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Please direct all responses/queries to:  
**Andrew Decet**

23 February 2024

Attn: Committee Secretary  
**Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications**  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

## **SUBMISSION ON THE PROTECTING THE SPIRIT OF SEA COUNTRY BILL 2023**

Woodside Energy Ltd. (Woodside) acknowledges Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their enduring connection to their lands and waters. Woodside has operated on the Burrup Peninsula (Murujuga) for almost 40 years and is proud of the relationships we have established with the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we have operated in that time.

Woodside takes its community and consultation obligations seriously, and we actively seek to build and maintain meaningful relationships with the communities in which we operate. This includes a focus on inclusive engagement with First Nations communities. Our consultation process with First Nations groups is consistent with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People which provides that consultation should occur in good faith with Indigenous people through their own representative institutions. Our approach has also been developed with Traditional Owners and reflects their requests for further information and investigations including environmental monitoring, archaeological and ethnographic surveys and access to independent expert advice.

In this regard, Woodside notes the *Protecting the Spirit of Sea Country Bill 2023* (Cth) (the Bill) seeks to amend the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2009* (Cth) (the 2009 Regulations). Given ongoing challenges to progressing offshore project approvals and a lack of clear consultation guidance, offshore regulation continues to be the subject of amplified focus. In addition to the Inquiry into the Bill we note there are additional review processes underway:

- On 10 January 2024, the 2009 regulations were repealed and replaced with the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2023* (Cth) (the 2023 Regulations).
- On 11 January 2024, the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR) commenced a review of the offshore environment management framework for petroleum and greenhouse gas activities, specifically the review of the consultation provisions under the offshore environmental management framework.
- The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) is undertaking reforms to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and introducing the *Cultural Heritage Act 2018* to replace the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*.

Woodside is actively engaging in these regulatory reforms and review discussions and believe regulatory processes and reform must:

- Provide clarity for all stakeholders on the purpose, standards and expectations of consultation;
- Provide timeframe certainty; and
- Ensure consultation is targeted and meaningful to inform any additional measures that may be adopted by the titleholder to protect the environment and cultural heritage values.

Therefore, it is Woodside's observation that competing and parallel regulatory reform discussions will cause confusion and potentially further division amongst communities. This risks undermining, rather than enhancing the important issues that must be addressed. Thus, Woodside respectfully submits that the Bill is considered within the existing review frameworks managed by DISR and DCCEEW.

For further information on how we approach cultural heritage please follow this link:

<https://www.woodside.com/sustainability/indigenous-peoples/australian-cultural-heritage-management>

Thank you for affording Woodside the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours faithfully,

**Michelle Grady**  
Vice President Corporate Affairs