

THE REGULATOR

10

NOPSEMA
our decade-long journey

2022 - Issue 4



NOPSEMA
Australia's offshore energy regulator

About NOPSEMA

The National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) is Australia's independent expert regulator for health and safety, environmental management, structural and well integrity for offshore petroleum facilities and greenhouse gas storage activities in Commonwealth waters.

By law, offshore petroleum and greenhouse storage activities cannot begin before NOPSEMA has assessed and accepted the required permissioning documents demonstrating how the activity will be undertaken to reduce risks to the health and safety of the workforce and the environment to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) and environmental impacts to an acceptable level.

In November 2021, NOPSEMA was given the role and functions of the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator following the passing of the *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* in federal parliament.

For more information, visit our website at nopsma.gov.au.

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Published in December 2022

Strategic
compliance
focus areas for
2022

PREVENTING MAJOR
ACCIDENT EVENTS

PREVENTING LOSS OF WELL
CONTROL

EFFECTIVE OIL POLLUTION
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

RESPONSIBLE ASSET
STEWARDSHIP

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Message from the
Chief Executive
Stuart Smith



Welcome to the final edition of the Regulator for the year and a change in plans. In November, the Minister for Resources, requested I stay on as CEO for an interim period until Sue McCarrey commences next year.

Ms McCarrey's first day at NOPSEMA will be 20 February and she brings substantial experience from her time as CEO of Australia's National Rail Safety Regulator.

In this edition of The Regulator, we're looking back over our first ten years, noting some of the key milestones and achievements we've had along the way.

But it's not just big-ticket items or achievements. What really makes NOPSEMA the agency that it is, are the people we have working here.

We have colleagues who've been with NOPSEMA for a significant period, including from the very start and even before when the agency was NOPSA.

Getting this inside view goes a long way to demonstrate why I have such confidence in the agency – the knowledge, experience, and dedication within NOPSEMA is of the highest calibre.

Again, on the same theme of the people with whom we work, I hope you enjoy our feature on John Oliver – AKA the Rig Chef – who's built a career and indeed something of a social media following through his restaurant-quality food.

Working offshore has its challenges – time away from family, long days, and isolation from many of our daily comforts. And so John is able to make life offshore just that bit more comfortable through his cooking, honed over 20 years in catering offshore facilities around the world.

Elsewhere in this issue you can read about the recent Health and Safety Representative forum we co-hosted in Melbourne with APPEA and ACTU. The event was very well received and was another great chance to bring together health and safety reps to share their learnings and provide support and guidance on how to best perform the duty.

This last quarter has been a busy time for NOPSEMA in terms of international collaboration. There is always plenty to learn, but this year offered us a great chance to engage with our international counterparts in person after two years of travel restrictions.

While still strongly supporting virtual attendance and engagement, being on the ground with others from around the world undoubtedly offers a valuable opportunity to collaborate on common challenges and learnings.

Along with the energy transition, renewables will play a major role in the future and we as regulators need to keep pace with demand and progress.

Renewables was a major theme this year but really ramped up over the past three months, reflected by the increasing amount of engagement we have been involved in, for both Australia's industry and our international partners.

We also have messages from the agency's two Heads of Division. Cameron Grebe discusses the need for companies to consult more broadly, and Derrick O'Keeffe covers the growing spotlight on sexual harassment in the workplace.

Heading into the end of year break, I want to wish everyone a happy festive and holiday season. I also want to acknowledge those in the offshore energy sector who are working over this period, away from friends, family and loved ones, (literally) keeping the lights on.

A stylized, handwritten signature of Stuart Smith in black ink.

Stuart Smith
Chief Executive Officer



The Rig Chef: a seasoned veteran of offshore cuisine

Life offshore has its challenges – the isolation, time away from friends and family and a heightened need for self-sufficiency.

For those working offshore, a few home comforts can go a long way, like a good meal at the end of a long day.

John Oliver, known as the Rig Chef, doesn't simply provide good food, he ensures that crew are treated to dishes that you'd find in a top-notch, land-based restaurant.

Jobs that are difficult in their own right come with added difficulty when applied to the offshore environment, something John knows very well.

As a senior chef based onboard the North Rankin Complex, 135kms off the coast of Karratha, John has worked in the offshore oil and gas industry for more than 20 years, on a variety of facilities in some of the most remote and challenging environments.

Commercial kitchens are already a high-pressure environment, but even more so when onboard an oil and gas facility.

"The highlight of my job is when people go out of their way to thank us – it's a good feeling knowing you've made their day with your cooking," John said.

"The job is very fast paced and sometimes is very hard both on the body and the brain.



"But what makes it all worth it is when we get our good feedback, and we can get the crew talking about food and the services we provide.

Despite the challenges, the quality that John and his team are able to achieve is something you would find in a city centre restaurant, even catching the attention of one of the world's most renowned celebrity chefs.

"Meeting Jamie Oliver was definitely a career highlight for me," John said.

"He was really interested in how an offshore kitchen is run – how we source the food, how we plan the menus, he was just blown away."

A friend of Jamie's showed him The Rig Chef's Facebook page, which led to the celebrity chef reaching out to John through his own social media page.

"At first, I thought it was a fake profile and thought nothing of it, but I checked it and it was legitimate," John said.

"He messaged me saying he was interested in my work offshore and after some conversation he asked if we could catch up when he was in Perth."

Fast forward a few months and Jamie's assistant reached out to John asking him to come by Jamie's restaurant – Jamie's Italian.

