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## Path now clear for NT onshore shale gas exploration

Santos today announced it has received approval for the first Environmental Management Plan (EMP) to be awarded for onshore shale gas exploration in the Northern Territory since the moratorium was lifted in early 2018.

NT Environment and Natural Resources Minister Eva Lawler approved Santos' Drilling EMP for the Tanumbirini 2H and Inacumba 1/1H wells in Exploration Permit 161 in the McArthur Basin, east of Daly Waters.

Santos is operator of, and has a 75 per cent interest in, the permit.

Today's green light for the resumption of drilling activities in the basin follows last month's approval of the EMP for civil works at and around the well locations, as well as the acquisition of 2D seismic data.

Santos Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Kevin Gallagher said approval of the Drilling EMP is an important milestone that clears the way to restart onshore shale gas exploration in the resource-rich McArthur Basin.

"We drilled Tanumbirini 1 in 2014 and liked what we saw, so we are delighted to be in a position to resume exploration drilling," Mr Gallagher said.

"Local communities desperately need the jobs, small business opportunities and investment the onshore natural gas industry will bring, and with the new regulatory regime in place to ensure that the environment and water resources are protected, we'll be moving as quickly as possible and doing our best to beat the approaching wet season."

Santos is currently completing drilling of the Dukas 1 well in the Amadeus Basin and the next drilling location for the Ensign 965 rig will depend on the rig release date from Dukas 1.

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