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EPA guidelines support existing WA shale gas regulation

Western Australia's Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) has demonstrated confidence in the state's ability to safely regulate the emerging shale and tight gas industry.

APPEA's Chief Operating Officer Western Region, Stedman Ellis, said the EPA's new assessment guidelines for projects using hydraulic fracturing supported WA's existing regulatory regime.

Mr Ellis said the EPA has previously determined that current exploration activities involving hydraulic fracturing were unlikely to have a significant environmental impact.

"The EPA has now outlined a pragmatic and responsible approach to the approval of more advanced projects based on a comprehensive and scientifically-based assessment of risk," he said.

"In doing so, it has clearly rejected the alarmist view that shale and tight gas projects cannot be developed safely.

"Instead, the EPA has effectively said that new proposals should be considered on their merits and, if approved, be required to operate in accordance with strict regulations."

Mr Ellis said the new assessment guidelines provided certainty for companies by making it clear what information would be required by the EPA when considering new projects.

He said while the level of information required was extensive, industry recognised that the EPA was responding to community concerns.

"The EPA has reiterated its view that some hydraulic fracturing proposals will not require a formal assessment because the effect on the environment is unlikely to be significant," he said.

"This has been the approach taken in regard to exploration wells currently planned for the Perth and Canning basins.

"The community can be confident, however, that any proposal that is subject to a formal impact assessment in the future will have been through an extremely comprehensive and rigorous process," he said.

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