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NOPSEMA approval puts Barossa firmly in the lead for Darwin LNG backfill

Australia's offshore petroleum regulator has accepted the Barossa-Caldita Offshore Project Proposal (OPP), a major step in the development approval process.

The National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) has assessed the environmental impacts and risks of petroleum activities over the 25-year life of the Barossa project and accepted the Joint Venture's project proposal.

This approval paves the way for the submission of activity-specific Environment Plans.

This is the first time NOPSEMA has accepted an OPP, a process which began with submission of the proposal in 2016 and included an eight week public consultation period.

This approval's milestone confirms Barossa as the leading candidate to supply backfill gas to Darwin LNG and the only gas supply source on track to deliver gas when Bayu Undan production ends in the early 2020s.

Santos Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Mr Kevin Gallagher said the OPP will allow the Barossa project to forge ahead.

"Acceptance of the OPP gives us a level of regulatory comfort and the certainty we need to enter the Front End Engineering and Design (FEED) phase in the very near future."

"This is one of the major regulatory steps leading to offshore project development and petroleum production, and it reinforces Barossa's position as the only gas supply source capable of meeting Darwin LNG's timetable," Mr Gallagher said.

The Barossa gas field, 300 kilometres north of Darwin, sits within Santos' Northern Australia portfolio, one of the company's core long-life, natural gas assets.

Santos remains committed to working with its joint venture partners in Northern Australia to commercialise the company's significant discovered resource base in the region through a range of ullage opportunities and/or expansion of existing projects.

Santos holds a 25% interest in the Barossa-Caldita joint venture along with partners ConocoPhillips (37.5% and operator) and SK E&S (37.5%).

Santos is also a joint venture partner in Darwin LNG with an 11.5% interest.

Ends.

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