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Statement on Pep 11 By Dr Sophie Scamps, Independent MP for Mackellar.

After years of fighting the oil and gas project proposed off the Sydney to Newcastle coast we are now close to victory.

Industry minister Ed Husic has formed a “preliminary view” that the PEP 11 permit should not be renewed.

[Statement on PEP-11 | Ministers for the Department of Industry, Science and Resources](#)

Asset Energy, the company behind the project, now has an opportunity to make submissions to address the Minister’s concerns and I respect the need for due process.

But a preliminary decision to reject this project is a big step forward in this decade-long fight and vindication of the stance of community independents in fighting for communities.

As Community Independents standing up for the Northern Beaches, Zali Steggall, Jacqui Scruby and I have fought long and hard to ensure that the Federal Government understands why our community wants to stop oil and gas development off our pristine beaches.

This project has been roundly rejected by the millions of people who live along the coast between Sydney and Newcastle, including the people of Mackellar.

This project poses unreasonable risks to the environment, to marine life and to other activities such as tourism that depend on our pristine coastline and now the Federal government has acted.

Attributable to Jacqui Scruby, Independent candidate for the state seat of Pittwater.

“As a local, I’ve seen the community outcry against mining off our beautiful beaches.

Last election I acted on it, writing the bill that eventually saw offshore drilling for oil and gas banned in NSW.

Federally, independents Sophie Scamps and Zali Steggall have led the charge. Today’s announcement is a victory for independents and their communities, and shows us that when we stand up and demand change, change is possible.

This by-election, if you want a local representative who will act with integrity to protect Pittwater, vote independent.”

Background

Petroleum Exploration Permit 11 (PEP 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 government has already legislated to give force to its opposition to the project.

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

But the project could still go ahead in federal waters if the permit is renewed.

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