"I went over with a couple of his books for him to sign and he greeted me with a big hug and asked for a video of us together to send to his friend who had shown him my page."





"He was really excited to meet me and suddenly I felt like the famous one."

"We spoke for about an hour and I thanked him for his time and went to leave, but he asked me to stay for the rest of the day to join competition winners who would be sampling his new menu."

"He has even kept in touch since then."

"It felt great to get that recognition for the work I do and it's the same reason why I started my own social media pages – to show people what I can do."

John's Instagram profile ([j_oliver_rig_chef](#)) and his Facebook page ([The Rig Chef](#)) – with 12,700 and 1,100 followers respectively – is packed with photos of the dishes he has prepared over the years.

Something John also likes to share on his pages are the themed meals he prepares for the crew on days of significance such as NAIDOC Week, Oktoberfest and Christmas, which always create a lot of buzz.

"It gets people talking about food and the whole place is humming," he said.

"It boosts morale throughout the rig, helps the crew do their jobs and makes them happy – anything to have a positive impact on people's mental health is something I'll get behind."

Whether it's planning a big, themed meal or day-to-day management, one of the most difficult parts of running an offshore kitchen is supply.

"Where you'd normally be able to go to market every day, we have to order two weeks in advance based on the forecast of people on board for a certain length of time. These forecasts can change, and it can be really hard to judge, so it all has to be really well planned."

"Being a chef requires you to be very organised, but as a chef manager you're not just dealing with the cooking side of things but also a lot of admin and leadership responsibilities."

"It's a lot of jobs rolled into one and I work closely with the crew all day to ensure any gaps are filled, whether it is in the kitchen or the accommodation."

John's day begins with pre-start planning for both day and night shifts before heading to the office to do admin duties such as writing menus, placing orders, and ensuring health and safety measures are followed and updated.

"Then I don my PPE and go through to the galley where I pull out all the meats needed as per the menu plan," John said.

"I'll then prepare any meats, marinating, traying up, and placing back in the fridge ready to cook up. I then take a walk of the accommodation and ensure the utilities out in the accommodation are up to scratch and see if they need any assistance. Every day is different and there's always plenty to do to ensure everyone is looked after."

Starting out at a young age, John knew he wanted to be a chef when he was 13 years old and has been working in the food industry since he was 15.

Born and raised in the UK, John first started working offshore in 2001 in the North Sea before moving to Australia in 2011 with his wife and three daughters.

Since then, he has worked on jack ups, platforms, FPSOs, barges and pipe lay ships.

"My biggest job was as Chief Cook on a pipe layer where I was responsible for a team feeding 660 people every day, around the clock."

"The main thing is having a good team, then you can do anything."

So, what's next for The Rig Chef?

"Over the years, lots of people have asked me for my recipes and encouraged me to put them altogether, so I'm planning on doing a cookbook," John said.

"Watch this space – Jamie Oliver will also be promoting it, so it'll hopefully reach quite a few shelves."



Ebb and flow in the offshore renewables world

In October, the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, the Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), and the Australian Energy Infrastructure Commissioner jointly convened a meeting of senior industry and government representatives in Melbourne.

This landmark occasion represented an important coming together of key industry leaders, representative bodies and government authorities with interests and responsibilities in the emerging Australian offshore renewables sector.

Speaking after the meeting, our Senior Project Officer for Offshore Renewables Sarah Miller said the forum was a great success and thanked everyone who attended.

“The meeting was an opportunity for participants to discuss the current state of play for offshore renewables and examine opportunities for future collaboration and coordination on matters of common interest,” Sarah said.

“Collegiate engagement across industry and government will be an important part of enabling the long-term sustainability of the sector in Australia.”

During the meeting key policy updates were shared such as the strengthened legislated targets for emissions reduction.

The attendees were also informed of priority government work programs, timelines for identification and declaration of future offshore areas, progress of regulatory and policy development, and complementary initiatives underway to enable further establishment of the industry.

During the day, insights from recent international forums in which Australia is represented were shared and it was discussed how established jurisdictions are looking at Australia’s new regulatory framework as an innovative and progressive approach to licensing and consenting of offshore renewables projects.

“We’re in a fortunate position to be able to leverage the experiences of leading and emerging international jurisdictions in developing a fit for purpose regulatory regime and will continue to benefit from strong international engagement into the future,” Sarah said.

Also in early November, the **Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Regulations 2022** and the **Offshore Electricity Infrastructure (Regulatory Levies) Regulations 2022** were finalised and released.

These represent the first of several sets of regulations under the *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* (OEI Act) and include arrangements for licensing, spatial referencing, treatment of pre-existing infrastructure, and fees and levies.

The next set of regulations necessary to support the OEI Act framework are currently under development and include arrangements for management plans, financial security, safety and protection zones, and work health and safety.

The OIR is providing technical and regulatory advice to DCCEEW to support the development of these regulations with stakeholder consultation planned for 2023.

The OEI framework will operate on a cost recovery basis ensuring the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, the Offshore Infrastructure Registrar, and the department are appropriately resourced to effectively and efficiently administer the regime.

A **Cost Recovery Implementation Statement** has been developed which sets out cost recovery activities under the framework in accordance with the Australian Government’s Charging Framework.

You can subscribe to receive offshore renewables updates (and other news) through the news and resources section of **NOPSEMA’s website**.



Health and safety representatives forum

An increased awareness of the importance of mental health in the offshore energy industry was the focus of a meeting of health and safety representatives (HSRs) at a recent industry-wide forum, hosted by NOPSEMA, APPEA and ACTU.

