

# Great Australian Bight Campaign Brief



## August 2019 Key Updates:

- Equinor (formerly Statoil) is the remaining 'Big Oil' company. In their recent public comment on their Environment Plan for drilling in the Bight they received over 30,000 comments.<sup>1</sup> NOPSEMA knocked back their initial plan. They now have until September 27 to resubmit.
- Equinor stated "if we are not wanted here, we will not push through resistance".<sup>2</sup>
- BP & Chevron have abandoned their drilling programs, but Chevron still retains its lease.
- A total of six companies currently hold leases or joint ventures in the Bight.
- For the first time in 5 years, NOPSEMA has approved the first stage of oil & gas development - seismic testing - to begin in September/October 2019. PGS (the seismic company) have postponed testing until next year.
- 14 councils in SA have passed motions that express concern or oppose drilling in the Bight<sup>3</sup>: Kangaroo Island, Yankalilla, Yorke Peninsula, Victor Harbor, Holdfast Bay, Elliston, Alexandrina, Onkaparinga, Port Adelaide Enfield, Marion and West Torrens Port Lincoln and Mt Barker and Grant.
- 4 Victorian Councils - Moyne Shire, Surf Coast and Corangamite, Warrnambool - have passed motions either opposing or expressing concerns about drilling plans and requesting to be consulted in the environmental approval process.
- 2 councils in Western Australia - Albany and Ravensthorpe have also recently passed motions.

## Environmental Statistics

- **Over 85% of known species in the Great Australian Bight region are found nowhere else in the world**<sup>4</sup>.
- **275 species new to science and 887 species found in the Bight for the first time** in a research study in 2017<sup>5</sup>.
- A haven for 36 species of whales and dolphins and the world's most important nursery for the endangered southern right whale.
- New research from Tasmania shows seismic testing can kill large swathes of zooplankton, the basis of the marine food chain, up to 1.2km from each blast site, leaving the ocean dotted with plankton holes<sup>6</sup>.
- The National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) granted permission for the testing to be done over a 30,100-square-kilometre area, located 80 kilometres from Port Lincoln and 90 kilometres west of Kangaroo Island.<sup>7</sup>

## Tourism statistics for SA

- In 2016-17, the tourism activity in SA is worth a combined total of \$6.3 billion to the state's economy<sup>8</sup>.
- 32,100 tourism industry jobs, 24,500 indirect jobs and total employment impact of 56,600 people in 2013 -14<sup>9</sup>
- In 2013-14, Limestone Coast, Kangaroo Island, Fleurieu and Eyre Peninsula's combined total tourism output was over \$2 billion with a total employment impact of over 11,000 people<sup>10</sup>.

## Fisheries statistics for SA

- In 2017, our fishing and aquaculture sectors were estimated at being worth \$900 million, one of the largest primary production sectors in South Australia<sup>11</sup>.
- SA fishing and aquaculture industry supports more than 3,000 full time jobs, mainly in regional areas<sup>12</sup>.

## Campaign Context

Equinor (formerly Statoil) and other companies remain eager to open up a **new oil precinct in the pristine and rough waters of the Great Australian Bight**, an open oceanic bay stretching along 2000 kilometres of Australia's southern coast. Equinor has plans for exploration wells in the Great Australian Bight Commonwealth Marine Reserve. This is the Norwegian company's **southern hemisphere equivalent of attempts to drill for oil in the Arctic**.

Independent financial analyst Carbon Tracker says it is likely to be a high cost field: "Allocating capital to high cost, high risk projects in the Australian Bight appears unwarranted in a low demand, low carbon future – shareholders should challenge whether this is the best strategy for the companies to create value."<sup>13</sup>

<sup>1</sup><https://www.nopsema.gov.au/environmental-management/open-for-comment-stromlo-1-exploration-drilling-program-draft-environment-plan/form-public-comment-on-draft-environment-plan-stromlo-1-exploration-drilling-program/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.portlincolntimes.com.au/story/5500024/we-like-the-bight-just-as-it-is-great/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.norwaynews.com/10-south-australian-councils-now-oppose-oil-drilling-in-great-australian-bight-after-marion-council-vote/>

