

FEDERAL, STATE AND TERRITORY RESOURCES MINISTERS MET TODAY BY TELECONFERENCE FOR THE SECOND RESOURCES MINISTERS ROUNDTABLE.

Today, Ministers began by reaffirming the need to maintain a coordinated, national approach to manage the impacts of COVID-19 in the resources sector, including for resources workers and the communities in which they live and operate.

Ministers commended industry for taking a decisive and proactive stance in this crisis, including by drastically reducing the number of workers travelling, and by publishing a *National COVID-19 Response Protocol* to guide the implementation of public health measures in resources operations. Ministers particularly welcomed industry's focus on protecting the health and safety of workers and local communities.

Ministers have met each week since the crisis unfolded in Australia to align efforts to manage the impacts of the crisis. These discussions informed the themes for today's COAG Resources Ministers Roundtable.

Immediate Priorities

The resources sector remains essential in providing jobs, economic support, important commodities and energy supply to Australians. Aligning government efforts to consider and minimise the impacts of COVID-19 on the sector is a key priority.

Ministers considered the immediate impacts of COVID-19 on the sector, nation and trade relationships, and resolved that:

- The resources sector remains essential to jobs, the economy, regional communities and the domestic and international supply of energy during this crisis. Ministers also agreed for the need to maintain onshore exploration to the greatest degree possible during and post COVID-19.
- They will take all reasonable steps in line with expert medical opinion to keep the sector open for business, and jurisdictions will work closely together and with industry as the crisis evolves—including to minimise disruptions resulting from workforce mobility and supply chain restrictions.
- The domestic and international supply of energy is a priority. Ministers noted that the Federal Government intends to assess options for a national gas reservation policy. A number of jurisdictions noted their concerns over the potential unintended consequences of a national policy. Ministers also endorsed the *Onshore Gas Principles Guide*¹, noting that each jurisdiction has individual approaches to onshore gas extraction.

¹ The *Onshore Gas Principles Guide* will be published on the COAG Energy Council website www.coagenergycouncil.gov.au

Ministers also endorsed guidance to increase flexibility for offshore exploration. Increased flexibility will immediately assist the sector to manage and plan their way through the current crisis, and be in a position to re-commence exploration once the effects of COVID-19 have passed.

Long-Term Positioning

Ministers also recognised the role resources will play in Australia's economic recovery. Consistent with the *Strategic Reform Agenda for Resources* agreed in 2018, Ministers considered how jurisdictions could support and expedite this recovery.

Ministers were also joined by Productivity Commissioner Lisa Gropp for a discussion of the Commission's draft report into resources regulation released in March 2020.

- Ministers resolved to request that the Productivity Commission suspend work on their report while jurisdictions focus on the urgent COVID-19 response actions.

Ministers further resolved that support for emerging industries is critical to economic recovery, job creation, and meeting global supply needs, including for example critical minerals, new resources basins, battery minerals processing, and hydrogen.

Ministers recognised the ongoing importance of critical minerals as key inputs to our modern high-tech world. Australia is well positioned to capture the growing critical minerals market.

Ministers endorsed a *COAG Critical Minerals Work Plan* developed collaboratively to support this emerging sector. The Commonwealth's Critical Minerals Facilitation Office will oversee and coordinate the ongoing development and implementation of this COAG Critical Minerals work plan.

The teleconference roundtable was attended by:

The Hon. Keith Pitt MP, Commonwealth Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia

The Hon. Angus Taylor MP, Commonwealth Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction (Chair of the COAG Energy Council)

The Hon. John Barilaro MP, New South Wales Deputy Premier, and Minister for Regional New South Wales, Industry and Trade

The Hon. Paul Kirby MLA, Northern Territory Minister for Primary Industry and Resources

The Hon. Dr Anthony Lynham, Queensland Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy

The Hon. Dan van Holst Pellekaan MP, South Australian Minister for Resources

The Hon. Guy Barnett MP, Tasmanian Minister for Primary Industry and Resources

The Hon. Jaclyn Symes MP, Victorian Minister for Resources

The Hon. Bill Johnston MLA, Western Australian Minister for Mines and Petroleum, Energy and Industrial Relations

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