Around 50 HSRs – crucial to ensuring wellbeing of workers in the offshore energy industry – took part in the one-day Melbourne based event, both online and in person.

Attendees heard from a range of expert speakers and panellists, who all spoke on different aspects of mental health, mental well-being and psychosocial work hazards, as well as on topics such as training, updates on legislation and regulation, and workplace support for HSRs.

One of the attendees was Luc Wilson, a Victoria-based HSR, who spoke powerfully about the deep and long-lasting effects of working in such a stressful and potentially dangerous environment.

“I think it’s really important that HSRs, industry, government and the regulator are aware of how much offshore work – especially if there’s an incident – can impact workers’ mental health.

“I’ve seen people walk away from this industry – good colleagues, good friends – because they felt poorly supported after being involved in an accident. They were traumatised and weren’t ever able to return to work. That’s awful to be so affected simply by just doing your job.

“This forum’s been great. Anything that can be done to improve workers’ mental health and bring it out into the open in what is typically such a ‘macho’ environment, can only be a good thing,” said Luc.

Derrick O’Keeffe, who heads up NOPSEMA’s Safety and Integrity division, said the day was a great success.

“We held our first event in 2019 in Perth and it was very well received. The 2021 event was slightly hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic and held as a virtual forum, and so we were really pleased to be able to hold an in-person event this year.

“The Australian offshore oil and gas industry relies on these dedicated, trained, experienced and competent personnel to ensure the safe operations and optimal performance of its offshore facilities. HSRs are a key part of this workforce and play a crucial role in keeping the offshore workforce safe and healthy,” Derrick said.

Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association (APPEA) Chief Executive Samantha McCulloch said the forum gave HSRs a valuable opportunity to share practical experience from across the industry.

“Our industry has decades of experience operating offshore facilities with a focus on ensuring the health and safety of our workers,” Samantha said.

“Representatives from a range of offshore workplaces brought their individual perspectives, heard about industry developments, and discussed how to continually improve health and safety.”

ACTU’s Liam O’Brien added: “We were delighted to see broad support from across industry to ensure the forum was well attended and of value to the workforce.

“We need to take action to address the factors at work that impact our mental health and this HSR forum is an important step in the offshore oil and gas industry taking action to improve the mental health of the workforce.”

The forum was arranged to fall the day after the WHS Foundation’s day-long HSR Refresher course – also held in Melbourne – meaning HSRs were able to access both opportunities with the minimum inconvenience.



Victorian-based HSR Luc Wilson



Our 10-year journey

This year is the tenth anniversary of the formation of NOPSEMA, when the Commonwealth brought the regulation of safety, well integrity and environmental management under one roof.

Since the earliest days of the regulation of the Australian offshore energy industry, the sector has undergone a major transformation.

This change has numerous factors – the increased gas production and LNG exports, the maturation of oil, the establishment of a regulatory regime for renewable energy projects, and an ever-increasing expectations of the Australian and global community for responsible development.

But despite all this, the offshore production of energy, whether from traditional or renewable sources, continues to play an important role in meeting Australia's current and future energy needs.

NOPSEMA's CEO Stuart Smith, who has been at the helm of the regulator for more than eight years, said the agency's experience and expertise has played a crucial and ongoing role as industry and government navigate these new challenges.

"From NOPSA becoming NOPSEMA in 2012, the agency has continued to evolve and grow at a rapid rate – a trend that's likely to continue," Stuart said.

"It's testament to the quality and skills of our workforce that we're able to grow while still maintaining the highest of regulatory standards."

The genesis of NOPSEMA was the formation of the National Offshore Petroleum Safety Authority (NOPSA) in 2005, which back then had responsibility for regulating offshore oil and gas safety.

"Since then, we've continued to be seen in Canberra as a trusted source of expertise and experience," Stuart said.

"The agency took on more responsibilities over the years, with the most recent being the passing of the *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act* bringing the offshore renewables sector into our scope under the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator (OIR)."

Head of Safety and Integrity Division Derrick O'Keeffe, who has been with NOPSEMA since 2016, said even among the expanded responsibilities, safety remained a key focus carried over from NOPSA.

"We have seen a lot of change over the past decade here, but one thing that hasn't changed is our focus on safety, which if anything, has only gotten stronger," Derrick said.

Over the next seven years, the agency's remit was expanded to first include well integrity in 2011, and then environmental management in 2012 – which is when NOPSEMA was officially formed.

Another area which is likely to occupy an increasingly large proportion of NOPSEMA's resources is decommissioning, something that Head of Environment, Renewables and Decommissioning Division Cameron Grebe has seen increase in focus since being with NOPSEMA from the very beginning.

Rod Gunn

**Manager of Assessment and Inspection
Joined NOPSEMA on 1 July 2012**

Having joined NOPSEMA in July 2012, shortly after it's formation, my first impression was seeing the range and high level of experienced people within the safety division. I was also impressed with the significant effort by our environment colleagues in establishing guidance, procedures, policies, and workshops and seminars with industry.

NOPSEMA is a busy place to be – we definitely punch above our weight. There have been a lot of milestones for the agency over the past 10 years, but for me they are particularly around engaging and playing a leading role with the International Regulators Forum (IRF). We've led and been involved in many education activities and played a leading role in urging the industry to start decommissioning planning and work.

