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WOODSIDE RELEASES SHELF REPORT



A draft environmental impact, review and management programme for the North West Shelf Development Project was released on Saturday May 19 by the operator of the joint venture, Woodside Petroleum Development Pty. Ltd.

The report stressed safety measures and said that Woodside would apply sound environmental management procedures in the planning construction and operational phases of the project.

Involving an investment of some \$3000 million, the project is expected to have a life of 20 years or more.

The Environmental Protection Authority is assessing the draft. It is hoped for Governmental approval to clear the way for a final decision on the project later this year.

The report was prepared by the Perth consulting engineers Maunsell and Partners Pty. Ltd.

The public will have till July 2 to comment on the proposals.

Up to 6.5 million tonnes of LNG and about 1.7 million tonnes of condensate will be exported annually.

The port will handle 120 LNG tankers and 50 condensate tankers a year.

The project provides for:

- * The establishment of two 40,000 tonne production platforms on the off shore North Rankin gas field, 130km north of Dampier, producing gas and condensate.
- * Building a submarine pipeline to deliver the gas and condensate to an on shore complex on the southern side of Withnell Bay in the Dampier Archipelago.
- * Processing facilities at the complex to treat gas for distribution to WA markets to produce LNG for overseas markets and to separate condensate.
- * Construction of a port for LNG and condensate shipments, including a dredged approach channel
- * A construction workforce of between 3000 and 4000 to be accommodated north of Hearsons Cove.
- * Housing in Karratha for the permanent operating workforce of 500.

Withnell Bay is about 12km north-east of Dampier on the rugged and relatively inaccessible Burrup Peninsula. It is about 20 km from Karratha.

The onshore complex will be designed to be self sufficient in utilities during operations. Fresh water will be distilled from sea water.

The management programme covers detailed safety measures for drilling and production platforms, the submarine pipeline, port operations and the onshore complex.

The report said that contingency plans had been drawn up in the unlikely event of a gas blow out at the platform. Procedures would be submitted to the Mines Department before operations started.

Woodside thought that the siting of the LNG tanker port at South Withnell Bay and safe guards governing tanker operation were in full accord with responsible international safety standards.

The development plan provides for two 180m high production platforms to be put on the seabed in water 125m deep.

They would be about 4km apart and each would drill up to 30 wells to a depth of 3000m.

The proposed platforms were designed to withstand wind, wave and currents under cyclonic conditions and would be well away from existing shipping routes.

Automatic well-closure system would be installed below the seabed on all producing wells. They would be designed to respond to any uncontrolled flow, or to well-head damage.

The submarine pipeline would be buried for most of its length.

Design and operating procedures for preventing and containing oil spills from jetties and ships would be based on the international safety guide for oil tankers and terminals.

LNG storage tanks would have secondary containment walls and surrounding earthfill protection.

The report said that Woodside's operations would not interfere with the fishing potential of the North West Shelf.

The maximum adverse impact from the cooling water would be in summer. Degradation of coral along the shore between Noname Bay and Withnell Bay was likely.

Withnell Bay was likely to receive 'slugs' of warm water that might kill some marine organisms and also inhibit the entry of fish.

During winter the heated effluent was likely to increase biological productivity in areas south of the outfall, especially in King Bay.

But it was unlikely that the previous abundance of coral reef fish and other organisms dependent on coral would return.

The report said that Woodside recognised the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships with the local community.

It would consult the Roebourne Shire Council the Government and other organisations in social and community work to ensure that project planning took account of regional policies.

The report outlined the impact of expected population increases resulting from the project.

A caravan park would be established nearby to accommodate 400 married people. Use of caravan park facilities in Karratha was also expected.

The construction workforce site of 50 hectares north of Hearson Cove would be developed in stages, each taking about 400 single people.

In the operational phase, the estimated population increase was 1250 married people, 205 single people and 1135 school children.

This would require 60 extra places at the child care centre in Karratha. Another primary school could be needed.

The high school would need to be expanded to take another 155 pupils, and an extra 10 to 15 beds would be needed at the Dampier Hospital.

In the construction phase the population increases were estimated to be 2400 people in single accommodation at Hearson Cove, 400 people in Hearson Cove caravans, 1830 in caravans at Karratha and 1140 in 300 homes at Karratha.

Another 1000 people were expected to be attracted to the area as a result of the project.

Demands on education and recreation facilities could be required ahead of permanent needs.

The WA Government might consider building the Karratha hospital earlier than planned to cope with the influx of workers and their families.

Shopping needs of workers at Hearson Cove would be met on site. But an early expansion of town facilities might be needed.

The number of visiting business men and tourists might justify a new motel at Karratha.

The report said it had been known for some time that the Dampier Archipelago contained a big number of Aboriginal sites.

The Pilbara region was a major Australian rock engraving area. The engravings and shell middens in the archipelago were of considerable archaeological interest.

The WA Museum had recorded many sites of varying importance on the Burrup Peninsula, including the area round Withnell Bay, King Bay, Hearson Cove and Searipple Passage.

The Searipple Passage engravings were considered to be of outstanding significance.