



Friday 15 October, 2021

The Hon Keith Pitt, MP
Member for Hinkler, Qld
Minister for Resources and Water
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

CC: Member for Wentworth, Mr Dave Sharma MP

RE: Call for the termination of Petroleum Exploration Permit No. 11 (PEP 11)

Dear Minister Pitt,

In 2018, Mission Blue designated the Sydney Coast as a globally recognized Hope Spot, covering a coastal area from Newcastle to Wollongong in recognition of the extraordinary significance of the marine environment in this region. The champions of the Hope Spot are the Bondi-based Ocean Lovers organization and Australian charity Underwater Earth and we join with them in requesting the termination of the PEP 11 permit.

The Hope Spot has the support of many other stakeholders including both the State and Federal Members of Parliament, corporate entities, ecotourism operators, other Not-for-Profit organizations and community members. The involvement of the stakeholders and supporters indicates the widespread interest in preserving a wonderfully rich ecosystem with incredible biodiversity - a veritable marine wonderland.

Australia is home to some of the most pristine ocean environments on earth and Sydney is a world leading demonstration of how humans can live in harmonious co-existence in such close proximity to a vast and unique marine environment that they love, cherish and nurture. The prospect of petroleum and gas exploration off the NSW coastline in the PEP 11 license is a clear breach of the Australian Government's trusted role to protect people and the environment for future generations. This issue is of international significance and has impacts beyond NSW jurisdictions.

The many thousands of citizens who actively support the restoration of damaged parts of this coastline are rightly in vociferous opposition to the extension of this license. Beyond the obvious benefits of protecting the outstanding beauty of the NSW coast that provides immense value in recreation, health and well-being and income to the people of NSW, estimated at \$116 billion, it is the home and rightful domain of an incredibly bio-diverse population of marine creatures and interconnected living systems that sustain the earth.

The internationally renowned marine biologist and whale researcher Dr. Olaf Meynecke, champion of The Gold Coast Bay Hope Spot, also expressed his concerns over the extension of the license. He describes the East Coast of Australia as an important habitat for Humpback, Minke, Brydes, Southern Right, Orcas and Sperm Whales and many more marine mammal species. It is not only a critical corridor for migration, but further, the area includes critical feeding and breeding habitats for these animals. Large whales play an important role in carbon sequestration and are vital for the health of the ocean and the land, and all species, including humans on our blue planet. Degradation of their habitat has far reaching consequences.

Any potential threats to this relatively unspoiled, largely intact area of marine abundance, including inappropriate development, should be carefully considered both in terms of environmental damage and lost economic potential. The idea that drilling is appropriate in a world-renowned whale migration route where over 30,000 Humpback Whales alone migrate annually is appalling as we race to stop the decimation of vulnerable marine species. The Sydney coast is also a precious dolphin habitat, and home to the only colony of Fairy Penguins breeding on mainland NSW. Putting this marine ecosystem at risk, let alone exposing the human and bird populations to the prospect of leaks and spills mere kilometres from the coastline, will attract global condemnation and rightful criticism.

Regressive actions that raise negative impacts on the delicate ecosystems of the ocean will not be accepted by the greater population of Australia. I applaud the members of your own Government who are opposed to this license and its extension and support the science and the community attitude.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the recent oil spill off the coast of Southern California, United States. While the extent of the damage is currently being assessed in conjunction with clean-up efforts there is no doubt it is threatening not only the marine life directly in the path of the oil spill but also coastal habitats that span for miles. Beaches have been closed and will remain closed until the clean-up efforts are complete. There is now a renewed push to ban new offshore drilling in the United States. You have the opportunity to avoid a catastrophic event such as this by taking action in your area now and canceling this license.

I urge you look to the future, to fully understand where the real value of the ocean is to the community you represent and to show the leadership of your government to embrace an ocean future for all the planet and revoke this license.

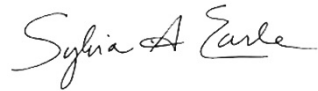
We are at a critical point for the planet with all the information we now know. I am driven by what I know; that the world I love is in trouble. It is not too late to turn things around. However, if we wait another 50 years, opportunities we now have will be gone. This is the moment. Our decisions, our actions will shape everything that follows.

Never again will we have this good chance as we now have to find an enduring place for ourselves within the natural systems that keep us alive. The decisions we make in the next 10 years will shape the next 10,000 years. Health to the ocean means health for us.

For the future of the sea, for the creatures there, and for us, protecting special critical areas in the ocean is of the most importance. The Sydney Coast is a priceless treasure. I sincerely request the Australian Government, please against all odds conserve the Sydney Coast for the world, for the ocean, and for the

health of the future generations. Mission Blue will also do our best to promote this extraordinary ecosystem to the world, introducing the magic of the Sydney Coast and praising the contribution of Australia for the effort of marine conservation.

Sincerely,




Dr. Sylvia Earle
President
Mission Blue

Signed:

Anita Kolni, Volvo Ocean Lovers Festival and Sydney Coast Hope Spot Champion



Lorna Parry, Underwater Earth and Sydney Coast Hope Spot Champion



Dr. Olaf Meynecke, Gold Coast Bay Hope Spot Champion

