

**Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications**  
**Legislation Committee**  
Answers to questions on notice  
**Environment portfolio**

**Question No:** 175  
**Hearing:** Supplementary Budget Estimates  
**Outcome:** 1  
**Programme:** Director of National Parks  
**Topic:** Marine Reserves - Oil and Gas Activities  
**Hansard Page:** 58  
**Question Date:** 19 October 2015  
**Question Type:** Spoken

**Senator Siewert, asked:**

**Mr Clark:** As you would be aware, there is a range of zones within reserves that are currently under active management. Many of those zones allow oil and gas activities. There are frequently activities, whether it is seismic work or other preparatory work for oil and gas activities, occurring at various times within reserves. The approval process for that is through NOPSEMA, and questions in relation to that should be directed to them. Within those zones, as Ms Barnes said, those activities are excluded from highly protected areas but are allowed within multiple use areas within the network. With respect to those areas that are currently under the review, as we talked about before, that are under a transitional management arrangement, they are not subject to any zoning restrictions at present and obviously will not be until new management plans are developed and come into force.

**Senator SIEWERT:** Has there been any activity in those areas?

**Mr Clark:** Yes.

**Senator SIEWERT:** There has been since last estimates?

**Mr Clark:** Yes.

**Senator SIEWERT:** Can you provide the detail of that, please?

**Mr Clark:** Yes.

**Senator SIEWERT:** Are you able to do that now or on notice?

**Mr Clark:** I would have to take that on notice.

**Senator SIEWERT:** Could you provide what activity and in which reserves—what activity and when? That would be appreciated; thank you.

**Answer:**

1. Since the May 2015 Senate Budget Estimates process held 25 May to 4 June 2015, five short-term exploration permits (Special Prospecting and Access Authorities) were granted across areas assigned in 2012 as Multiple Use and Special Purpose Zones. These permits were granted by the National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator (NOPTA), on 29 May 2015, 17 July 2015 and 1 November 2015 and overlap the Argo-Rowley Terrace, Gascoyne, Shark Bay, Abrolhos and Montbello Multiple Use Zones and Abrolhos Special Purpose Zone.
2. One of the above-mentioned Special Prospecting Authorities also overlaps an area assigned in 2012 as Habitat Protection Zone in Gascoyne and Carnarvon Commonwealth marine reserves.
3. The 'no change on the water' policy that was introduced following the 2012 proclamation has been continued to allow the independent review to consider management and zoning arrangements, including what activity should be allowed in different zone types. The 'no change on water' policy does not pre-empt the findings of the review and any subsequent response by government.