An issue that's been very close to me is our continued support for the vital role of Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs), including the HSR Forums we host, which bring in a strong crowd and feature some really important discussions and knowledge sharing. A big topic in health and safety right now is around mental health, and I'm really proud of the collaborative work we've done with industry, unions, and state regulators on psychosocial risks in offshore workplaces.

The reason I've stayed with NOPSEMA over the years is, without a doubt, my colleagues and the offshore workers at the coalface. The people at NOPSEMA all have a real passion for what we do and that gives us the ability to influence and work with industry to continually improve, especially with implementing best practices. Australia is always pushing to be at the leading edge.

The next 10 years will bring a new set of challenges and opportunities – one that I'll especially be keeping an eye on is energy transition and how we can support Australia's needs.



Carissa Aitken
Acting Environment Manager of Operations

Having worked with the WA State Government for 10 years, I started in a new role with NOPSEMA in December 2012 as an Environmental Specialist in the Assessment and Compliance Team. Over the past decade with NOPSEMA, I have held a number of different roles within the division before stepping into my current role as Acting Environment Manager for the Operations team.

I can clearly recall how smoothly the Environment Division was running considering that the function was barely a year old.

A highlight for me was working on the regulatory reform project in 2018 to increase transparency in Environmental Plan (EP) assessments. This project included significant changes to our technology and working processes, and I had the opportunity to create and influence how these changes were implemented on the ground. I'm looking forward to continuing our key work in the industry's management of greenhouse gas emissions and impacts from climate change, as well as collaborating with State and Commonwealth Government in this area to support our response to the Statement of Expectations from Madeleine King, our new Minister for Resources.

Working with such an incredible group of like-minded, talented and dedicated people in the Environment, Renewables and Decommissioning Division is one of the key reasons why I have stayed with NOPSEMA for 10 years. My first impressions of the agency were right on the money – the high level of knowledge and technical skills within the agency have only increased and I still work with the majority of the initial team that I was so impressed by. The work is incredibly rewarding – I get to apply my knowledge and skills in a meaningful way to support better environmental outcomes, which is deeply important to me. I have confidence in my team that we can further build upon our achievements to date and have a lasting impression on the new and future members of NOPSEMA.

Over the past decade, I have watched the agency evolve, grow and respond to some significant challenges. I have also seen NOPSEMA achieve great outcomes and implement regulatory best practice initiatives. I'm excited to see where it will be in the next 10 years under our new incoming CEO Sue McCarrey.



“Many of Australia’s offshore assets have already, or are soon to, reach their end of life,” Cameron said.

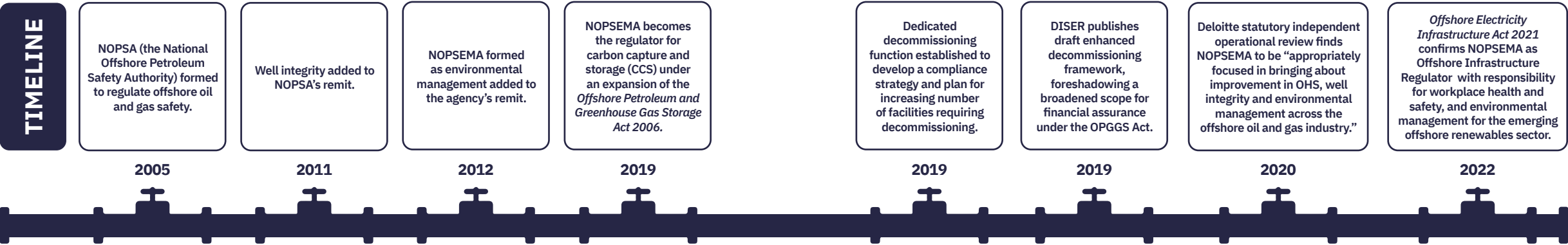
“Industry is scaling up decommissioning activities, which presents both challenges and opportunities, particularly in light of the growing interest in carbon capture and storage.

“Likewise, the addition of offshore renewable regulatory responsibilities as the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator means it’s more important than ever that the knowledge and experience within NOPSEMA is leveraged to ensure robust safety and environmental outcomes, and support the Government in the energy transition to renewables.”

While NOPSEMA is likely to see significant change as it takes on additional responsibilities and functions, the focus of the agency remains the same – ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the offshore workforce and marine environment.

“Whether someone has been with NOPSEMA for ten years or ten days, looking after the sector’s workforce and the marine environment where they work will always be our number one focus,” Stuart said.

“Coupled with the arrival of our new CEO Sue McCarrey in February, it’s an exciting time to be at NOPSEMA.”



Collaborating with international partners

With so many offshore energy projects occurring around the globe, each with their own unique challenges and opportunities, there is no shortage of lessons to learn and knowledge to share on the international stage.

The past few months has provided valuable opportunities for NOPSEMA to collaborate with other international regulators, governments, and industry leaders to glean what we can from their successes, challenges and areas of focus.

IRF AGM

The International Regulators Forum (IRF) AGM and Conference is a major fixture on the international calendar every year, providing a large platform for the exchange of knowledge with industry peers from around the world.

An extra element was added for Australian participants this year as the event – held in early October in the Norwegian capital of Oslo – was chaired by NOPSEMA CEO Stuart Smith.

The COVID-19 pandemic had prevented in-person meetings of the IRF in both 2020 and 2021, so this year was an opportunity for members to discuss evolving regulatory best practices and knowledge face to face.

Key discussion topics focused on the core issue of the prevention of harm in the offshore oil and gas industry across the whole asset lifecycle.

