



Australian Government
**Department of Industry,
Science and Resources**

Offshore Resource Management and Administration

Proposed Changes to Data Management and Reporting

Consultation Paper

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Overview

The regulatory framework for offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas storage activity in Australia provides for the exploration and recovery of offshore petroleum resources; the injection and storage of greenhouse gas substances; and sets out the basic framework of rights, entitlements and responsibilities of government and industry.

The *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* (OPGGs Act) and *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Resource Management and Administration) Regulations 2011* (RMA Regulations) are part of the legal framework for offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas storage activity in Commonwealth waters. The RMA Regulations cover resource management and administration; well operations management plans and well activities; data management and reporting; and other regulatory and administrative matters.

A review of the data management regulations found some provisions are outdated, inconsistent and/or difficult to understand. To ensure these regulations remain fit for purpose and respond to changes in the industry and operating environment, the department proposes to revise the data management provisions of the RMA Regulations, which include information, data and sample submission requirements, and release timeframes. The proposed revisions are intended to create consistency, clarify and streamline the data management provisions to ensure that the provisions operate effectively and efficiently, promote data transparency and align with best practice standards.

The paper commences with a brief summary of the offshore regulatory framework and key elements of the RMA Regulations. The main body of the paper discusses identified issues and proposed revisions to the data management provisions of the RMA Regulations.

Summary of Proposals

Proposed revisions to the data management provisions in the RMA Regulations are as follows:

- Consolidate and streamline Parts 7–10 of the RMA Regulations and provide for consistent submission and release timeframes between petroleum and greenhouse gas titles where possible and appropriate. [4.1]
- Update the data management provisions in the RMA Regulations to be technology neutral and agile as possible. [4.2]
- Clarify the requirement to submit daily geological reports to the Titles Administrator when undertaking drilling operations in a title area. [4.3]
- Combine the submission requirements for initial and final well completion reports to a single report with a submission timeframe 2 years after rig release. All well data to be releasable 3 years after rig release. [4.4]
- Revise the list of samples that are required to be submitted to the Titles Administrator to address current information gaps and clarify submission requirements to address current ambiguities. [4.5]
- Replace the requirement to provide a sample analysis progress report with a requirement to provide a final analysis report to the Titles Administrator, irrespective of whether the analysis is conducted in Australia or overseas. In addition, replace the requirement for sample export approval with a requirement to provide notice to the Titles Administrator of the intended export. [4.6]
- Clarify the submission requirement for all reprocessed data. [4.7]
- Clarify requirements for titleholders to submit interpretation reports and associated data where non-exclusive data is licensed by the titleholder to meet a title condition. [4.8]
- Change the release timeframes for non-exclusive seismic data from 15 years to 10 years. [5.1]
- Simplify and reduce the number of release timeframes for disclosable information. [5.2]

1. Introduction

The Australian offshore oil and gas regime has a well-established regulatory framework. The Australian Government (Government) regularly reviews and updates the framework, to ensure that the regime remains fit for purpose. The Department of Industry, Science and Resources (department) is seeking stakeholder views on proposed revisions to the data management provisions in the [Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage \(Resource Management and Administration\) Regulations 2011](#) (RMA Regulations). Opportunities have been identified to improve, clarify, and modernise Parts 7–10 of the RMA Regulations.

2. Offshore Resources Regulatory Framework

[The Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006](#) (OPGGs Act) and associated regulations¹ provide the regulatory framework for petroleum exploration and recovery, and the injection and storage of greenhouse gas substances in offshore areas.

The OPGGS Act sets out roles, rights and responsibilities for industry and Government in relation to petroleum exploration and recovery, injection and storage of greenhouse gas, and provides for the establishment of Joint Authorities, the National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator (Titles Administrator), and the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) to administer the framework.

Under the OPGGS Act there are regulations set out powers and functions of administrators in relation to greenhouse storage and injection, environment management, safety, levies and resource management and administration.

2.1. Resource Management and Administration Regulations

The RMA Regulations cover resource management and administration (Parts 1–4 and 6); well operations management plans and well activities (Part 5); data management (Parts 7–10); and other regulatory and administrative matters (Parts 11–13).

