



# Environmental Defenders Office

## Offshore Petroleum Factsheet Series:

### How to comment on proposed Gas Exploration Areas

*Disclaimer: This factsheet is a guide only and is designed to give readers a plain English overview of the law. It does not replace the need for professional legal advice in individual cases. To request free initial legal advice on a public interest environmental or planning law issue, please visit our [website](#).*

*While every effort has been made to ensure the information is accurate, the EDO does not accept any responsibility for any loss or damage resulting from any error in this factsheet or use of this work.*

*This factsheet was last updated on 17 March 2026*

#### What is this factsheet about?

This factsheet explains the first stage of offshore oil and gas projects, where areas are nominated for gas exploration. There are three steps in the nomination process, including a step that provides you with an opportunity to comment on nominated areas. This factsheet shows you how to stay updated on when these opportunities arise, and how to write an effective submission.

#### Outline

(Click on the subheading to skip to that section)

1. What is this factsheet about?
2. Steps in the nomination process
3. Determining the areas for exploration
4. Evaluate this resource

#### Steps in the nomination process

The first stage before any oil and gas projects commence involves the nomination of areas for exploration. There are three distinct steps in the nomination process, as shown by the Figure below.



## Determining the areas for exploration

### Step 1. Government invites companies to nominate areas for exploration

The Australian Government invites companies to participate in the Offshore Petroleum Exploration Acreage Release Program (**Acreage Release**) each year.

Companies can nominate areas of the ocean that they want to explore, and the Government will then consider these nominations when deciding which offshore areas to release for exploration.

Proposed release areas are published in the Australian Petroleum News (**APN**), a digital newsletter published by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (**Department**).

N.B. To stay informed, you can be added to the APN mailing list, by emailing [petroleum.exploration@industry.gov.au](mailto:petroleum.exploration@industry.gov.au)

### Step 2. Government invites public comment on nominated areas

This is the first stage where you have an opportunity to comment on proposed nominated areas. Although the Government is not required *by law* to consult the public on Acreage Releases, the Department allows various stakeholders to comment on nominated release areas and highlight how exploration in these areas may impact them.

#### Who are the stakeholders allowed to comment?<sup>1</sup>

- Government agencies
- The public
- Marine users, like the fishing, aquaculture and tourism industries

#### When does it happen?

This public comment opportunity is open for approximately six weeks in November/December of each year.

#### How to comment on nominated areas

Public comment is by way of written submissions. The Government will assess the issues raised in the submissions before deciding whether to release the nominated areas for exploration.

N.B. You can subscribe to the [Department's Consultation Updates](#) to be notified of upcoming public comment opportunities relating to Acreage Release.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Industry, Science and Resources, 'Offshore petroleum exploration acreage release process' (Webpage) < <https://www.industry.gov.au/mining-oil-and-gas/oil-and-gas/offshore-oil-and-gas/offshore-petroleum-exploration-acreage-release-process#consultation-on-area-nominations> >

## What to include in your written submission

### *Introduce yourself or your group*

Introduce yourself/your group and say why the release of the areas in the region affects you. For example, you may be a traditional custodian of the Sea Country where the activity is proposed or a commercial fisher whose livelihood depends on a healthy ocean. Or you might be a member of the public who is concerned about the climate change impacts of fossil fuel projects.

### *Outline your key concerns*

Written submissions require you to “*provide comments on how the release of the areas in this region may affect you*”. This may include concerns about:

- the conservation of ecosystems and habitats
- the risks to native species and in particular, endangered species
- the impacts on the fishing industry, food security and regional communities
- the impacts on First Nations communities

Your submission doesn't need to be long, and the shorter you can make it the better. Avoid using emotive or abusive language, as this can detract from your arguments.

### *Use evidence or case studies or stories to support your arguments and recommendations*

Wherever possible, include evidence in your submission that supports your arguments. This could be knowledge you (or your group) possess, studies or reports written by others, information from government websites, court judgments or journal articles

Read: [EDO's Factsheet How offshore oil and gas projects impact the environment](#) for an overview of the environmental impacts of offshore oil and gas projects.

Visit: The 2023 Offshore Petroleum Acreage Release [website](#) to find submissions made to previous rounds of Acreage Release.

### **Step 3. Government releases areas for exploration**

Release areas are announced in the Australian Gazette or State/Territory Government Gazette, and you can access an information package on the Department's Acreage Release website.

Visit: The Department's Acreage Release [website](#).

## Evaluate this resource

EDO welcomes feedback on this legal resource. Your feedback will help us ensure we provide useful legal information.

If you have any concerns or suggestions regarding this legal resource, please fill out the Legal Resources evaluation form by clicking [here](#) or scanning the QR code below:

