

WA island site for world's largest carbon storage project

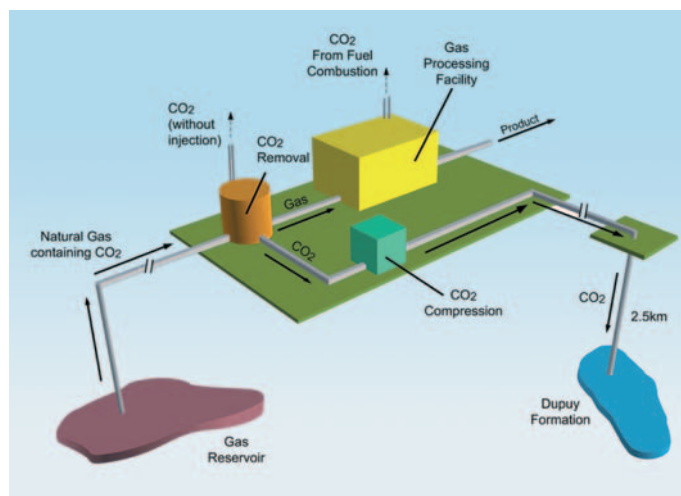
The Australian Government will provide \$60 million to support the world's largest carbon dioxide capture and storage project at Barrow Island, off the north coast of Western Australia.

The area is also the location of the as-yet undeveloped Gorgon gas field. The gas tends to have high carbon dioxide levels, which is why Gorgon operator, Chevron, is examining the costly geosequestration option.

Chevron has the rights to pump gas from the site, but is awaiting environmental approval.

The Department of Environment and Heritage has allocated funding from its \$500 million Low Emissions Technology Demonstration Fund to support Chevron with its 'CO₂ Injection' project.

'This project, which will



Carbon dioxide will be captured, liquefied and then pumped into a geological reservoir 2.5 km beneath the sea floor. offshore-technology.com

capture carbon dioxide from the Gorgon gas field and inject it deep underground, has the potential to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions by up to three million tonnes each year,' says Senator Ian

Campbell, Minister for the Environment and Heritage.

'The Australian Government's funding provides for a commercial-scale demonstration project involving liquefying the carbon dioxide so it

can be piped to the injection site, then injecting it 2.5 km underground into a geological structure.

'There will be long-term monitoring of the stored carbon dioxide to ensure its safety.

'Through our Low Emissions Technology Demonstration Fund we're forging ahead with a portfolio of technologies, including large-scale solar power, brown coal drying, oxy-firing of black coal, and enhanced gas recovery from coal seams with carbon dioxide sequestration.

'Lessons we learn from these demonstration projects will be used throughout Australia and internationally.'

Senator Campbell says the project must still clear all relevant State and Commonwealth environmental approvals.

Overfishing threatens Great Barrier Reef's sharks

Australian scientists have warned that coral reef shark populations on the Great Barrier Reef are in the midst of a catastrophic collapse because of fishing pressure.

Research conducted by William Robbins and colleagues at James Cook University and the ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, found that grey reef shark numbers had already declined to around 3% of unfished levels, and are currently declining so fast that they could collapse to one-thousandth of their unfished levels within 20 years if current conditions continue.

Whitetip reef shark populations are currently at 20% of unfished levels, and could be down to 5% within two decades.

'Our research indicates that current reef shark abundances

and levels of fishing pressure are simply not sustainable,' says Robbins.

'Reef sharks are effectively on a fast track to "ecological extinction" – becoming so rare that they will no longer play their part in the ecology and food web of the reef.

'[The study] also suggests that immediate and substantial reductions in fishing pressure will be needed to give threatened populations any chance of recovery.'

One of the study co-authors, Mizue Hisano, says reef sharks mature late in life, and, like many whales and dolphins, produce very few offspring. 'This makes it hard for them to bounce back from even low levels of fishing,' he says.

The study points out that, because shark fishing is



Reef sharks are a vital part of reef ecosystems. ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies

intensifying, population collapses are likely to accelerate if no immediate action is taken. Hisano says it is especially disturbing that a collapse in shark populations had occurred on Australia's Great Barrier Reef.

'The Great Barrier Reef is widely regarded as one of the world's best-managed reef ecosystems. This means the situation may well be even more serious on reefs elsewhere in the world.'