



Offshore project proposal assessment

Document No: N-04790-PL1650 A469720

Date: 10/01/2024

Table of contents

Table o	ble of contents1				
1.	Purpose2				
2.	Scope				
3.	Decision making principles				
4.	What is an offshore project?				
5.	Pre-submission engagement				
6.	Cost recovery				
7.	Assessment process				
	7.1.	Stage of assessment			
	7.2.	Submission and completeness check	5		
	7.3.	Assessment team	6		
	7.4.	Topic scoping	6		
	7.5.	Timeframe for assessment			
	7.6.	Requests for further written information			
	7.7.	Unable to make a decision	7		
	7.8.	Withdrawal of an OPP			
8.	Assessment of OPP suitability for publication - stage I (Regulation 9)				
	8.1.	Suitability of an OPP for publication	8		
	8.2.	Refusal of an OPP for publication	9		
	8.3.	Publication of the OPP for public comment	9		
	8.4.	Promotion of the public comment period			
	8.5.	Submissions during the public comment period	.10		
	8.6.	NOPSEMA's consideration of public comments	.10		
9.	Acceptability of the OPP assessment - stage II (Regulation 11)		.11		
	9.1.	Proponent address of public comments	.11		
	9.2.	Criteria for acceptance	.11		
	9.3.	Acceptance of an OPP	.12		
	9.4.	Publication of OPP after acceptance			
	9.5.	Refusal to accept an OPP			
10.	Policy r	olicy review13			
11.	Relevant legislation				
12.	Related documents13				
	Regulatory policy and guidelines on NOPSEMA's administration of the legislation:13				
Resour	ces to as	sist stakeholders understand the requirements and how to comply:	.13		



1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clarify NOPSEMA's regulatory policies in relation to administration of the regulations that relate to offshore project proposals (OPP) to ensure a documented, systematic and consistent approach for assessing and making decisions on OPPs.

Regulatory policies guide the exercise of NOPSEMA powers under the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2023 (Environment Regulations) and inform stakeholders on how NOPSEMA applies the legislation, including where NOPSEMA can exercise discretion. This regulatory policy does not replace the legislation and in each case NOPSEMA will have regard to the regulations that apply, regulatory policies and legislation that inform how decisions are made by NOPSEMA. In accordance with good administrative decision-making principles, NOPSEMA takes a case-by-case approach when considering the application of policies and guidelines in conducting assessments and making decisions under the legislation.

2. Scope

This policy applies solely to NOPSEMA assessments and NOPSEMA decision-making for offshore project proposal submissions made to NOPSEMA under the Environment Regulations. This policy should be read in conjunction with the overarching <u>NOPSEMA Assessment policy</u> (N-04000-PL0050). The reference to a regulation in this policy refers to the Environment Regulations unless otherwise specified.

The <u>OPP content requirements guidance note</u> (N-04790-GN1663) provides further information on the purpose and content of an OPP and is used by NOPSEMA in conjunction with the assessment policies to inform assessment decisions.

NOPSEMA's policies on environment plan (EP) assessments are outside the scope of this policy. Refer to the <u>Environment plan assessment policy</u> (N-04750-PL1347) for NOPSEMA's policy positions relating to EP assessments.

3. Decision making principles

The Environment Regulations specify the criteria against which NOPSEMA must make its assessment for both the publication of the OPP¹ and the acceptance of the OPP². To achieve this, NOPSEMA has adopted a principled decision-making approach that:

- accords with the principles of good decision-making and procedural fairness obligations³
- undertakes OPP assessments consistent with the object of the Environment Regulations⁴
- makes decisions with due regard to appropriate and relevant environmental considerations.

The <u>OPP content requirements guidance note</u> (N-04790-GN1663) provides further information on factors that influence NOPSEMA decision making.

¹ The Environment Regulations, subregulation9(4)

² The Environment Regulations, subregulation13(4)

³ In accordance with the Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977.

⁴ Environment Regulations, regulation 4.



4. What is an offshore project?

An offshore project⁵ is one or more activities that are undertaken in an offshore area for the purpose of recovery of petroleum other than on an appraisal basis, including any conveyance of recovered petroleum by pipeline.

Specifically an offshore project would include one or more of the following activities:

- drilling (other than on an exploration or appraisal basis)
- construction of facilities or pipelines
- operation of facilities or pipelines
- any other petroleum activity in an offshore area that is undertaken for the recovery of petroleum (excluding appraisal activities).

An offshore project would not include the components of a development that take place in State or Territory coastal waters or lands.