The growing issues of energy security, offshore renewables, carbon capture and storage, and the challenge of the energy transition were also highlighted,

with leading offshore energy safety regulators from around the world sharing insights on emerging trends for protecting workers and preventing major accident events.

Stuart said many of these insights will have direct application in Australia, supporting better protection for all.

“Throughout many forums, it’s apparent that energy transition is in full swing – there are regulations to enable this transition and governments need to move quickly with approvals to keep pace,” Stuart said.

One major milestone was the agreement of the IRF to expand its focus to also cover safety of offshore renewables infrastructure.

With Australia’s renewable industry rapidly growing, there were many opportunities to learn from long established regulators, as well as a chance to provide some leadership of our own.

“A working group led by our very own Offshore Renewables Project Lead Owen Wilson will now develop a plan for implementation of this initiative,” added Stuart.

The next AGM and Forum of the IRF will be hosted in Perth by NOPSEMA in October 2023.

IOPER

With close ties to the IRF, the International Offshore Petroleum Environment Regulators (IOPER) also held its AGM in Oslo the week after the IRF, with our Head of Environment, Renewables and Decommissioning Cameron Grebe representing NOPSEMA.

Cameron said energy transition was a major theme, including the trend of government policies supporting greater offshore renewables. The IOPER working group’s efforts to cooperate on research and technology development for sound impacts on marine life was recognised as useful to support global offshore renewables regulators forum (GOWRF).

“Community interest and activism is growing across the world, along with the increasing amounts of litigation and the attention that brings.

“This is extremely topical in Australia at the moment, with broader community consultation needed across the board.

“This also goes for engagement with first nations communities, which was an issue that other regulators were also seeing.”

Financial assurance around decommissioning was another big topic as the workload of necessary decommissioning projects continues to grow.

“In discussions with other regulators it became apparent they were seeing increasing numbers of cases of failure to remove property and securing approvals from all parties. So this really again highlights why we’re so focused on decommissioning projects in Australian Commonwealth waters,” added Cameron.

Australia’s leadership in the progress of IOPER is reflected in Cameron being elected as Chair and NOPSEMA as Secretariat for both IOPER and the Marine Sound Working Group.

The next IOPER AGM will be hosted Perth by NOPSEMA in October 2023.



Global Offshore Wind Regulators Forum

Keeping with the Scandinavian theme, the Danish Energy Agency hosted the Global Offshore Wind Regulators Forum (GOWRF) in Copenhagen in early October attended by NOPSEMA’s Offshore Renewables Manager Owen Wilson.

Established in 2019, the GOWRF is made up of lead government planners and regulators representing both experienced and emerging offshore wind jurisdictions including Australia, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Day one of the forum featured country-specific presentations, which provided members with an opportunity to share recent policy and regulatory developments, and potential key challenges in their respective jurisdiction.

“What we repeatedly saw was the need to increase the pace of deployment of offshore wind to meet jurisdictional targets for energy security and independence, and to achieve emissions reduction goals,” Owen said.

“Likewise, another common concern was the pressure on the global offshore wind supply chain and the associated challenges for the delivery of projects and achievement of targets.”

Day two of the forum saw members take a deep dive into regulatory focus areas including marine spatial planning and allocation of seabed rights, coexistence with fisheries and other users of the marine environment, effective and efficient environmental review processes and transmission planning and permitting.

“The members noted jurisdictional approaches to seabed licensing and regulatory frameworks and practices need to adapt to respond to changing external factors including maturity of the industry and allocation of project risk,” Owen said.

“Established jurisdictions are actually looking at Australia’s new regulatory framework as an innovative and progressive approach to licensing and consenting of offshore renewables projects.

“Australia’s in a fortunate position to be able to leverage the experiences of leading and emerging international jurisdictions in designing and implementing policy and regulatory approaches.”

Wind Energy Hamburg – Spotlight on Australia

For the first time in four years, developers, service providers and government representatives in the onshore and offshore wind sectors came together for the Wind Energy conference, held in Hamburg, Germany in September.

As part of the global markets theatre stream Offshore Renewables Manager Owen Wilson delivered a presentation on major developments in offshore wind in Australia.

The session also featured a keynote address from the Victorian Minister for Energy who highlighted the state’s aspirations for offshore wind with targets of up to nine gigawatts (GW) of offshore wind generation by 2040.

“The conference – which was attended by a massive 30,000 people – featured an impressive exhibition hall with state of the art and emerging technologies on display which really showed the pace of development in the wind industry over the past few decades, Owen said.

“In the 1980s, wind turbines were about 17 metres tall with a capacity of around 0.75 megawatts (MW). In 2021 the latest generation of offshore wind turbines are up to 250 metres tall and have a generation capacity of up to 15 MW.

“As we look towards 2030 it’s predicted we will see turbines with a generation capacity of 20 MW.”

Other technological developments were on show with floating offshore turbine technologies enabling access to a far greater range of suitable offshore locations for energy generation.

Bringing things home, seven regions have been identified in Australia as areas potentially suitable for offshore wind technology, the first being in the Hunter and Illawarra regions off the New South Wales coast.

O&G decommissioning world comes to Perth

In early November, leaders and experts of the decommissioning world converged on Perth for the Society of Petroleum Engineers' symposium – Asia Pacific Offshore Decommissioning and Well P&A 2022.

The two-day event was billed as a key platform for industry leaders, subject matter experts, regulators, service, and technology providers, as well as researchers to address challenges, success stories and lessons learnt in the offshore decommissioning and well P&A (plug and abandon) activities.

