



## Exploration concerns remain, says MP

KATE CHAPMAN

CONCERNS about oil spills remain after a public meeting about offshore oil and gas exploration south of Wellington, Green MP Gareth Hughes says.

Representatives from Anadarko, one of the partners in the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, attended the meeting in Kaikoura yesterday. Anadarko was awarded two exploration permits for blocks in the Pegasus Basin off the Wellington coast.

Iwi, local businesses and government officials were also represented.

Mr Hughes said people were concerned about the risk of an oil spill.

"A huge amount of concern, I think, because obviously Kaikoura is dependent on its tourism businesses ... it's

[the exploration area] even closer to Wellington than it is to Kaikoura and I think Wellingtonians don't want to see oil washing up on their beaches."

Energy and Resources Minister Simon Bridges was not able to answer basic questions, Mr Hughes said.

"What I took out of it is that none of them could guarantee that we wouldn't see any oil spill."

Mr Bridges said Mr Hughes may not have got the answers he wanted but the meeting was generally positive.

"Absolutely there were, as I expected, concerns about issues of health and safety and the environment, that's entirely natural and understandable and I think they're issues that I certainly take seriously."

Anadarko spokesman Alan Seay said the meeting was positive and while it was "once over lightly" there would be more meetings in the future.

"There was a genuine desire to listen. Understandably there are concerns, we never anticipated that we'd be able to allay concerns at a single meeting."

Anadarko has a five year work programme, including seismic surveying, for the Pegasus Basin.



**Gareth Hughes:** Says the risk of an oil spill is at the centre of most people's fears.