



Fact sheet



Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006 (petroleum activities)

If your project involves the exploration or recovery of petroleum in an Australian offshore area in the sea, you must obtain titles and plan approvals in accordance with this Act.

1. What approvals do I need?

Petroleum exploration and recovery activities in Australia's offshore areas require an appropriate title and an approved Offshore Project Proposal (OPP) and environment plan in accordance with the [Offshore Petroleum Act and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006](#) (OPGGGS Act). Offshore areas generally start three nautical miles from the Australian coastline, extending to the boundary of Australia's continental shelf.

[Petroleum titles](#) derived from Petroleum Exploration Permits are awarded on a successive basis and each title is granted over a particular area. An exploration permit can only be granted in an offshore area the Joint Authority has [released](#) for petroleum exploration following a competitive bidding process. The Joint Authority comprises the Australian Government Minister for Resources and the [relevant State or Northern Territory Minister](#) for the offshore area in question.

Titles are as follows:

- **Petroleum Exploration Permits** authorise exploration for petroleum in a defined area within the offshore release area. Permits are granted for six years and a maximum of two five-year renewal terms each, requiring a 50% relinquishment of blocks.
- **Petroleum Retention Leases** are granted from blocks in an exploration permit where there has been a discovery and if the recovery of petroleum is not commercially viable but is likely to become

commercially viable within 15 years.

- **Petroleum Production Licences** authorise petroleum exploration and recovery activities.
- **Infrastructure Licences** authorise the construction and operation of an infrastructure facility in relation to petroleum or greenhouse gas.
- **Pipeline Licences** authorise the construction and operation of a pipeline to convey petroleum or greenhouse gas.
- **Petroleum Special Prospecting Authorities** authorise petroleum exploration operations in an authority area not already subject to an existing title – but not the making of a well. These authorities are limited to a maximum 180 days.
- **Petroleum Access Authorities** authorise petroleum exploration and recovery operations (but not the making of a well) related to an existing exploration permit, retention lease, production licence or special prospecting authority to be carried out in an area proximal to but beyond the boundaries of the existing title.

[Guidelines](#) on title requirements are available on the National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator (NOPTA) website.

Petroleum operations require approval of an environment plan prior to commencement. Development projects also require approval of an OPP. Environment plans and OPPs must undergo an [assessment process](#) to receive approval. Content

This fact sheet provides general information and does not constitute legal advice. You should seek independent legal advice tailored to your individual circumstances. The Major Projects Facilitation Agency (MPFA) assists major project proponents to navigate Australian Government approval processes. The MPFA does not grant approvals, nor administer the legislation listed in this fact sheet.

requirements for each of these documents are detailed within the [Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage \(Environment\) Regulations 2023](#).

Offshore titleholders should also be aware of ongoing obligations in respect to titles and offshore activities under the [Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage \(Resource Management and Administration\) Regulations 2011](#).

Separate requirements apply for offshore activities proposed in marine parks. For more information on these requirements, please refer to the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) and Parks Australia guidance note on [Petroleum activities and Australian Marine Parks](#)^[PDF].

2. Who provides the approvals?

Under the OPGGS Act, the decisionmaker for offshore petroleum titles is the relevant Offshore Petroleum Joint Authority.

NOPTA manages the [Titles Register](#) and undertakes the technical assessment of title and title-related applications. NOPTA makes decisions on the short-termed Petroleum Special Prospecting Authorities and Access Authorities. Based on technical advice from NOPTA, Joint Authorities make decisions on the grant of all other petroleum titles and title-related applications.

NOPSEMA assesses and makes decisions on the acceptance of OPPs and environment plans.

For activities occurring in State or Northern Territory coastal waters, separate legislation applies, and additional approvals are required from each state or territory.

3. How do I apply for the approvals?

Applications for the grant of exploration permits from an acreage release are submitted to NOPTA in accordance with the requirements specified in the Invitation to Bid published in the [Australian Government Gazette](#). Applications for titles derived from exploration permits and all title-related applications are submitted to NOPTA by email or post using the approved manner and form detailed in NOPTA's [Petroleum Forms Guidance](#)^[PDF]. The specific application process will depend on the title.

OPPs and environment plans are submitted to NOPSEMA for assessment based on the [submission process](#) outlined on NOPSEMA's website. Depending on the particular document involved for each element of a proposal or plan, submission may take place by online portal, secure file transfer or email.

4. More information

National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator

Further information on offshore petroleum titles is available on the NOPTA [website](#).

NOPTA can be contacted by email at titles@nopta.gov.au.

National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority

Further information on offshore petroleum plans is available on the NOPSEMA [website](#).

NOPSEMA can be contacted by email at environment@nopsema.gov.au.

Major Projects Facilitation Agency

If you would like assistance to identify potential Australian Government regulatory approvals required for your project, please refer to the [Major projects help tool](#) self-assessment.

The MPFA team can be contacted by email at MPFA@industry.gov.au.