

MEDIA RELEASE

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‘Oil spill should never have happened’: Revelations spark urgent push for inquiry and safeguards

Explosive comments from Australia’s peak oil and gas body this morning that the Kimberley oil spill should never have happened has finally lifted the lid on eight weeks of doubt and concern about the response to the disaster, WA’s leading environment organisations said.

Four failed attempts to cap the oil spill and ongoing delays are adding to the mounting disbelief about the industry’s ability to deal with both this spill and future environmental disasters, Conservation Council of WA director Piers Verstegen said.

“After eight weeks of denial, the oil and gas sector recognises that we have a serious problem and that it simply should never have happened.

“APPEA’s honest admission today confirms that an urgent examination is now necessary of why this spill happened, why the response has been so slow and what measure should now be put in place to safeguard the marine environment from further damage.”

Environs Kimberley director Martin Pritchard said the revelations, together with evidence of damage to marine life, demonstrates the need for areas to be set aside as safe havens and must be large enough to safeguard marine life from disasters like the oil spill.

“The time for pretending that things will be ok is now over. The only guarantee for our unique and unprotected marine life is the establishment of large marine sanctuaries, which act as a safe haven for marine life to feed, breed and migrate.

“With only 1 per cent of the waters off the Kimberley protected, we call on the oil and gas industry to accept that the days of access to all areas is over after all we are talking about one of the last remaining pristine areas of ocean in the world.”

Mr Verstegen said a fully public independent inquiry not just on this spill but the appropriateness of oil and gas development blanketing the Kimberley region must be undertaken.

“It will demonstrate the obvious, that despite its claims of infallibility, the oil and gas industry is as subject to the limitations of technology as any other sector, and must accept prudent safeguards for our marine life.”

Mr Verstegen said it is even more alarming that with all the best possible technology available, the spill was not prevented and has dragged on for so long.

“Even with the best technology this was not prevented, and even with the best global experts from industry engaged in the response, the spill is still running uncontrolled.”

Further comment: Martin Pritchard, Environs Kimberley, 0427 548 075