



Offshore Greenhouse Gas Search Authority, Special Authority, and Research Consent

All fact sheets should be read in conjunction with the [Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006](#) (the **OPGGs Act**), associated regulations, relevant guidelines and policies (available on [NOPTA's website](#)).

Parts 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7 of the OPGGS Act provides for the grant of an offshore greenhouse gas (GHG) search authority, special authority, or research consent respectively.

Overview

The responsible Commonwealth Minister (RCM) has the power to grant GHG search authorities, special authorities and research consents subject to conditions the RCM thinks appropriate.

GHG Search Authority

A GHG search authority authorises the holder to undertake operations to explore for potential GHG storage formations and injection sites within the authority area (for example seismic surveys and seabed sampling). A search authority does not authorise the holder to make a well.

A search authority application cannot include block(s) that have an existing GHG assessment permit, holding lease or injection licence or petroleum exploration permit, retention lease or production licence in force.

A search authority comes into force on the day specified in the authority and remains in force for the period specified in the authority, not longer than 180 days. A search authority cannot be transferred (section 406 of the OPGGS Act) and there is no provision to extend the duration of a search authority (although a new application for a subsequent search authority is permitted).

Holders of a GHG search authority will be informed if another search authority or petroleum special prospecting authority is granted with respect to any relevant block(s).

GHG Special Authority

An applicant for a GHG special authority must be the holder of an existing GHG assessment permit, holding lease, injection licence or search authority (the originating title).

A GHG special authority authorises the holder to undertake operations which relate to GHG exploration, injection, storage or monitoring within the authority area. The operations authorised by a special authority must be related to the operations that are being carried on in the authority holder's GHG assessment permit, holding lease, injection licence or search authority area. This may include carrying out operations in an area which is either part of that offshore area but outside the existing GHG assessment permit, holding lease, or injection licence area, or part of an adjoining offshore area. A special authority does not authorise the holder to make a well.

A special authority comes into force on the day specified in the special authority and remains in force for the period specified in the authority. If the entitlement to a special authority derives from a search authority the term of the special authority will be aligned with the search authority.

A special authority can be varied by the RCM by written notice. Consultation procedures apply if the RCM proposes to vary a special authority (see section 419 of the OPGGS Act and Consultation section below).

GHG Research Consent

A GHG research consent authorises the holder of the consent to carry out operations relating to the exploration for potential GHG storage formation and injection sites, in the course of a scientific investigation. This recognises Australia's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) to allow marine scientific research on its continental shelf (see [Article 246 of the UNCLOS](#)).

A research consent comes into force on the day specified in the consent and remains in force for the period specified in the consent. There is no provision to extend the duration of the consent.

Consultation

Applicants for a GHG search authority special authority, or research consent over areas not subject to an existing



GHG assessment permit, holding lease, injection licence or search authority should provide evidence of consultation undertaken with relevant Commonwealth agencies and stakeholders (including any relevant petroleum titleholders).

If the applicant has completed consultation as part of an Environment Plan process under the [Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage \(Environment\) Regulations 2009](#) applicants should provide a copy of the consultation and a response table with the application.

Consultation responses may be used to determine if conditions are required to be placed on the authority or consent at the time of grant.

When applying for a special authority over an area that is subject to a GHG assessment permit, holding lease, injection licence or search authority held by a third party, applicants should seek the written consent of that party for the grant of the special authority over its title area. If such consent is provided with an application this can significantly reduce assessment timeframes.

Reporting

Holders of GHG search authorities, special authorities or research consents should be aware of the reporting requirements for GHG titles in the [Offshore Petroleum Greenhouse Gas Storage \(Resource Management and Administration\) Regulations 2011](#).

Note: where the grant of a special authority authorises activities over a GHG assessment permit, holding lease, or injection licence held by a third party, the authority holder must comply with section 420(1) of the OPGGS Act relating to reporting obligations to third parties.

Timing of applications

For GHG research consents, early engagement with NOPTA is recommended to discuss the application process prior to submitting.

It is recommended that GHG search and special authority applications be submitted at least three months prior to the intended commencement date to allow sufficient time for assessment/approval of the application. Any requests for further information may impact the timeliness of approvals.

Delays to processing times can be avoided by using the [NOPTA Forms Guidance - Greenhouse Gas](#).

How do I apply?

Applicants can apply in writing to NOPTA at: ghg@nopta.gov.au.

Application forms are available on [NOPTA's website](#) and include checklists of information that should be provided with an application.

More information

If you have any specific questions, please contact ghg@nopta.gov.au.

***Please note:** this document is intended as a guide only and should not be relied on as legal advice or regarded as a substitute for legal advice in individual cases.*

Version History

Version	Date	Comment
3.0	18/03/2024	Add link to GHG forms guidance
2.0	03/04/2023	Update to content, layout, and format.
1.0	03/04/2023	New fact sheet