Decommissioning activities must be included in the scope of an OPP. However, decommissioning of preexisting petroleum activities in isolation do not trigger the requirement for an OPP submission prior to acceptance of an EP.

An offshore project proposal is the document submitted by a proponent to NOPSEMA when seeking acceptance for an offshore project, under Part 2 of the Environment Regulations.

5. Pre-submission engagement

Proponents are encouraged to engage early with NOPSEMA to gain general advice on the requirements of an OPP prior to submitting an OPP for assessment.

Where an expansion of an existing facility⁶ is proposed that meets the definition of an offshore project, it may be necessary to submit an OPP if it involves a significant modification or new stage of an existing development, depending on the nature and scale of the new activities that are considered an offshore project.

NOPSEMA will provide advice to proponents on how it interprets the general requirements of the Environment Regulations. NOPSEMA will not provide regulatory endorsement of the content of a proposal until the OPP is formally submitted for assessment.

6. Cost recovery

NOPSEMA will charge a fee for the assessment of an OPP on a full cost recovery basis under Regulation 57. This cost recovery process will commence on the submission of an OPP for assessment. OPP assessment fees will be calculated in accordance with NOPSEMA's Schedule of Fees and will be based on the total amount of expenses incurred by NOPSEMA in considering the proposal.

⁵ As defined in the Environment Regulations, regulation 5

⁶ Defined under Regulation 5 of the Environment Regulations.



Further information on OPP fees is provided in the <u>Environment management cost recovery guideline</u> (N-04750-GL1350).

7. Assessment process

The OPP assessment process enables proponents to seek high-level environmental approvals for new largescale petroleum developments by:

- providing an environmental assessment that delivers environmental outcomes that are equivalent to an environmental impact statement under the EPBC Act
- providing the public an opportunity to review and provide input during the development of proposed offshore projects
- allowing the regulator to make a whole-of-project assessment of the environmental acceptability of proposed offshore projects
- providing certainty to proponents at an early planning stage of the project.

The OPP requires the proponent to identify, assess and consult on all the potential impacts to matters protected under Part 3 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)* and the broader environment in a systematic way, which is consistent with environmental impact assessment processes. Specifically, an OPP should deliver:

- an assessment of the full suite of environmental impacts and risks of an offshore project, and all the
 options that are to be carried forward for the project, to demonstrate that the offshore project is
 environmentally acceptable, supported by detailed and scientifically robust environmental impact
 assessment processes
- a comparison of the environmental impacts and risks of technically feasible alternatives to the project and activities occurring as part of the project
- a robust evaluation of the impacts and risks to matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act
- clearly defined and measurable environmental performance outcomes that inform the level of environmental performance that is to be achieved for the life of the offshore project
- clearly documented and sufficient information to enable the public to provide informed comment during the mandatory public comment phase of an OPP assessment process.

The OPP assessment process enables a proponent to achieve a whole of project authorisation, but does not permit offshore petroleum activities to commence until an EP⁷ (or EPs) for the activities has been accepted by NOPSEMA.

The Environment Regulations set out pre-conditions that apply to submission of EPs and proposed revisions of EPs for activities or new activities that are, or are part of, offshore projects. An EP for an activity, or proposed revision of an EP for a new activity that is part of an offshore project, may be submitted to NOPSEMA for assessment only if:

• NOPSEMA has already accepted the related OPP that includes the activity or new activity

⁷ For more information on EP requirements refer to guidance published on NOPSEMA's website.



• if the Environment Minister has made a decision or granted approval under the EPBC Act relating to an action that is equivalent or includes that activity or new activity.

7.1. Stage of assessment

NOPSEMA's assessment of an OPP considers all information provided by the proponent on submission. Proponents are required to provide content in the OPP to meet each requirement of subregulation 7(2) to 7(5) and, after the public comment period, regulation 11.

The Environment Regulations place the responsibility on the proponent to demonstrate in the OPP that environmental impacts and risks have been identified, evaluated and will be managed to an acceptable level.

For guidance on the required contents of an OPP submission, refer to the <u>OPP content requirements</u> guidance note (N-04790-GN1663).

There are two key stages of an OPP Assessment. These are:

- Stage I Suitability of an OPP for publication (regulation 9)
- Stage II Assessment against the criteria for acceptance (subregulation 13(4)).

The assessment processes for these two stages are outlined below.

Stage I and Stage II OPPs received by NOPSEMA are assessed as separate submissions under the Environment Regulations.