The RMA Regulations aim to ensure petroleum operations are undertaken in accordance with good oilfield practice and are compatible with the optimum long-term recovery of petroleum. The regulations also aim to ensure that administrators of the OPGGS Act are informed of petroleum and greenhouse gas storage operations; and provide a framework for the collection, retention and timely dissemination of petroleum and greenhouse gas data.

This paper focusses on the data management provisions in the RMA Regulations. Parts 7–10 of the regulations set out the regulatory arrangements for submitting and releasing information, data and samples:

- Part 7 sets out the requirements for petroleum titleholders to give reports, cores, cutting or samples to the Titles Administrator.
- Part 8 sets out the conditions for release of technical information about petroleum.
- Part 9 outlines the requirements for reporting and data submission for greenhouse gas titleholders.
- Part 10 sets out the conditions for release of technical information about greenhouse gas storage and injection.

The purpose of this paper is to seek industry input on opportunities to update and modernise these data management provisions. The aim is to clarify and simplify data management and make sure the regulations are fit for purpose and achieve regulatory objectives.

3. Review, consultation, and remake of the RMA Regulations

A review² of the RMA Regulations data management provisions identified that some provisions need to be revised to ensure the management, submission and protection of data reflects the current operating realities of the oil and gas industry, and community expectations of improving transparency in the management of Australia’s oil and greenhouse gas resources.

The proposed amendments to the data management provisions of the RMA Regulations aim to:

- ensure Australia’s offshore data management framework is fit for purpose
- improve regulatory clarity, reduce complexity and improve the quality and usability of released information and data
- minimise regulatory burden on industry, and
- provide meaningful information and data in a timely manner to enhance understanding of Australia’s offshore resources and marine environment.

The RMA Regulations are due to sunset³ (cease to be law) on 1 April 2026. It is intended that the RMA regulations will be remade prior to 1 April 2026 so that resource management and administration; well operations management plans and well activities; data management and reporting; and other regulatory and administrative matters continue to be appropriately regulated.

The department is seeking stakeholder’s views on proposed changes to the data management provisions of the regulations as outlined in this paper.

Written submissions are invited via the department’s [consultation hub](#) by 11 June 2023. If you need help with making a submission, please email oilandgasdivision@industry.gov.au.

The results of the consultation will be considered in the remake of the RMA Regulations. An “Exposure Draft” of the RMA Regulations will then be released for public comment prior to the regulations being finalised and remade.

Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Data Management and Reporting

4. Data submissions about wells and surveys

The data management provisions, Parts 7 and 9, Division 3, in the RMA Regulations regulate the management and submission of data. This includes setting out requirements for daily drilling reports, submission of seismic data and samples, initial well completion reports and final well completion reports. Submission data helps to establish environmental baselines, which provides critical data for monitoring and compliance activities by the Titles Administrator.

Some of the data submission regulations are outdated, resulting in administrative burden on titleholders and government. There is ambiguity and inconsistency in the regulations, which impacts on the administration of petroleum and greenhouse gas activities. This section of the paper discusses specific proposals to address these concerns.

This section includes proposals to consolidate regulatory requirements for petroleum and greenhouse gas titles; introduce a submission requirement for daily geological reporting for well operations; simplify submission requirements for well completion reports; and clarify submission requirements in respect of reprocessed, interpretative and non-exclusive survey data.

4.1. Consolidation of petroleum and greenhouse gas data regulations

Issue: Data submission and release requirements for petroleum and greenhouse gas titles are in separate parts of the RMA Regulations but are largely identical. This results in duplication in the regulations and some inconsistent timeframes, causing confusion for titleholders.

Proposal: Consolidate and streamline Parts 7–10 of the RMA Regulations and provide for consistent submission and release timeframes between petroleum and greenhouse gas titles where possible.

Petroleum data and sample submission requirements and release provisions are set out in Parts 7 and 8 of the RMA Regulations while greenhouse gas data and sample submission requirements and release provisions are set out in Parts 9 and 10.

