

**Economics Legislation**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water Portfolio**

**Inquiry:** Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Legislation  
Amendment (Safety and Other Measures) Bill 2024

**Question No:** IQ24-000056

**Hearing Date:** 14 March 2024

**Division/Agency:** Nature Positive Regulation Division

**Topic:** Environmental laws

**Question Date:** 14 March 2024

**Question Type:** Written

**Senator Cox asked:**

1. Did DCCEE make any formal objections or push back against this move to weaken environmental laws?
2. It has become clear that this change is meeting one of the Coalitions four demands to pass PRRT legislation, is the department working on any of the following:
  - a. Preventing the Department or a future Environment Protection Agency from being able to 'stop the clock' on approvals whilst more information is sought?
  - b. Expect gas projects already with applications in to not have to comply with future EPA approvals?

**Answer:**

1. Agencies within government routinely engage with each other in relation to proposed law changes. These discussions include advice on the structure of proposed changes, implications on related laws and advice on how changes might be operationalised.
2.
  - a. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water is currently working to develop new environmental laws in accordance with the Australian Government's Nature Positive Plan. This work includes consideration of all elements of the approvals process under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, including how and under what circumstances additional information is sought during the assessment process.
  - b. The Government will work with relevant parties on existing accredited agreements and arrangements to integrate new national environmental standards and requirements under the new Nature Positive laws. It is the Government's intention that the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) will continue to regulate offshore gas projects under the revised arrangements. The department is continuing to develop proposed transitional arrangements for project approvals, noting the general intent is that project applications undergoing assessment under the current legislative settings will continue to be assessed under those settings, unless the proponent opts out to seek assessment under the new laws.