

Woodside seeks next big gas discovery in deepwater

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PERTH, Australia -- The search for new elephants in Australia has moved to deepwater, said Agu Kantsler, executive VP of exploration & ventures, science & technology, Woodside Energy, during the keynote address on the opening day of DOT International Asia/Pacific in Perth, Australia.

From 1979 to date, Woodside has discovered 16.5 Bboe comprising 31% liquid and 69% gas in shallow waters off Australia. In deepwater during approximately the same time period, the company has discovered 9.3 Bboe comprising 6% liquids and 94% gas.

Woodside plans to drill at least 39 wells in deepwater (>500 m water depth) Carnarvon basin permits through 2011, which is more than double the number it drilled in deepwater during the period 2000-2008. In the Browse basin, it plans to spud at least six deepwater wells through 2011, compared to four deepwater spuds from 2000-2008.

Deepwater exploration will continue to add gas resources, and existing gas discoveries are coming into development, Kantsler says. The company has a number of prospects in water depths ranging from 1,100-1,700 m and 120-350 km from existing infrastructure.

The deepwater basins are simply extensions of the shallow water basins, Kantsler explained. Woodside has extended its technology from shallow water to deepwater to tap these resources, he said. Kantsler pointed to the company's use of disconnectable FPSOs on Enfield, Stybarrow, and Vincent fields as examples.

Still, technology challenges exist, Kantsler said. These include remote gas fields, complex processing facilities, flow assurance, and challenging metocean conditions.

Developments must include drilling and workover capability for wet and dry trees and gas processing and compression, he said. Other design considerations are higher air gap for 1 in 10,000 year waves if manned during cyclones, quayside integration of deck and hull for TLPs to avoid heavy lift, and suction gravity-base concept for TLP foundations.

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