It is proposed, to the extent possible, Parts 7–10 of the RMA Regulations be consolidated and streamlined, and submission and release timeframes made consistent between petroleum and greenhouse gas titles. In doing so it is planned to simplify and resolve current inconsistencies between the petroleum and greenhouse gas data submission and release provisions to be consistent with the petroleum provisions as far as practically appropriate. Where required, exceptions to this will be specified in the regulations.

4.2. Data submission reporting formats and media

Issue: The RMA Regulations require that well and survey data are to be given to the Titles Administrator in a data reporting format and on a medium specified in Schedules 1–5 of the regulations. The data reporting formats and media prescribed for submission of data are overly prescriptive and out of date, resulting in cost and regulatory burden for industry.

Proposal: Amend the RMA Regulations to be as technology neutral and agile as possible.

The RMA Regulations are considered to be too prescriptive about technologies used to submit information, refer to formats and media that have become out of date, and are not readily able to accommodate changes in technology. Consequently, the format and media specified in the schedules are often inconvenient and relatively costly for titleholders to use. In addition, while the RMA Regulations enable the Titles Administrator to authorise a titleholder to use another medium or format for data, it is inefficient to provide for this in a piecemeal manner and may result in inconsistent requirements between titleholders.

4.3. Requirement to provide daily geological reports

Issue: There is currently no requirement to submit daily geological reports which provide valuable and contemporary geological information to Government about wells being drilled in title areas.

Proposal: Clarify the requirement to submit daily geological reports to the Titles Administrator when undertaking drilling operations in a title area.

Daily geological reports provide detailed and timely geological information⁴ that is essential to supporting the Government's resource management functions.

NOPTA consider drilling and geological reports important sources of information in understanding and monitoring titleholders' activities in a title area. Currently, the RMA Regulations currently require titleholders to give the Titles Administrator a daily drilling report but not geological reports when undertaking drilling operations. As a matter of current practice, most titleholders submit daily geological reports with their daily drilling reports. The department is proposing to amend the RMA Regulations to have a consistent regulatory basis for submission of daily drilling reports and daily geological reports to the Titles Administrator.

Geological information is important in the context of the proposal below [4.4] to provide for submission of a single final well completion report 2 years after the rig release date. The provision of daily geological reports would ensure timely information for Government in advance of receiving the well completion report.

4.4. Combined submission of initial and final well completion reports and data

Issue: Submission requirements for the initial well completion report and final well completion reports contain a mix of basic and interpretative information and data that complicates information management and release timeframes.

Proposal: Combine the submission requirements for initial and final well completion reports to a single report with a submission timeframe 2 years after rig release. All well data to be releasable 3 years after rig release.

The RMA Regulations⁵ require submission of reports and data by a titleholder in relation to drilling wells in a title area. Currently, two well completion reports and data, the initial well completion report and data and final well completion report and data, must be given to the Titles Administrator within 6 and 18 months (for petroleum titles) and 6 and 12 months (for greenhouse gas titles) respectively of the day the rig is released.

While the initial well completion report and data generally contains basic information only, the information that must be included in a final well completion report and data is a mix of basic and interpretative information. This complicates how the information and data is released under the current release schedules, as there are different confidentiality periods for basic and interpretative data. Titleholders are currently requested to clearly identify and separate the basic and interpretative information so that the release can be managed appropriately. In practice, this often requires titleholders having to either resubmit the final well completion report to the Titles Administrator with the interpretative information redacted, or to agree to its earlier release as part of the final well completion report when the confidentiality period for the basic data has passed.

To streamline reporting requirements and simplify release timeframes, it is proposed to reduce the reporting requirements to a single combined well completion report, with a submission timeframe of 2 years after the rig release date. All information and data submitted about well operations, including interpretative information, would become releasable 3 years (rather than the current 5 years for interpretative data) after the rig release date.

4.5. Changes to required core, cuttings and samples and timing of submission

Issue: A list of core, cuttings or samples required to be submitted to the Titles Administrator is provided under the RMA Regulations, meaning other useful samples, not listed, may not be submitted and available for release. The submission timing of some samples is also ambiguous.

Proposal: Review the RMA Regulations to revise the list of samples to be submitted and how and when they are required to be submitted.

