



20 July 2020

EPBC recommendations a step in the right direction

Australia's oil and gas sector welcomed today's interim report into the review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* as it provides an important pathway to more efficient environmental approvals processes while ensuring protection of the environment and delivering greater certainty for future investment.

APPEA Chief Executive Andrew McConville said the recommendation for consistent national environmental standards focused on outcomes rather than process will help improve environmental protection while supporting businesses' needs.

"While we still need time to consider the Interim Report in detail, the headline recommendations are a welcome outcome for both improved environmental protection while reducing the costly regulatory burden to business. The approach proposed should help improve outcomes for all stakeholders and today's report is a step in the right direction," Mr McConville said.

"This is a once in a decade opportunity to get it right. We are encouraged by the discussions we've had with environment groups during the review process and we are committed to continuing to work with these groups and the Government as the process plays out.

"Overlapping requirements between states and the Commonwealth and widespread duplication of processes between the Commonwealth and states do not help to protect the environment but often causes unnecessary delays increasing the costs for development.

"The EPBC water trigger is a key example of such duplication, and though we are disappointed that the review recommends the water trigger be retained, the options identified to apply the trigger more efficiently are a positive step."

Mr McConville said the report's intention to establish clear national environmental standards focused on outcome rather than process, will provide greater flexibility when circumstances change while ensuring environmental protection is maintained.

"This will improve certainty for business proponents, environmental groups and communities. We all share a desire to improve certainty – for the environment, for business, and for community amenity," Mr McConville said.

A recent survey of more than 100 APPEA members showed that nearly 70% of them see reducing red and green tape as the critical steps to improve the investment environment, streamline approval processes and restore business confidence amid COVID-19 and near record low oil prices.

Read APPEA's EPBC Act [review submission here](#)

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