



# Media Statement

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## **NOPSA submission to Commission of Inquiry into Montara incident calls for changes in regulation of offshore petroleum well safety**

The National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority (NOPSA) has provided a submission to the Commission of Inquiry into the Montara uncontrolled hydrocarbon release which includes a call for legislative change to improve the regulation of the integrity of offshore petroleum wells.

The Commission of Inquiry was established by the Federal Minister for Resources and Energy following the Montara Incident.

NOPSA has prepared and provided its submission based on what it regards as necessary improvements to the regulation of well safety in Australia. These improvements would, in the Authority's opinion, further limit the likelihood of an incident such as the Montara uncontrolled release.

"First and foremost, the titleholder of a well has primary responsibility for its integrity and ensuring operations relating to it and associated facilities are safe, however, NOPSA has also submitted to the Commission of Inquiry that it strongly believes there is a requirement for legislative change to create a more focussed and better resourced administration for regulating the integrity of wells," said the CEO of NOPSA, Ms Jane Cutler.

NOPSA is currently undertaking an investigation into the Montara uncontrolled hydrocarbon release to determine whether any occupational health and safety laws have been contravened by the operators of the Montara well head platform and the West Atlas drilling unit. Subject to NOPSA's findings it will provide a brief of evidence to the Commonwealth Department of Prosecutions for their consideration.

Although NOPSA's own investigation is continuing, it is clear that the uncontrolled release occurred because there was a failure of the integrity of one of the wells in the Montara field.

NOPSA is responsible for regulating the occupational health and safety of people at offshore petroleum facilities. NOPSA's functions and powers do not extend to the integrity of wells.

"NOPSA has submitted to the Commission of Inquiry that it strongly believes there is a requirement for legislative change to create a more focussed and better resourced administration for regulating the integrity of wells," said Ms Cutler.

"The Authority is of the view that, if resourced and funded accordingly, it has the appropriate expertise and would be best placed to administer legislation relating to the integrity and safety of wells," she said.

“Such a regulatory change augmenting the role of NOPSA would also help promote objectivity and independence by further separating safety from the resource management and government petroleum revenue generation activities of State and Northern Territory agencies which currently have responsibility for the critical assessment of Well Operations Management Plans.”

Ends.

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*The National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority (NOPSA) is the occupational health and safety (OHS) regulator for the Australian offshore petroleum industry. NOPSA is a Commonwealth statutory agency that regulates under the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006 in Commonwealth waters and equivalent OHS legislation in designated coastal waters of the States and Northern Territory.*