

Woodside receives initial regulatory approval for Scarborough gas project

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The National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) has accepted an Offshore Project Proposal (OPP) from Woodside Energy Ltd (Woodside) to develop the Scarborough Gas Fields off northern Western Australia.

While the impacts of COVID-19 on the community and industry are being assessed and managed, NOPSEMA continues to undertake normal processes of assessment and regulatory oversight in accordance with legislative requirements, of which this decision is testament.

Today's announcement follows a thorough assessment of more than a year, with the assessment period including an eight-week public comment process.

NOPSEMA has approved the Scarborough project because it's reasonably satisfied that it can be undertaken in an environmentally responsible way, while appropriately managing greenhouse gas emissions. This approval includes provision for monitoring and adaptation to changes arising as a result of uncertainty in the context of global climate change.

Woodside proposes to adopt a range of management and mitigation measures to assist in reducing global emissions, ensuring emissions across the lifecycle of the project would be reduced to acceptable levels.

In recognising the need to transition to a lower carbon future, Woodside's proposal positions Scarborough gas to play a key role in the future global energy mix. Woodside will be contributing to global efforts to reduce global greenhouse gas levels by actively displacing more carbon-intensive power generation with gas, as a less carbon-intensive source of fuel.

NOPSEMA's actions and decisions are guided by Commonwealth legislation such as the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act and the National Greenhouse Energy and Reporting (NGER) Act.

As such, NOPSEMA must give appropriate and relevant consideration to greenhouse gas emissions from offshore energy projects, including direct impacts, and on a case-by-case basis, indirect consequences.

Woodside proposes to start developing the Scarborough Gas Fields in 2023, following the drilling of wells, installation of pipeline and semi-submersible floating production unit (FPU).

This approval is subject to further regulatory approvals, including an accepted environment plan, a well operations management plan and safety case. An accepted environment plan is required before any activity can begin. Environment plans are also reviewed by NOPSEMA at least once every five years.

A statement of reasons and final OPP document will be published by NOPSEMA within 10 days of the acceptance decision, in accordance with the regulatory requirements.

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