The RMA Regulations⁶ specify the sample types, quantities and volumes collected from a well operation that are required to be submitted to the Titles Administrator. The department is aware that industry regularly collects other samples from well operations or other offshore operations carried out in a title area. The department considers that these samples should be submitted to Government and made available for future release. For example, isotubes containing valuable information on composition are regularly collected but not required to be submitted.

It is proposed the RMA Regulations be amended to provide for additional samples to be submitted to the Titles Administrator, where collected from a well or other offshore petroleum or greenhouse gas operation. Further, the timing of some sample submissions is ambiguous and could occur after the confidentiality period that applies. This means that currently some samples, such as the two third portion of the full-hole conventional core, may be submitted after they should be released by the Titles Administrator. The department proposes to amend the RMA Regulations to correct these inconsistencies.

4.6. Requirement to report on core, cuttings and samples analysed overseas

Issue: There is currently no requirement for titleholders to submit, to the Titles Administrator, a final report on sample analysis conducted in Australia or overseas.

Proposal: It is proposed to remove the requirement to provide progress reports and to introduce a requirement to provide a final analysis report and associated data to the Titles Administrator, whether the analysis is conducted in Australia or overseas. It is also proposed to amend the RMA Regulations to replace the requirement for approval to export a sample for overseas analysis and replace it with a requirement to provide notice to the Titles Administrator of the intended export.

Samples are often sent to international laboratories for analysis. Under the RMA Regulations the Titles Administrator must give approval before a core, cutting or sample leaves Australia. Once approval is granted, the RMA Regulations require that a report about the progress of the analysis is provided within 12 months, and at the end of each subsequent 12-month period. Consistent with the intent of the submission and release provisions in the RMA Regulations, the Titles Administrator should receive a final report, however, this is not currently specified in the regulations.

It is proposed to amend the RMA Regulations to require titleholders to provide notice to the Titles Administrator of their intention to conduct sample analysis and advise whether this will occur in Australia or overseas. If the analysis will occur overseas, the department proposes to replace the requirement for export approval with a requirement to notify the Titles Administrator of the proposed export. It will also clarify the requirement for titleholders to submit a final report of the analysis (instead of the current progress report requirement) regardless of where the analysis occurs. Submission of the report would be required within 12 months of providing notice of the commencement of the analysis, with provision to seek an extension on reasonable grounds.

It is proposed that sample analysis reports would be released at the same time as the rest of the information relating to the original activity. However, where samples from that activity are already open file, the sample analysis report will be releasable as soon as it is submitted.

4.7. Clarification of submission requirements for all reprocessed data

Issue: The current RMA Regulations data provisions⁷ do not provide for the submission of reprocessed data generated or licenced by titleholders over title areas.

Proposal: Amend the RMA Regulations to provide an explicit submission requirement for all reprocessed data.

The department considers the availability of reprocessed data⁸ to be a useful source of information to the oil and gas industry. However, the RMA Regulations need to be updated to ensure this additional source of data is captured and can be made available for public release.

The RMA Regulations provide for the release of seismic survey data that has been reprocessed as a condition of the grant of a petroleum and greenhouse gas title, but do not explicitly require the submission of this data. The department considers this to be a regulatory oversight and proposes to amend the RMA Regulations to strengthen and clarify the submission and release requirements for reprocessed data.

Consistent with submission timeframes for survey processing reports and data and interpretation reports and data for surveys undertaken in a petroleum title area, the department proposes that processing reports and interpretation reports for reprocessed data be submitted 24 months and 30 months from the date the reprocessing was completed, respectively.

4.8. Submission of interpretative information for non-exclusive survey data

Issue: The RMA Regulations do not require submission of survey interpretation reports and data by a titleholder who has licensed 'non-exclusive' survey data to satisfy title conditions.

Proposal: Amend the RMA Regulations to make the submission of survey interpretation reports and associated data by a titleholder a regulatory requirement where non-exclusive data is licensed by the titleholder to meet a title condition.