NOPSEMA's Head of Safety and Integrity Derrick O'Keeffe was the symposium's co-chair and had the honour of welcoming attendees and introducing the keynote speaker on day one, Fiona Hick, (then) Woodside Energy's Executive VP – Australia Operations.

"This SPE event in our own backyard is a regional event with global reach and multi-national contributors," Derrick said

"It was great to see such a collective effort from NOPSEMA colleagues and their industry counterparts at the event, all of whom were able to contribute to the presentations and the breakout sessions.

"It was a fantastic opportunity to share and learn across multiple countries, disciplines and stakeholders with a mix of key-note speakers, panel discussions, presentations and an interactive workshop providing the opportunity to address the global issue for our industry of 'Doing the Right thing'."

Derrick said his 34 years in the industry and six years at NOPSEMA had given him a good perspective, having been involved in many projects in his career spanning from inception to decommissioning.

"A lasting legacy of the oil and gas industry for future generations will depend on how our generation ensures that wells are permanently plugged and equipment is properly decommissioned. The timing is now, not tomorrow," he said.

NOPSEMA's Decommissioning Manager David Christensen also chaired one of the first sessions of the event, entitled "Maintaining social license to operate through decommissioning."

"It was a great 90 minutes with some really excellent presentations from industry and government," David said.

"Social license is such a key part of the world of decommissioning, so it was great to have such an engaged audience discussing the importance of working with the community and stakeholders to understand values, perspectives and identify effective solutions for the safe and environmentally responsible decommissioning of petroleum projects."

NOPSEMA's Head of Environment, Renewables and Decommissioning Cameron Grebe also took part in a panel titled: "Regulatory playing field and role of government."

"Decommissioning is a normal and inevitable stage in the lifetime of any offshore petroleum project, and we've been urging that this stage needs to be planned from the outset and matured throughout the life of operations so that risks to people and the environment are reduced to as low as reasonably practicable and to acceptable levels during execution of decommissioning activities," Cameron said.

"We're giving heightened focus into the planning and execution of decommissioning and that's why we published our five-year Decommissioning Compliance Strategy, with several targets for industry to meet, along with a range of compliance and enforcement actions we have taken in some cases.

"The opportunity is there for the industry to share high level decommissioning plans to ensure cooperation and efficiencies in the way in which decommissioning is carried out.

"We've also published a number of policies and guidance so that industry is well placed to meets its decommissioning obligations into the future."



Head of Environment, Renewables and Decommissioning Division
Cameron Grebe



Head of Safety and Integrity Derrick O'Keeffe



Maintaining fire suppression equipment

Quite possibly the single, biggest danger on an offshore oil and gas facility is fire.

In fact, many of the systems and procedures onboard offshore facilities are designed specifically to reduce the risk of fire.

Major accident events, such as a hydrocarbon release from a topside process plant or a helicopter crash leading to fire and explosion, require emergency fire suppression systems to work seamlessly and on demand.

Percy Dhanbhoora, NOPSEMA acting Manager of Assessment and Inspection, said: “It’s important for facility operators to regularly check the fitness for service of safety critical equipment, and ensure the suppressants used on their facilities comply with the relevant performance standard.”

“This’ll help ensure the efficacy of the equipment for the control of, and response to, emergencies at the facility.”

Percy said that over the past five years inspectors have seen a lot of good practice from many operators.

However, there also some cautionary tales to learn from – so here are the good, the bad, and the ugly.

The good:

Planned inspections over the past five years have shown that many operators have comprehensive systems (inspection, maintenance, and testing) in place for monitoring performance of their fire suppression equipment and they are continuously improving.

Some examples of good practice include:

- performance standard assurance plans with established links between technical controls and associated major accident events.
- testing, inspection, monitoring and maintenance conducted at a frequency determined by a recognised industry standard.
- performance standards, procedures and records associated with maintenance activities are embedded in the maintenance system.
- supervisors and personnel working with fire suppression equipment have good knowledge of the system, are adequately trained, and have experience relevant to the operation, maintenance, and assurance of the systems.
- regular testing of produced suppressant and monitoring degradation of system performance to facilitate preventative, rather than reactive, maintenance.
- facility specific auditing or performance verification of fire suppression systems and the associated maintenance management systems.

NOPSEMA inspectors have also found that operators commonly have systems in place to notify and report failures of critical fire suppressant safety equipment to meet performance standards as a ‘dangerous occurrence.’

The not so good:

Over the same five-year period NOPSEMA has made recommendations, provided advice, and taken enforcement action regarding safety critical fire suppressant integrity management.

The NOPSEMA advice, recommendations and enforcement actions originated from findings that the fire suppressant systems had:

- untested or low flow rates, corrosion, unrepaired damage to piping, defective isolation valves; blocked deluge nozzles, no volume markings and/or functioning level gauges on suppressant storage tanks.
- a lack of suppressant testing by a third-party laboratory, insufficient percentage of suppressant, facility personnel not afforded produced suppressant laboratory testing results, a lack of records of helideck fire-fighting suppressant concentrate and produced suppressant annual testing maintained at the facility.
- no performance standards for suppressant systems’ flow rates, pressure, area coverage, and makeup of the produced suppressant noted on maintenance documentation and were therefore not visible to offshore maintenance personnel.
- inadequate preventative maintenance management plans with a lack of performance criteria, unimplemented maintenance routines and infrequent functional assurance (reliability and availability) testing.

As will be noted, most of these occasions related to weaknesses in the implementation of the fire suppression equipment and systems, critical function testing, and operators failing to meet relevant performance standards.

