

# Environmental Regulation of Exploration and Development in the Cooper/Eromanga Basins

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The environmental management requirements by Government for the upstream petroleum industry in Queensland are in a state of change are:

- the pending introduction of the Environmental Protection Policy for Petroleum (read the upstream petroleum industry), and
- the transfer from the Department of Mines and Energy (DME) to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) of the Administration of environmental management matters, including environmental regulation and enforcement. The presentation will discuss details of these changes. The relationship between a petroleum tenure under the proposed new Petroleum and Gas Act and an environmental approval under the Environmental Protection Act, as they relate to petroleum exploration, will be discussed.

In the past, the industry's environmental management has been principally guided by self regulation and Departmental policy. The performance of the exploration industry has been guided by "good oil field practice", the APPEA Code of Environmental Practice and the development by individual companies of internal Procedures and Management Plans. This system resulted in consistent performance in the Cooper Basin, including some poor performance.

In 1996, the implementation of the Environmental Protection Act added legislative support for effective environmental management through the introduction of the concept of "general environmental" and "environmental harm". The Environmental Protection Act also introduced a licensing system that applied to several activities associated with hydrocarbon production. Exploration continued to be regulated through compliance with Governmental Departmental Codes of Practice and policy.

A comprehensive DME/EPA compliance Code of Environmental Practice for Petroleum Exploration is currently being developed in consultation with industry. It is intended that if companies plan to carry out activities that cannot comply with the Code, then site specific Environmental Management Plans will be required. The current approach by Government is to encourage the integration of environmental management requirements into exploration and development planning. The presentation will present details of these aspects in relation to exploration in the Cooper/Eromanga Basin.