The RMA Regulations require all titleholders who conduct a geological or geophysical survey in a title area to submit survey acquisition, processing and interpretation reports and scheduled data items. This includes where the titleholder is a commercial seismic vendor acquiring non-exclusive data under a special prospecting authority or access authority. However, it is also the Titles Administrator's expectation that a titleholder, such as an exploration permittee or retention lessee, who has licensed non-exclusive survey data to meet a title condition, submits an interpretation of the licensed data.

The department proposes to revise the RMA Regulations to ensure that an interpretation of all non-exclusive data, that is licensed to meet a condition of a title, is submitted to the Titles Administrator and subsequently made publicly available on the expiry of the relevant confidentiality periods.

5. Release of technical information about wells and surveys

The Government seeks to make data publicly available⁹ as quickly as possible, while maintaining an appropriate balance between public and commercial interests. Improving access to information, other than information that would breach privacy laws or security requirements, is desirable because it stimulates research, enables innovation, improves productivity, and provides for efficiency of resource allocation.

The Government's position is that an appropriate period of confidentiality following the collection of geoscientific information is key to maintaining investment in Australia's offshore sector. An appropriate period of exclusivity incentivises investment in the collection of information and gives those who acquire data an advantage to offset the cost and risk of that investment. However, this must be balanced with the benefit that open file data provides to Government, other explorers and those with an interest in the marine environment.

The current release provisions, Parts 8 and 10, Division 3, in the RMA Regulations are prescriptive and complex, which makes enforcement difficult. The release of privately generated petroleum exploration and production and greenhouse gas injection and storage information by Government is intended to support sustainable development of the resource sector, increase investment and encourage innovative technologies.

To ensure the regulations remain fit for purpose and respond to community expectations for increased transparency, the department proposes to revise relevant confidentiality periods and to simplify the information release provisions in the RMA Regulations.

5.1. Changes to release timeframes for non-exclusive seismic data

Issue: The current confidentiality period for non-exclusive¹⁰ survey data is outdated and restricts access to high-quality seismic data to underpin exploration activity.

Proposal: To increase access to publicly and freely available data it is proposed the relevant day¹¹ for release of non-exclusive seismic data is reduced from 15 years to 10 years after acquisition of the data was completed.

The RMA Regulations¹² specify release timing or confidentiality periods for data. Confidentiality periods differ significantly according to whether data is designated as non-exclusive or exclusive. Non-exclusive seismic survey data is confidential for a period of up to 15 years while exclusive survey data may be made publicly available from 3 years.

This longer confidentiality period for non-exclusive seismic data was aimed at incentivising commercial vendors to increase seismic acquisition, particularly over frontier areas; and through this, stimulate exploration.

An external review commissioned by the department of the data management regulations recommended a change in the confidentiality timeframe to 10 years in accordance with best practice standards in countries such as Canada and Norway.¹³

The department proposes reducing the confidentiality period for non-exclusive seismic data from 15 years to 10 years thereby increasing publicly and freely available data.

5.2. Streamlined release timeframes for disclosable information

Issue: The provisions for release of technical information from petroleum and greenhouse gas storage titles are complex and inconsistent, impacting on efficiency of regulation.

Proposal: It is proposed to reduce and simplify the provisions for release of disclosable information.

The provisions of the RMA Regulations¹⁴ relating to the release of information and data are complex and, in places, inconsistent. Information (including physical samples) is categorised in various ways with differing periods mandated until public release by Government is permitted.

The department considers the provisions for 'open information' (which may be released at any time) and 'excluded information' (which is permanently confidential) are clear and straight forward. However, complexity arises in respect to the release of 'disclosable information' (that is, information that is not classified as permanently confidential). Disclosable information may be made publicly available once that information's relevant day has passed.

The relevant day for disclosable information has not been reviewed since 2006 and is currently based on a wide range of factors including the data type, survey type and how and why the data was collected as well as market conditions at that time. To simplify the release provisions, the department proposes changes to the confidentiality periods as set out in the table below.