7.2. Submission and completeness check

An OPP must be submitted by a proponent who may be an individual or a company and does not need to be a titleholder. OPPs must be submitted electronically and should include relevant maps, diagrams, figures, full copies of relevant supporting studies (if not publicly available) and any other information that supports the assessment of the OPP, in accordance with the Environment Regulations. This will allow the public to make informed comment during the public comment period and allow NOPSEMA to determine if the requirements of the Environment Regulations have been met.

NOPSEMA requires that OPPs are submitted in accordance with the <u>Making submissions to NOPSEMA</u> <u>guideline</u> (N-04000-GL0225). An OPP coversheet should also be submitted with the OPP (N-04790-FM1663).

NOPSEMA will conduct a pre-assessment check to confirm:

- that an appropriate person (proponent) is making the submission
- contact details for the proponent have been provided
- that the submission appears administratively complete (e.g. all identified attachments and appendices have been included with the submission)
- that the offshore project will not be undertaken in any part of a declared World Heritage property.

An incomplete submission may result in the return of that submission to the proponent, or a delay in the commencement of NOPSEMA's assessment. Aside from the checks above, NOPSEMA will presume that the information provided in an OPP submission is complete and accurate.



NOPSEMA will notify the proponent in writing of the OPP submission receipt date and provide a contact person for the assessment.

7.3. Assessment team

NOPSEMA will conduct a team-based assessment of the OPP, drawing on its technical expertise as required to undertake the assessment of the OPP.

7.4. Topic scoping

The assessment of an OPP will involve the selection of impact- and risk-based topics informed by the nature and scale of the project (e.g., the sensitivities of the receiving environment, degree of community interest or concern, and those environmental impacts and risks that are considered to pose the most significant threat to the environment). In all cases, a general assessment and at least one topic assessment will be selected to ensure that all aspects of the Environment Regulations are addressed. Table 1 provides an overview of key considerations during 'general' and 'topic' assessments of an OPP and section 8 and 9 provides further detail on the assessment considerations.

Table 1 OPP scope of general and topic assessments

Part	OPP assessment criteria overview
General assessment	In all cases, NOPSEMA will undertake an assessment of the whole OPP submission to determine whether NOPSEMA is reasonably satisfied that the OPP meets the criteria for publication set out in subregulation 9(4) (Assessment Stage I) and the criteria for acceptance set out in subregulation13(4) (Assessment Stage II). For both stages, the general assessment will determine, in general terms, whether the OPP complies with the items required by subregulation7(2). The general assessment is intended to assess, at a broad level, whether the OPP includes all required content, and scope, process applied, consistency with plans of management and level of detail provided are reasonable.
Topic assessment	 NOPSEMA will conduct a detailed assessment of one or more topic areas during OPP assessments. This considers in detail, the extent to which the OPP meets the criteria for publication and criteria for acceptance. Topic areas will focus on the components of the activity that pose the greatest levels of environmental impact, risk or uncertainty to establish if there are any specific information deficiencies or faults in the proponent's impact and risk assessments and subsequent environmental acceptability determinations. Topic assessments may focus on public comment aspects of the OPP assessment to ensure that the proponent's address of public comments is appropriate.



7.5. Timeframe for assessment

In accordance with the statutory 30-day assessment decision timeframe, NOPSEMA will notify the proponent in writing of one of the following assessment outcomes:

- a decision that the OPP is or is not suitable for publication (Stage I)
- a decision that the OPP has been accepted or has been refused acceptance (Stage II)
- a notification that NOPSEMA is unable to make a decision on the OPP within the 30-day period (applicable to both Stage I and II).

NOPSEMA will propose an alternative timeframe if it is unable to make a decision within the statutory timeframe[®].

Statutory timeframes for assessment are calculated from the day after the OPP submission is received by NOPSEMA, in accordance with section 36 of the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901*⁹. If the final day of the statutory timeframe falls on a weekend or public holiday, then the *Acts Interpretation Act 1901* allows for the decision to be made on the following business day¹⁰.

7.6. Requests for further written information

NOPSEMA may request further written information from the proponent to clarify aspects of the submission that relate to the OPP publication criteria (Stage I) or acceptance criteria (Stage II).

NOPSEMA will specify a reasonable time period within which this further information will be required. A proponent can submit earlier than the specified time or request more time. A decision whether or not to grant the extension will be at NOPSEMA's discretion.

Responses to requests for further written information will be considered in conjunction with information in the OPP. NOPSEMA expects that responses are incorporated in the OPP so that one consolidated document can be provided in response to each request for further written information.

