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Media Release

Consultation on EEZ regulations for exploratory petroleum drilling questioned

The Environmental Defence Society is concerned that the Minister for the Environment is not undertaking meaningful consultation on proposed regulations for exploratory oil and gas drilling.

“The Minister announced back in April that *a simplified process* for exploratory petroleum drilling consent applications *appears to be an appropriate response*,” said EDS Chairman Gary Taylor.

“The Government this week introduced a new non-notified discretionary activity status to the EEZ Act through a Supplementary Order Paper. This cuts out the public consultation that normally occurs on a law change through the select committee process.

“The Minister for the Environment has now released a discussion document proposing that exploratory oil and gas drilling become a non-notified discretionary activity. However, her earlier comments back in April promised proper consultation.

But now the law is being changed first and the consultation will be after the fact. The outcome has clearly been pre-determined.

“The petroleum industry has clearly pushed Ministers hard to create this weak, pass-through consent process that will have no public involvement. It is unacceptable regulation of a potentially extremely dangerous activity.

“The Deepwater Horizon well that caused the worse oil pollution in many decades was an exploratory well and one of the issues uncovered in the subsequent review was regulatory capture by the industry. Inexplicably, we seem about to fall into the same trap.

“EDS is not opposed to offshore petroleum drilling but we must have a transparent and robust regulatory framework in place to assess the environmental risks, the applicant’s track record and whether appropriate measures are in place in case of well failure,” Mr Taylor concluded.

The Ministry for the Environment’s discussion document is available [here](#).¹

¹ <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/publications/oceans/managing-our-oceans/activity-classification-under-the-eez-act.pdf>