RMA Regulations release timeframes for disclosable information			
Proposed release timeframes		Changes from current arrangements	
Relevant Day	Activity	Petroleum Title	Greenhouse (GHG) Title
3 years from the end of the operation	Basic information relating to an exclusive seismic survey	Unchanged	Injection licence – increased by 1 year Other GHG title – no change
	Information from reprocessing of data from an exclusive seismic survey	Changed – definition of ‘relevant day’ simplified	Changed – definition of ‘relevant day’ simplified
	‘Other’ geophysical & geological surveys (non-seismic) – conducted under a title other than an access authority, special prospecting authority, GHG search authority or GHG special authority	Unchanged	Injection licence – increased by 1 year Other GHG title – no change
	‘Other’ geophysical and geological surveys (non-seismic) – conducted under an access authority, special prospecting authority, GHG search authority or GHG special authority – exclusive data	Unchanged	Unchanged
	All disclosable information relating to a drilling activity	Basic information increased by 1 year; Interpretative information reduced by 2 years.	Injection licence – Basic information increased by 2 years; Interpretative information reduced by 2 years Other GHG title – Basic information increased by 1 year Interpretative information reduced by 2 years.
5 years from the end of the operation	Samples	Production licence – increased by 2 years Other title – increased by 1 year	Injection licence – increased by 2 years Other GHG title – increased by 1 year
	Interpretative information relating to an exclusive seismic survey	Unchanged	Unchanged
	2D extract of non-exclusive 3D seismic data – required to be produced as a condition of title	Unchanged	Unchanged
	2D extract of non-exclusive 3D seismic data – not required to be produced as a condition of title	Reduced by 1 year	Reduced by 1 year
	Non-exclusive ‘other’ geophysical and geological survey data (non-seismic)	Reduced by 1 year	Reduced by 1 year
10 years from the end of the operation	Basic and interpretative information relating to a non-exclusive seismic survey or information from reprocessing of data from a non-exclusive seismic survey	Changed – reduced by 5 years; expanded to capture interpretative and reprocessed data	Changed – reduced by 5 years; expanded to capture interpretative and reprocessed data

End Notes

¹ The following are regulations under the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006 (OPGGGS Act):

- [Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage \(Regulatory Levies\) Regulations 2004](#) (Levies Regulations)
- [Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage \(Environment\) Regulations 2009](#) (Environment Regulations)
- [Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage \(Greenhouse Gas Injection and Storage\) Regulations 2011](#) (GHG Regulations)
- [Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage \(Safety\) Regulations 2009](#) (Safety Regulations)
- [Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage \(Resource Management and Administration\) Regulations 2011](#) (RMA Regulations).

² ACIL Allen, Offshore resources information regime: review of policy and regulations, 21 December 2020, report to the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.

³ Under the [Legislation Act 2003 \(Cth\)](#), all legislative instruments (including regulations) are automatically repealed (sunset) 10 years after their original registration. A legislative instrument ceases to be law if it is not made in advance of its sunset date. The key principle of the sunset arrangements is that legislative instruments are kept up to date and should only remain in force so long as they are needed. Sunset provides an opportunity for Ministers to review and streamline legislative instruments.

⁴ As set out in [RMA Regulations, regulation 7.14 and regulation 9.14](#) geological information includes observations made from drilling a well, including:

- (a) lithology; and
- (b) stratigraphy; and
- (c) storage formation properties and quality; and
- (d) geochemistry of formation rocks if available; and
- (e) environment of deposition if available.

⁵ [RMA Regulations Part 7, Division 3; Part 9, Division 3](#)

⁶ [RMA Regulations Part 7, Division 3, Subdivision 3.5; Part 9, Division 3, Subdivision 3.5](#)

⁷ [RMA Regulations Part 7, Division 3; Part 9, Division 3](#)

⁸ 'reprocessed data' here refers to data that has been newly created by applying new and/or novel processing techniques to existing or legacy data.

⁹ [The Australian Government Public Data Policy Statement](#)

¹⁰ 'non-exclusive' here refers to data that is made available for commercial sale or license

¹¹ 'Relevant day' refers to the date from which the Titles Administrator or responsible Commonwealth Minister may make documentary information publicly known.

¹² [RMA Regulations Part 8, Division 3 and Part 10, Division 3](#)

¹³ ACIL Allen, Offshore resources information regime: review of policy and regulations, 21 December 2020, report to the Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources.

¹⁴ [RMA Regulations Part 8, Division 3 and Part 10, Division 3](#)