

# Acreage release and prime areas

## Purpose

This guide note provides information on how the Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration manages the annual acreage release program and the designation of prime areas within Western Australia in support of exploration for:

- Petroleum and regulated substances;
- Geothermal energy resources; and
- Greenhouse gas storage.

This guide note applies to onshore Western Australia, and coastal waters governed by the *Petroleum, Geothermal Energy and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 1967* (PGEggGSA) and the *Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Submerged Lands) Act 1982* (PGGS(SL)A).

## What is an acreage release?

To responsibly manage Western Australia's petroleum and geothermal energy resources and potential greenhouse gas (GHG) storage formations, the department periodically releases discrete areas calling for competitive applications for exploration permits (section 30 of the PGEggGSA; section 20 of the PGGS(SL)A).

Discrete release areas are selected based on a combination of nominations from industry and an assessment of the prospectivity and/or proximity to relevant infrastructure.

Acreage releases are generally made annually and formalised in the Western Australian Government Gazette. Once announced, potential applicants have a period of three months to prepare and submit a competitive work-program bid for a specified release area.

Details of acreage releases are available on the department's website: [Acreage Release](#).

## Determining areas for release

The department considers various factors in determining which areas will be included in a release, prioritising the areas that support responsible resource development for the State and best align with the following criteria:

- Industry nominations received and assessed as suitable for release.
- Prospectivity assessments, including structural geology, data availability, known plays, and exploration maturity.
- Proximity to essential infrastructure - pipelines, processing facilities, and ports.
- Existing tenure and land use constraints, including environmental, heritage, or subsisting titles considerations.
- Strategic basin development priorities, including opportunities to foster exploration in under explored or emerging areas.

## What is a prime area?

Prime areas are declared areas of the State that have been set aside for a future acreage release. The department has identified these areas as having a high level of resource prospectivity and/or proximity to essential infrastructure that would facilitate resource exploration and future extraction of resources, or storage of GHG.

A declaration of reservation of blocks is made pursuant to section 28 of the PGEGGSA or section 18 of the PGG(SL)A by a notice in the *Government Gazette*. A separate prime area reservation is declared for each of the three resource types. The declared blocks cannot be subject to an application for a title relevant to the resource type.

Details of the current prime areas are available as a layer on the department's mapping systems, Tengraph and Geoview WA, and on the WA Government website:

- [Petroleum reservation of blocks](#)
- [Geothermal energy reservation of blocks](#)
- [Greenhouse gas storage reservation of blocks](#)

## Can I lodge an application over a prime area?

No applications for a particular resource can be lodged over the corresponding prime area for the resource while the reservation is in effect. An application over a prime area can only be made over that area if it has been made available through an acreage release process.

Prospective applicants that are interested in lodging an application over a prime area should make a formal nomination for that area to be considered for inclusion in a release. Details on how to nominate blocks are provided in this separate guide: [Nominating blocks for an acreage release](#).

Importantly, applications for a Special Prospecting Authority can be accepted at any time for an area of the State not subject to a live title or set aside under reservation as a prime area.

## Will new locations be designated as prime areas in the future?

The prime area reservation remains in effect for a set period specified in the *Gazette* notice, however, the department reviews the prime areas annually to determine

- whether an area should be included in a release;
- whether any blocks should be added or removed from the reservation; and
- whether to extend the reservation to include additional blocks.

## Further information

For additional queries regarding the nomination process or this guide note, please contact the Resource Tenure Group: [petroleum.titles@dmpe.wa.gov.au](mailto:petroleum.titles@dmpe.wa.gov.au)

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