Should NOPSEMA request further written information during either stage of the OPP assessment process and the proponent fails to provide the information, the information may be requested again. NOPSEMA will generally limit the number of times further written information is sought from the proponent under Regulation 8 and 11 to a maximum of two requests for each of a stage I or II assessment. NOPSEMA may seek a further round of written information in limited circumstances, such as where new scientific information or legislation is published part way through the assessment, or other unforeseen circumstances necessitate a further request.

See Section 8.2 for more information on refusal to accept an OPP for publication and section 9.5 for more information on refusal to accept an OPP.

7.7. Unable to make a decision

If NOPSEMA requires more time to consider the OPP, in excess of the 30-day timeframe, a notice will be issued under paragraph 9(2)(b) that a decision was unable to be made in the 30-day timeframe.

⁸ Environment Regulations, paragraph 9(2)(b) and paragraph 13(2)(b).

⁹ Acts Interpretation Act 1901, sub-section 36(1).

¹⁰ Acts Interpretation Act 1901, sub-section 36(2).



This may occur for a range of reasons including:

- further written information has been requested from the proponent
- complex projects with significant or uncertain impacts or risks
- the proponent informs NOPSEMA that other submissions, including EPs, are of a higher assessment priority.

If NOPSEMA notifies the proponent that it is unable to make a decision within 30 days, NOPSEMA must set out a proposed timetable for consideration of the OPP.

7.8. Withdrawal of an OPP

A proponent may notify NOPSEMA in writing of its intention to withdraw an OPP from assessment at any time before an acceptance or refusal decision has been made.

If the OPP has been released for public comment before the proponent notifies NOPSEMA of its decision to withdraw the OPP, NOPSEMA will publish a notice on its website that the submission has been withdrawn.

If the proponent has not submitted the OPP¹¹ within six months of the public comment period closure, NOPSEMA will write to the proponent and request that the proponent submits the OPP within a reasonable timeframe or withdraws the OPP from the assessment process.

8. Assessment of OPP suitability for publication - stage I (Regulation 9)

8.1. Suitability of an OPP for publication

NOPSEMA will consider the OPP content to determine whether it can be reasonably satisfied that the proposal meets the criteria for publication (Stage I). In Stage I, NOPSEMA will assess the suitability of the OPP for publication against the content requirements of an OPP stipulated in the Environment Regulations¹².

Stage I of an OPP assessment will check that the environmental impacts and risks have been reasonably scoped against the project circumstances and that relevant environmental performance outcomes are provided for each. At this stage, the assessment does not consider the environmental acceptability of the project, but whether the OPP presents a logical supported evaluation of each environmental impact and risk and provides a reasonable basis for public comment.

Supporting documentation, such as relevant environmental impact assessment studies, must be included in full with the OPP if not publically available. Studies may be summarised and cited in the OPP where they are publicly available.

A decision that an OPP is suitable for publication under paragraph 9(1)(a) means that NOPSEMA has decided that the OPP meets the content requirements specified in subregulation7(2) and the criteria specified in subregulation 9(4). The decision indicates that NOPSEMA is reasonably satisfied that the

¹¹ In accordance with regulation 11

¹² Environment Regulations, sub-regulations 7(2), (3), (4), and (5).



environmental impacts and risks have been reasonably scoped and relevant EPOs are provided that will ensure the proposal provides a reasonable basis for public comment.

8.2. Refusal of an OPP for publication

After all requested information has been received and assessed, if NOPSEMA decides that the OPP does not meet the 'suitability criteria' of the Environment Regulations, the proponent will be notified in writing as soon as practicable and provided with reasons for the decision¹³. NOPSEMA will not accept an OPP for publication that:

- does not sufficiently address the suitability for publication criteria identified in subregulation9(4)
- does not present a logical supported evaluation of each environmental impact and risk for the project circumstances, in particular for matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act
- does not contain environmental performance outcomes that are consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development¹⁴ and that are relevant to the identified impacts and risks of the project
- involves an activity or part of an activity being undertaken in any part of a declared World Heritage property.

After receiving a decision that the OPP is not suitable for publication, the proponent may choose to submit a new OPP under regulation 6 and recommence the assessment process.

8.3. Publication of the OPP for public comment

In the event that NOPSEMA is reasonably satisfied that the OPP is suitable for publication under paragraph 9(1)(a), in accordance with paragraph 9(5), NOPSEMA publishes the OPP on its website as soon as practicable along with the following information:

- a notice inviting public comment
- a specified public comment period
- instructions on how comments can be made.

