public comment on environment plans – NOPSEMA’s tools and guidance

Agenda Item 3.1 – NOPSEMA’s new “Have your say” process

The group discussed NOPSEMA’s draft brochure entitled ‘Have your say on environment plans for exploration activities in Commonwealth waters’, as well as draft webpages for its online public comment tool (provided in a discussion paper). Feedback on the material was generally positive, it was considered accessible and informative for members of the public that may not be familiar with environment plan assessments.

The group gave some suggestions for improvements including the following:

- Include ‘tips’ on how to provide effective comment on the NOPSEMA website so that commenters can easily see them
- Clarify where commenters can go to raise broader policy-level issues about offshore exploration
- Explore options for communicating proposals for offshore exploration activities that are in the earlier planning stage (i.e. for which an environment plan has not yet been submitted to NOPSEMA), for the benefit of relevant persons that may want to participate in consultation, and for the public to prepare for public comment. While not currently within NOPSEMA’s regulatory remit, this could be raised as an item for regulatory change

Some group members also offered additional feedback to NOPSEMA by email.

ACTION: NOPSEMA will consider all feedback received from the CERG on the “Have your say” process, and incorporate improvements into its guidance and online form prior to implementation in April 2019.

ACTION: NOPSEMA will follow up with the Department of Industry, Innovation and Science (DIIS) to explore options for communicating proposals for offshore exploration activities at an earlier stage, or seeking legislative change to facilitate this.

Agenda Item 3.2 – NOPSEMA’s new report on public comment

The group discussed NOPSEMA’s proposed format for a key matters report to accompany an acceptance decision for exploration environment plans (provided in a discussion paper), which will outline how public comment is taken into account in the decision. The group broadly considered the report an important improvement in the transparency of the assessment process, and was supportive of the level of detail and types of information included in the example reports provided.

The group gave a range of feedback including:

- In order for the report to be easily understood by the public, terminology must be consistent and acronyms avoided
- The report should relate not only to issues raised by the public, but also to the acceptance criteria specified in the Environment Regulations that NOPSEMA must consider, such as the environment plan’s demonstration that impacts and risks will be reduced to acceptable levels and as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP)



- The report should also provide options for appeal if a member of the public is not satisfied with the way NOPSEMA took a matter into account. These would include the available avenues for requesting a statement of reasons, making a complaint, legal challenge, etc.

Some group members also offered additional feedback to NOPSEMA by email.

ACTION: NOPSEMA will consider all feedback received from the CERG on the format for the key matters report, and incorporate improvements prior to implementation in April 2019.

Agenda Item 4 – Topics for discussion by the CERG

This item was deferred to the next meeting and the CERG was referred to the previous list of topics discussed in Meeting 2, which NOPSEMA will use to develop the agenda for future meetings.

Agenda Item 5 – Review and close out

The proposed date for the next meeting is Wednesday, 11 September 2019 in the afternoon. Agenda to be confirmed closer to the time.



Attachment 1

Attendees list

NOPSEMA representatives	
Stuart Smith, Chief Executive Officer (chair)	In person
Cameron Grebe, Head of Environment Division	In person
Raquel Carter, Environment Specialist	In person
Community representatives	
Mr Brett McCallum	In person
Mr Daniel Marsh	In person
Ms Jacqueline Hine	Teleconference
Ms Kirsten Rough	Teleconference
Ms Marilyn Shea	In person
Ms Pauline Noelle	Teleconference
Ms Ruby Hamilton	In person
Mr Stuart Field	In person
Apologies	
Ms Robyn Glindemann	