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.misa.net.au/research/collaborative\\_research\\_science\\_program\\_-\\_the\\_gab](http://www.misa.net.au/research/collaborative_research_science_program_-_the_gab)

<sup>5</sup> [http://www.misa.net.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/295995/Great\\_Australian\\_Bight\\_Research\\_Program\\_Highlights\\_2013\\_2017.pdf](http://www.misa.net.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/295995/Great_Australian_Bight_Research_Program_Highlights_2013_2017.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> New Scientist Journal, 2017: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2138326-oil-exploration-airguns-punch-2-kilometre-wide-holes-in-plankton/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-01-15/great-australian-bight-seismic-testing-gets-green-light/10716252>

<sup>8</sup> <http://tourism.sa.gov.au/documents/CORP/documentMedia.ashx?A={53EAC575-AE5A-4E76-A7D2-534ACA41AE47}&B=False> (page 17)

<sup>9</sup> <http://tourism.sa.gov.au/documents/CORP/documentMedia.ashx?A={54340688-F71C-4A4C-914E-9919C9A9A914}&B=False> (page 5)

<sup>10</sup> <http://tourism.sa.gov.au/research-and-statistics/regions/regional-tourism-profiles>

<sup>11</sup> [http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/221993/Aquaculture\\_IndustryBooklet.pdf](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/221993/Aquaculture_IndustryBooklet.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.premier.sa.gov.au/index.php/leon-bignell-news-releases/8336-celebrate-the-start-of-south-australia-s-seafood-season>

<sup>13</sup> <http://reneweconomy.com.au/2016/senate-to-probe-bp-great-australian-bight-oil-plans-a-2-6bn-carbon-bomb-79026>

**The world's biggest oil spill accident, BP's Deepwater Horizon tragedy**, occurred in 2010, when 800 million litres of oil spewed into the Gulf of Mexico (GoM) for 87 days after attempting to drill an exploration well. **The Great Australian Bight waters are deeper, more treacherous and more remote** than the GoM. The Deepwater Horizon was drilling in 1500m of water 70 kms off the coast when it exploded. In the Bight, oil companies plan to drill in waters down to 2250m depth and up to 300km offshore from Ceduna.

**In BP's emergency plan, the oil-well containment response system was to be located on the other side of the world in Houston<sup>14</sup>** with other capping stack options potentially coming from Norway or Singapore. There is no established offshore oil and gas industry in South Australia to deal with a disaster. More than 6800 boats were involved in the Gulf cleanup but the South Australian Oyster Growers Association says that SA and neighbouring states don't have that many vessels and probably only 20 could operate safely in the waters where BP [and now Equinor] planned to drill.<sup>15</sup>

### Oil spill modelling

BP's own modelling<sup>16</sup> revealed that a **"worst-case" oil spill from an uncontained blowout from its proposed Stromlo-1 well is guaranteed to impact the South Australian coast**. Furthermore, anywhere across all of southern Australia's coast could be impacted, from Western Australia across to Tasmania and NSW. **The NSW coast has a 41 per cent chance of getting hit by a spill if it occurred in winter, while Apollo Bay and Wilsons Promontory in Victoria would have a 91 per cent chance of being hit by a spill in April-May**. BP modelled a 149-day spill (the time it would take to drill a relief well to permanently stop a blowout), but **even if it could cap a well in the 35 days it claimed it would still have a high chance of impacting Adelaide, Port Lincoln and Kangaroo Island**. BP's spill modelling shows:

- **97% chance of spill hitting Adelaide in April-May, 86% chance in winter, 58% in summer**
- **100% chance of hitting Port Lincoln in April-May, 98% chance in winter, 91% in summer**
- **100% chance of hitting Kangaroo Island in April-May, 95% chance in summer, 94% winter**
- **97% chance whales getting hit in Great Australian Bight Marine National Park in winter**

**The modelling considers relatively high concentrations of oil (at levels that it will directly impact wildlife onshore) but does not model the more far reaching impacts on fisheries, which could be closed if affected by much lower concentrations of oil**. The results are for concentrations that will harm coastline wildlife such as seals (100 grams per square metre), which is 10 times the concentration that will impact marine life in the sea (10g/m<sup>2</sup>). It's also 10,000 times the concentration requiring the closure of fisheries (US standard 0.01 g/m<sup>2</sup>). Impacts forcing the closures of fisheries will spread further and faster.

