

## **7.2.2024 Media Release**

### **Community power has stopped PEP-11**

#### **Attributable to Dr Sophie Scamps, Independent Federal Member for Mackellar**

Today is a great win for our Northern Beaches community, for our coast and for our climate.

The NSW Government's decision to legislate to block the PEP-11 offshore petroleum project is a vital step forward in stopping it altogether, with the final decision sitting with the Federal government later this year.

I have been working hard to bring an end to PEP-11 since before the last federal election. I've met both the NSW State and Federal environment ministers a number of times about the issue, telling them that the people of the Northern Beaches would never accept drilling for oil and gas off our beaches.

I have also spoken in parliament a number of times about the issue, including seconding Zali Steggall MP's Bill to end PEP-11, reiterating each time that it would never be accepted by our community.

So, it is great news that the State Environment Minister got the message, saying that her decision was based on the fact that the 'overwhelming majority' oppose offshore mining.

PEP-11 would have allowed drilling for gas in an area just 50kms off the coast from Manly through the Central Coast to Newcastle, and would have posed a great threat to our local coastline.

This hopefully ends years of uncertainty about this destructive fossil fuel project, right on Sydney's doorstep.

It is the right decision, particularly because Australia has now committed in international forums to a swift and just transition away from fossil fuels.

Stopping new fossil fuel projects, particularly highly risky ones that could damage not only our local environment, but also our industries like tourism and fishing, is the first step toward that goal.

I also want to pay tribute to the independent candidate for Pittwater, Jacqui Scruby, who developed the Save our Beaches Bill to block this risky development during the 2023 campaign, and which was ultimately introduced by the current Member for Pittwater.

## Background

Petroleum Exploration Permit 11 (PE -11), covers 4,500 square km of ocean along our favourite beaches, from the Illawarra to Newcastle. It was originally surveyed in 1981 but there was no action until 2010 when the first exploratory wells were sunk. Progress on its development then stalled. More seismic testing took place in 2018.

In 2021 the company that holds the permit, Asset Energy, applied to renew the permit.

PEP-11 quickly became an election issue and a source of community concern. The former Prime Minister, Scott Morrison, who had secretly appointed himself to the resources portfolio (and several other portfolios) refused to renew PEP-11.

Asset then appealed to the Federal Court challenging the decision. In February this year. After receiving advice that it would likely lose the case, the [Labor government agreed to revisit the decision](#).

The decision was referred to Commonwealth-New South Wales Offshore Petroleum Joint Authority for consideration.

The NSW Environment Minister, Penny Sharpe has now indicated that NSW will legislate to give force to its opposition to the project.

This includes amendments to state environmental protections law to offshore petroleum and gas mining in state coastal water and banning other developments for the purposes of seabed petroleum and gas projects.

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