



18 October 2024

Attention: Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and
Communications
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Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

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Dear Committee Members,

RE: *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Amendment (Reconsideration of Decisions) Bill 2024 (the Bill)*

Senex Energy (**Senex**) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Senate Environment and Communications Committee's inquiry into the above Bill. Senex supports the Bill's objective to limit the time period during which third parties request the federal Minister for the Environment to reconsider an approval decision under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (the EPBC Act)*.

About Senex

Senex is a world-class supplier of affordable, reliable and secure natural gas. We are committed to delivering essential energy for life. The energy we proudly provide is essential to our modern lives and for the thriving communities we serve.

We're also a critical energy provider to Australia's manufacturing industry, supporting thousands of workers who make essential goods – from bricks to plasterboard to glass bottles.

Senex currently supplies around 27 petajoules (PJ) of natural gas per year to the Australian domestic gas market. From the end of 2025, this will increase to 60 PJs, equivalent to around 10 percent of east coast domestic demand, as a result of Senex's A\$1 billion investment in its Surat Basin expansion project.

EPBC Act reform

The case for reform of Australia's environmental laws is well documented in the Independent Review of the EPBC Act completed by Professor Graeme Samuel AC in 2020 (**the Samuel Review**) and Senex supports the government's stated objectives of fixing Australia's environmental laws so they better protect the environment and give faster, clearer decisions for business.

The Bill under consideration is consistent with these objectives as it would provide greater certainty in approval conditions for project proponents. Such certainty is essential for investor confidence, particularly in capital intensive industries involving multi-decade investments such as the natural gas industry.

Under the current regulatory framework, and as described in the Bill's explanatory memorandum, it is possible for a reconsideration request to be made by a third party as many as 11 years after the original approval decision. While Senex expresses no view as to the merits of the reconsideration request discussed in the explanatory memorandum, this represents an unacceptable risk for **any industry** and leaves the door open for opportunistic reconsideration requests made by groups seeking to frustrate and delay project development. The consequence of such actions is to add cost and risk to projects that have already been through a comprehensive and lengthy assessment process, and it does nothing to improve environmental outcomes.

Senex considers that the proposal to enable only the relevant state or territory minister to make a reconsideration request once 36 months have passed from the approval decision is reasonable. It effectively balances the need for investment certainty while ensuring environmental protections remain robust should substantial new information become available. In fact, the timeframe of 36 months could be further reduced to provide additional certainty to project proponents without diminishing environmental protection.

In addition to supporting the current Bill, Senex supports broader reforms to the EPBC Act to create a more efficient assessment process for business while maintaining the high standards of environmental protection Australian's rightly expect. The government's Future Gas Strategy, released earlier this year, recognises the need for investment in new natural gas supply to support Australia's energy system, to maintain and grow Australia's manufacturing sector and to help our trade partners on their own paths to net zero. However, reform of Australia's environmental laws is needed to secure this much needed investment. Senex looks forward to playing its part and will continue to engage constructively with policymakers on these issues in the months and years ahead.

If you require any further information, please contact Amanda Delaney, Senex Head of Government Relations at

Yours sincerely,

Darren Stevenson
Chief Operating Officer and Incoming Chief Executive Officer
Senex Energy Pty Ltd