

MAYORS MESSAGE 460

Exploratory drilling in the Great Australian Bight.

As most people would know there are several companies preparing to complete exploratory drilling in the Great Australian Bight searching for oil and gas.

Council is supportive of this process provided that drilling is approved by NOPSEMA – this organization is independent of Government, consists of highly skilled experts and is very conscientious about ensuring that no operations can happen unless every possible precaution is taken.

Before deciding to support this process Council engaged extensively with BP Exploration in particular and sought assurances that we would not face the kind of disaster that happened in the Gulf of Mexico. We were provided with answers to every question and were satisfied at the level of transparency in all cases.

The number of actions that BP developed and shared with other companies to ensure that another disaster is avoided proved to be very reassuring. Consultation is an ongoing process with two more visits in the next couple of months which will incorporate a public information day and visits to other areas of the Eyre Peninsula.

Many may not be aware but this is not the first time that there will be drilling in the Bight with 12 wells having been explored in the past. The track record of the various companies that have drilled for oil and gas in Australia, both onshore and offshore shows a most impressive history.

The NOPSEMA process is very thorough and usually involves feedback to the company requesting that certain stipulated aspects be further detailed. This has already happened twice and further detail was provided for NOPSEMA to review. This part of the process does not represent a refusal despite the claims of some interested parties but is a part of the normal steps taken.

All exploration for oil and gas is never certain of finding a viable deposit with only a small percentage being commercially viable. Should this programme prove to be successful the prospects for our community, the State and the whole country could be very exciting indeed.

The investment of \$10 million at the Ceduna airport coupled with the activity over coming months is a real bonus for our community. Furthermore over 95% of the expenditure on this project has been spent either locally or on the Eyre Peninsula.

The level of care being taken to avoid every possible risk of spillage coupled with plans to quickly address any spillage is both reassuring and comprehensive.

The NOPSEMA process will not allow drilling to proceed unless the level of risk is at the lowest possible level. If we want our town and area to have development and jobs we need to support progressive actions to promote growth.