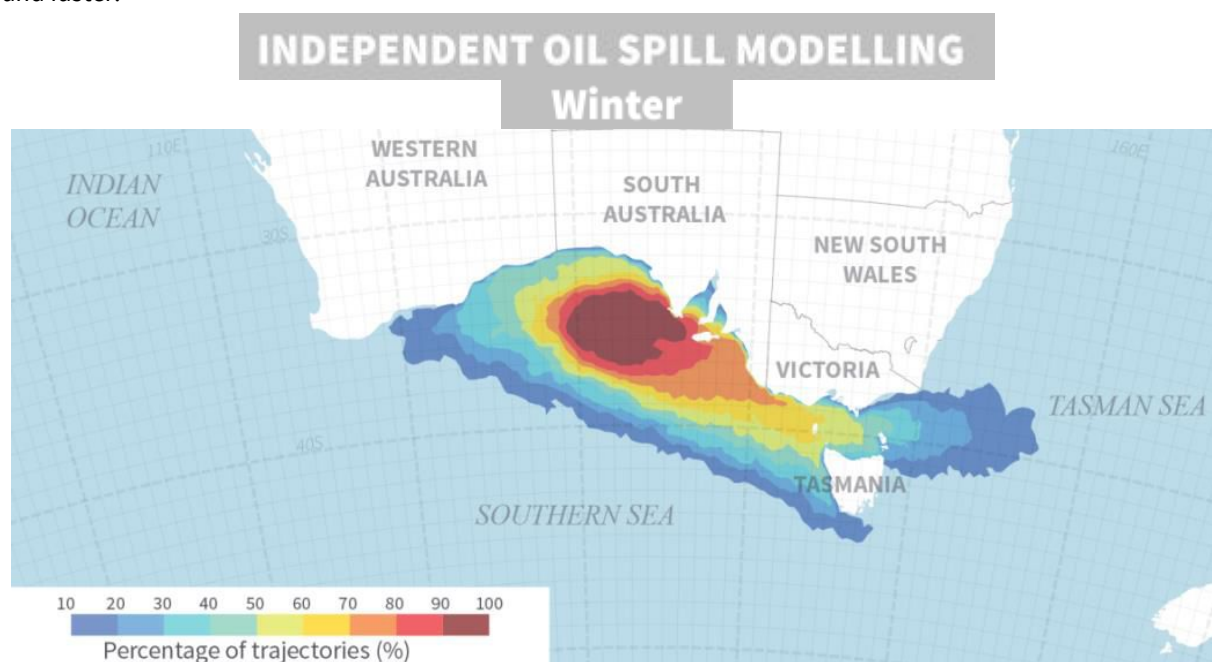


Image: Socio-economic impact analysis for winter after 4 months (scenario 2A with oiling threshold of 0.01 g/m<sup>2</sup>)<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2015/may/25/bp-would-need-to-bring-equipment-from-texas-to-contain-south-australia-oil-spill>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=8c6910e1-6143-4282-a8c8-cb89681eda11&subId=412275>

<sup>16</sup>

[https://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp-country/en\\_au/about-us/what-we-do/exploring-great-australian-bight/fate-effects-oil-spill-modelling-assumptions-parameters-results.pdf](https://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp-country/en_au/about-us/what-we-do/exploring-great-australian-bight/fate-effects-oil-spill-modelling-assumptions-parameters-results.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> "Stochastic analysis of deep sea oil spill trajectories in the Great Australian Bight" by Laurent C.M. Lebreton, MSc - 2015 - Page 34,

Available to download at: [www.fightforthebight.org.au/oil-spill-modelling](http://www.fightforthebight.org.au/oil-spill-modelling)