It is NOPSEMA's policy that a consolidated and complete OPP document is resubmitted following any requests for further written information incorporating all additional requested information. This is to allow NOPSEMA to publish the OPP for public comment, without any additional changes needing to be made, should NOPSEMA be reasonably satisfied that the OPP meets the relevant decision-making criteria. In some circumstances, NOPSEMA may provide an opportunity to a proponent to make specific administrative or formatting amendments to the OPP before publication where it is considered such changes are minor and would impart clarity for public comment. The OPP will be published on NOPSEMA's website on a date agreed with the proponent.

The Environment Regulations prescribe a minimum public comment period of four weeks for all OPP submissions¹⁵. Extension of the public comment period beyond the minimum will be at the discretion of

¹³ Environment Regulations, subregulation9(6).

¹⁴ Ecologically sustainable development is defined in the EPBC Act

¹⁵ Environment Regulations, paragraph 9(5)(b).



NOPSEMA and determined on a case-by-case basis. The length of the public comment period will be between four and twelve weeks and will vary based on NOPSEMA's consideration of the following:

- project complexity
- sensitivity of the environment within which the project is proposed to be undertaken
- degree of stakeholder consultation undertaken prior to the OPP submission
- number of non-business days within the public comment period.

Generally, more complex projects in proximity to sensitive environments that have had little to no exposure to stakeholder consultation by the proponent, will receive the full twelve-week comment period.

Conversely, a small-scale project in a remote location that has already been subject to a reasonable amount of stakeholder consultation will likely only require the minimum four-week public comment period.

NOPSEMA will notify the proponent of the public comment timeframe set by NOPSEMA in the notice of acceptance of 'suitability for publication'.

8.4. Promotion of the public comment period

If an OPP is found to be suitable for publication, NOPSEMA will request that the proponent publish a notice inviting comments on the OPP within the designated public comment period in specific media. NOPSEMA's request will identify (at a minimum) the requirement for the proponent to advertise in:

- a prominent place on the proponent's website
- a national newspaper
- statewide daily newspaper(s) in the State(s) and/or Territory that are closest to the offshore project (more than one State or Territory may be necessary depending on the project location)
- a regional newspaper closest to the offshore project if practicable. .

8.5. Submissions during the public comment period

It is NOPSEMA's policy that public comments be in writing and submitted via NOPSEMA's consultation hub (<u>https://consultation.nopsema.gov.au/</u>). NOPSEMA has published an information paper (N-04790-IP1664) that contains additional information on making comments during the OPP public comment period.

To ensure that comments are considered and addressed, public comment submissions must be received by NOPSEMA within the specified period and via the submission details published on NOPSEMA's website.

In the event that NOPSEMA receives comment on an OPP prior to the public comment period, NOPSEMA will request that the comment is resubmitted during the public comment period so that an informed submission can be made.

8.6. NOPSEMA's consideration of public comments

NOPSEMA will be the recipient of all public comments as this enables the regulator to be informed about all issues raised by the public during the comment period. Public comment correspondence will be collected and forwarded to the proponent, in a reasonable timeframe.



NOPSEMA will retain a copy of all correspondence but will not review public comment until after the public comment period has closed and the proponent has resubmitted the OPP with the report summarising the comments received. NOPSEMA will then assess whether the OPP adequately addresses the comments received during the public comment period¹⁶.

9. Acceptability of the OPP assessment - stage II (Regulation 11)

9.1. **Proponent address of public comments**

As soon as practicable after the closing date of the public comment period, the proponent must submit another copy of the OPP (whether altered or not in response to public comments) and a public comment report. This report should summarise comments received during the public comment period. The public comment report must specifically provide an assessment of the merits of each objection or claim made and describe a suitable response, or proposed response, to each objection or claim.

Where the comments received have sufficient merit, the proponent is to alter the content of the OPP to reflect these responses. If changes have not occurred in response to an objection or claim, the proponent must clearly demonstrate why the objection or claim did not result in a change to the offshore project or its environmental management. The proponent may also make changes to the OPP to reflect any other information learnt or actions arising from the public comment period.

9.2. Criteria for acceptance

During Stage II of the assessment process, NOPSEMA will assess the acceptability of the project in accordance with the acceptance criteria set out in subregulation13(4) of the Environment Regulations. This stage of the process will include a focus on how the proponent has addressed public comments given during the period for public comment. The Stage II assessment will also involve a particular focus on the proponent's demonstration that the environmental impacts and risks of the offshore project will be of an acceptable level for the life of the project.

