New oil and gas guidelines exclude Watarrka and Coomalie from exploration

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Oil and gas exploration permit applications for Watarrka National Park and the Coomalie Council Region will not be granted, the Northern Territory Government said today.

Mines and Energy Minister David Tollner said the new oil and gas guidelines announced last week have been applied in the assessment of oil and gas exploration permit applications for Palatine Energy in relation to the Watarrka National Park and NT Gas in relation to the Coomalie Council Region.

“Government recently implemented these new measures, on top of its already robust regulations, to ensure onshore oil and gas activities can proceed alongside other land usages in a safe and sustainable manner,” Mr Tollner said.

“Both applications were assessed as not satisfying all of the recently announced criteria. As announced last week, the Northern Territory Government will not grant acreage release and exploration permits where there is a land use conflict, based on the following criteria:

- Urban living areas including rural residential areas—i.e. land zoned as residential and land zoned as rural residential
- Areas of intensive agriculture – the Department of Mines and Energy will assess the compatibility of land use, however oil and gas activities will not take place on areas such as melon farms, mango orchards and aquaculture operations
- Areas of high ecological value – as determined through the NT’s robust environmental assessment process
- Areas of cultural significance as advised by the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority – there is no change for Aboriginal land under the Aboriginal Land Rights or Native Title Acts
- Areas that include assets of strategic importance to nearby residential areas – including areas with high potential for other uses such as tourism related development around Bitter Springs at Mataranka
“I am satisfied that the consultation process our government has implemented is working. I am supportive of this decision and feel confident that all key stakeholders including Traditional Owners have been heard,” Minister for Parks and Wildlife Bess Price said.

“The NT Government understands the sensitivities associated with allowing exploration activities in the region and hasn’t taken this decision lightly,” Mr Tollner said.

“It is unfortunate that the Central Land Council chose to be vocal about the actions of the Northern Territory Government before allowing proper processes to be undertaken to ensure all parties affected in this decision could be consulted,” he added.

To learn more about the NT Government’s new guidelines for onshore oil and gas go to https://onshoregas.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/195643/Fact-Sheet-Where-oil-and-gas-activities-can-occur-ud.pdf

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