In all these instances, NOPSEMA engaged with the operators to remedy the shortfalls and follow up to inspect the remedial work to ensure the issue has been resolved.

More information on control measures and performance standards is available on NOPSEMA’s website.



Out of sight is not out of mind

A message from Cameron Grebe Head of Environment, Renewables and Decommissioning Division

While offshore oil and gas activities occur somewhere over the horizon, being out of sight does not mean being out of mind.

The importance of offshore energy to Australia's economy, energy security and to people's livelihoods is well recognised by governments, which also comes with the imperative to ensure all projects are managed to a high standard.

Central to this is the need to consult broadly and effectively, to build social licence to help communities better understand how offshore petroleum and gas occurs, the environmental impacts and risks and how they're to be managed.

The Environment Regulations apply a principle to ensure free, prior and informed consultation principles are adhered to by companies proposing offshore petroleum activities. It's a matter of providing enough information to allow the community to make informed comment during the consultation process so the management of impacts and risks can take those views into account and be improved.

Consultation is an opportunity for companies to ensure the people and organisations who may be affected by activities have the opportunity to be consulted so they can have their say from an aware and sufficiently informed position.

Both the Australian community and government expect meaningful, broad and genuine consultation by resource companies.

The recent decision of the Federal Court to dismiss an appeal relating to a company's failure to consult with First Nations people on the Tiwi Islands now provides clarity on the specific consultation requirements that are unique to the offshore petroleum environment regulatory regime.

While there are high expectations as to how resource companies go about their activities in harnessing and developing resources – and rightly so – there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Each planned activity requires consultation and engagement to be tailored and appropriate for different sectors of the communities to ensure everyone is informed and heard.

Across the industry we are seeing a growing recognition of the need to ensure more comprehensive consultation, particularly with First Nations peoples.

Recent government policies and expectations, the First Nations Voice to Parliament, and reforms under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* all make this abundantly clear.

For our part, while we recognise the importance of the industry and we work tirelessly to ensure it has a good safety and environmental performance, we also recognise the need for ever improving levels of consultation.

In some respects, industry needs to reinvent itself in the public eye. The consultation process presents an opportunity for industry to connect with communities and invite people to be part of the journey – even if this means acknowledging the impacts and risks inherent with the petroleum industry.

Madeleine King, the Federal Minister for Resources and Northern Australia, has been very clear on the Australian Government's expectations and need for broader consultation, especially with First Nations Australians.

Minister King spoke on the issue in her address to the WA Chamber of Commerce and Industry at an event in October.

"An ongoing partnership with First Nations people, which protects their rights and delivers economic and social benefits, is essential to ensuring the sustainability of the resources sector" Minister King said.

"The Government has committed to reforming our national cultural heritage protection framework, including through new stand-alone First Nations heritage protection legislation."

"I am working with my colleagues – including the Minister for Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek – to ensure that this new legislation provides operational certainty for businesses and supports positive working partnerships between project proponents and First Nations Australians."

"I want to assure you that the Australian Government understands how important it is for the nation that the sector remains healthy and continues to prosper."

"But the industry must take responsibility for reducing its impact on the environment."

In her Statement of Expectations to NOPSEMA, the Minister stated: "Key to maintaining social licence was built off the back an industry with a mature culture and a focus on the wellbeing and safety of its workforce, including effective management of psychosocial hazards and risk factors."

Addressing incidents of harassment

A message from Derrick O’Keeffe Head of Safety and Integrity Division

Recent media coverage on the findings of the WA enquiry into sexual harassment against women in the FIFO mining industry has once again thrown a spotlight on the prevalence of discrimination, bullying and harassment in work places.

As the regulator that oversees the health and safety of people working offshore, NOPSEMA recognises it has crucial role in this area and takes that responsibility very seriously.

The current legislation places a duty on facility operators to take all reasonably practicable steps to provide people working offshore with a workplace that is safe and without risk to their physical or mental health.

This duty requires operators to have adequate measures in place to prevent workplace harassment of any kind – including sexual harassment – and to appropriately respond to and manage such incidents.

The issue is getting more and more attention, and rightly so.

The Minister for Resources Madeleine King said in her Statement of Expectations to NOPSEMA: “Key to maintaining its social licence, is an industry that has a mature culture and a focus on the wellbeing and safety of its workforce, including effective management of psychosocial hazards and risk factors.”

“I expect NOPSEMA to maintain a focus on ensuring the workplaces it regulates have adequate management systems to prevent, and deal with, any incidents of harassment of any kind including sexual harassment.”

These sorts of behaviours are totally unacceptable and as regulator, we are increasing the level of focus being put on it.

As a result, this year we’ve met with several major operators to discuss what measures they currently have in place to prevent and manage workplace harassment. They advised that they have measures in place and are taking steps to review and improve those measures.

NOPSEMA is developing a process to monitor how operators are appropriately managing risks related to all types of harassment.

Improved guidance can provide the industry with a clear understanding of its duties, the legislative requirements, and our expectations as the regulator.

Next year we’ll be following up these meetings by conducting inspections to ensure duty holders are meeting their duties and are doing everything that is reasonably practicable to protect the workforce from sexual harassment.

While we haven’t received any reports or complaints of sexual harassment at an offshore facility, we recognise that this doesn’t mean it’s not occurring.

Our staff are currently completing a workplace behaviour training programme to build awareness on issues including workplace sexual harassment.