In determining whether the OPP is acceptable, NOPSEMA will have regard to:

- the evaluation presented for the identified environmental impacts and risks in demonstrating acceptability
- the establishment of environmental performance outcomes that:
 - define the acceptable level of environment impact
 - are consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development
 - clearly relate to the risks and impacts identified and evaluated in the proposal
 - clearly relate to environmental features that may be impacted
 - address impacts and risks for the life of the project

¹⁶ Environment Regulations, paragraph 13(4)(a)



- relevant information and considerations, including correspondence from external stakeholders and the content of public submissions including whether the proponent has adequately addressed comments made
- reputable and publicly available scientific and other literature relevant to the assessment that the proponent should reasonably have known and considered, to confirm or refute claims made by the proponent, or identify gaps in the assessment
- Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment (DAWE) policies, guidelines, plans of management and other material relating to matters protected under Part 3 of the EPBC Act relevant to the project.

9.3. Acceptance of an OPP

A decision to accept an OPP in accordance with paragraph 13(1)(a) means that NOPSEMA is reasonably satisfied that the OPP meets the acceptance criteria set out in subregulation13(4) of the Environment Regulations. An OPP acceptance decision indicates that the proponent has demonstrated, with a sufficient evidence base, that the offshore project can meet an acceptable level of environmental performance and that comments during the public comment period have been adequately addressed.

Following the acceptance of an OPP, subsequent environment plans will need to be submitted and accepted before any activities covered under the OPP can be undertaken.

9.4. Publication of OPP after acceptance

NOPSEMA will publish the final OPP on its website within 10 days of making a decision to accept the OPP¹⁷. It is the proponent's responsibility to ensure that any submission it makes to NOPSEMA following the public comment period as well as in response to any requests for further written information is complete, consolidated and of publication quality. NOPSEMA's policy is to publish a consolidated document including the:

- final OPP
- any technical documents and appendices appended to the OPP
- proponent's summary assessment of public comments and actions in response to public comments received (known as the consultation report)
- additional information provided by the proponent in response to NOPSEMA requests for further written information.

Being mindful of the size of their electronic OPP documentation and challenges large documents can present when accessing a published OPP online, the proponent may choose to submit appendices as a separate document from the main OPP document depending on the size of the consolidated OPP.

9.5. Refusal to accept an OPP

The Regulations require that an OPP must be refused acceptance for one or both of the following reasons:

• the offshore project is clearly unacceptable under the OPGGS Act and Environment Regulations (e.g. it occurs in a World Heritage property)

¹⁷ Environment Regulations, subregulation13(5)



- the offshore project is inconsistent with a plan of management
- NOPSEMA is not reasonably satisfied that the OPP meets one or more of the criteria for acceptance (subregulation13(4)).

In the event that a 'refuse to accept' decision is reached, the response letter to the proponent must contain a clear justification for why NOPSEMA is not reasonably satisfied that the submission meets the criteria for acceptance.

If NOPSEMA refuses to accept an OPP, NOPSEMA must publish the 'reasons for refusal' on its website¹⁸. The reasons for refusal will not be published until the proponent has been notified in writing of the decision outcome.

Following a decision by NOPSEMA to refuse to accept an OPP, the proponent may choose to submit a new OPP for the offshore project under Regulation 6. In this case, the OPP will be considered a new submission and the assessment commences at Stage I of the assessment process (subregulation7(2)).

10. Policy review

NOPSEMA will review and update this policy from time to time, as the assessment process is refined. Reviews may be prompted, for example, by changes to legislation or by lessons learnt during OPP assessments.

11. Relevant legislation

Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006 (the OPGGS Act)

Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2023 (the Environment Regulations)

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the EPBC Act)

Administrative Decisions (Judicial Review) Act 1977

12. Related documents

Regulatory policy and guidelines on NOPSEMA's administration of the legislation:

N-04750-PL1347 – Policy – Environment plan assessment

N-04000-GL0225 - Guideline - Making submissions to NOPSEMA

Resources to assist stakeholders understand the requirements and how to comply:

N-04790-GN1663 – Guidance Note – Offshore project proposal content requirements

N-04750-GL1350 – Guideline – Environment management cost recovery

N-04790-IP1664 – Information Paper – Making public comment on offshore project proposals

N-04790-FM1653 – Form – Offshore project proposal cover sheet

¹⁸ Environment Regulations, subregulation13(6).