

WA To Host Tight Gas Workshop

The complexity, availability and the commercial viability of tight gas in Western Australia will be discussed by major players from across the country at a workshop to be held at the King's Park Function Centre in Perth on 20 August.

Western Australia's Department of Industry and Resources (DOIR), in conjunction with the WA Energy Research Alliance, and support of PESA and SPE WA Section, will examine opportunities in the sector and aims to develop a tight gas network in Perth.

Stakeholders in the domestic gas industry in WA will examine drilling and completion techniques and international approaches to exploiting tight gas reservoirs.

Regulatory and licensing issues will be discussed together with independent expert assessment of current and projected opportunities in the market.

Tight gas is found in rocks with a low permeability, making it difficult to extract and requiring specialised drilling techniques.

Substantial tight gas reserves are known to exist in the southwest and lower midwest of

WA but have not previously been thought to be economically viable.

However, recent advances in drilling and completion technology combined with higher domestic gas prices have changed this outlook.

The WA government released the first tight gas permit in November 2007.

Organisers of the workshop said they were confident WA Resources Minister Francis Logan would play a role in discussions as a VIP guest at the workshop.

Logan has said that while Australia's petroleum industry had limited expertise in the 'tight gas' field, it was more common in other parts of the world.

"We are fortunate in WA to have large reserves of easy-to-access gas, so our tight gas resources have been largely ignored. But with the market doing so well and the looming domestic gas shortage, tight gas is looking more favourable."

Logan said the WA Government is encouraging more exploration and

development in order to avert a domestic gas shortage.

Shutdowns in various sectors of WA's energy industry have had much of the state's mining and processing industry scrambling to limit production losses on several occasions and ignited a debate surrounding security of supply.

WA's Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive, James Pearson, said the state should not be relying on the North-West for most of its domestic gas supplies.

"Major disruption to Western Australia's domestic gas supplies has once again exposed the state's energy vulnerabilities as a result of its dependence on gas from a limited number of supply sources", he said.

The WA government expects supply of domestic gas from large liquefied natural gas projects would begin after 2014.

More details of the Tight Gas Workshop are available from the Department of Industry and Resources website at <http://www.doir.wa.gov.au/mineralsandpetroleum/index.asp> or contact Kieu Pham, email: pham@mech.uwa.edu.au. ■