As part of this, the staff who manage complaints and investigations will receive additional training in responding to disclosures of sexual harassment in a trauma informed way.

We all have a lot of work to do to meet the Minister’s expectations and we will be monitoring how industry keeps pace with providing safe working environments for all offshore workers.



What's happening offshore?

During Q3 2022, there were 58 fixed facilities, five mobile offshore drilling units (MODUs), six vessels, 92 pipelines, nine sets of subsea infrastructure and no seismic activities within NOPSEMA's jurisdiction.

The number of offshore hours worked was 2,764,674, a slight increase compared to the same period last year and the highest number of hours worked over both 2021 and 2022.

Of the total number of facilities under NOPSEMA's regulatory oversight, 10 fixed facilities, nine sets of subsea infrastructure, and 17 pipelines have ceased operations permanently and require timely decommissioning.

During Q3 2022, NOPSEMA undertook 33 inspections and recorded 10 injuries.

We commenced 47 assessments of key permissioning documents, comprising 15 new submissions and 32 revisions.

None of the recorded injuries this quarter were of a serious nature, with the half of these cases being alternate duties injuries.

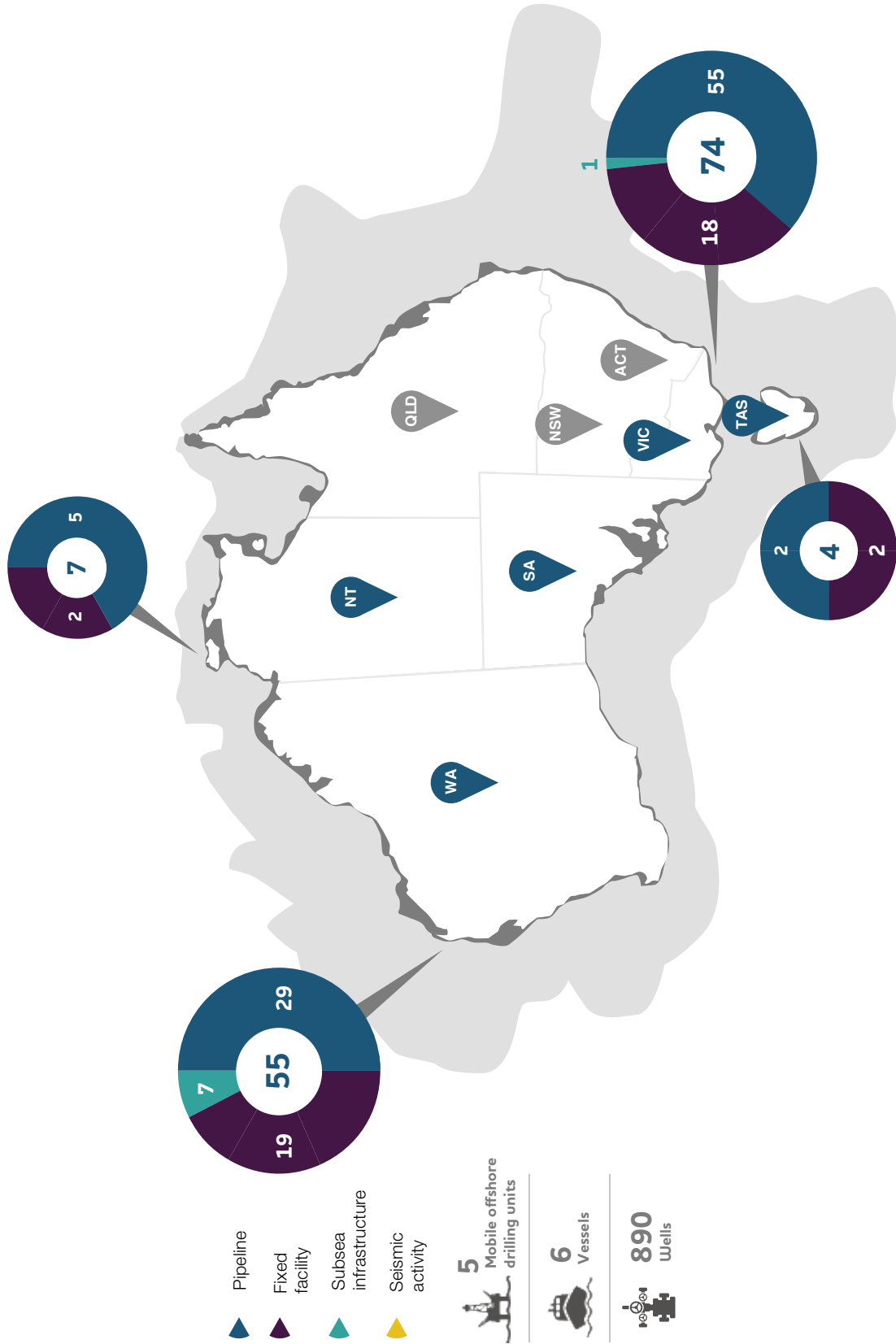
There were seven occupational health and safety complaints this quarter each of which were subject to NOPSEMA investigations

NOPSEMA issued four enforcement actions, which included two notices prohibiting facility operators from conducting specific activities until NOPSEMA was satisfied that the risks to the health and safety of the workforce had been reduced to ALARP.

There was one environment plan for decommissioning published on the NOPSEMA Consultation Hub for public comment, and one proposal for a seismic survey. Both of these have closed for comment.



Offshore activity Q3 2022





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**National Offshore Petroleum Safety and
Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA)**

ABN 22 385 178 289