

# THE 2026 - Issue 2 REGULATOR



**How NOPSEMA  
investigates**

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and why it matters



**NOPSEMA**  
Australia's offshore energy regulator

# About NOPSEMA

**T**he 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 and greenhouse gas storage activities in Commonwealth waters.

Under the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006*, offshore petroleum and greenhouse storage activities cannot begin before NOPSEMA has assessed and accepted the required permissioning documents demonstrating how the activity will be managed to ensure the associated risks to the health and safety of the workforce are as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) and risks and impacts to the environment are ALARP and are acceptable.

The Offshore Infrastructure Regulator (OIR) was established under the *Offshore Electricity Infrastructure Act 2021* to regulate work health and safety, infrastructure integrity and environmental management for offshore infrastructure activities.

For more information, visit our website at [nopsema.gov.au](http://nopsema.gov.au).

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# Contents

**04**

A message from the Chief Executive Sue McCarrey

**14**

The 2026 HSR Forum and HSR Awards

**22**

A trusted regulator: insights from the 2025 Stakeholder Engagement Survey

**06**

How NOPSEMA investigates – and why it matters

**17**

NOPSEMA engages with industry at Australian Energy Producers Conference

**24**

Offshore Infrastructure Regulator: what to expect when we're inspecting

**10**

Investigating lifting incidents offshore

**19**

NOPSEMA releases Australia's Offshore Energy Industry Performance report

**26**

Offshore activity Q1 2026

# Message from the Chief Executive

## Sue McCarrey

**A**cross the offshore energy sector, maintaining strong performance depends on more than systems, processes and compliance obligations. It depends on leadership, learning, constructive engagement and a shared commitment to understanding risk before it results in harm.

That theme runs through this edition of The Regulator.

We begin with a closer look at NOPSEMA's investigation function and why thorough, evidence-based investigations are so important to effective regulation. When a serious accident, dangerous occurrence or suspected non-compliance occurs, NOPSEMA's immediate priority is to ensure risks are being properly managed. A formal investigation serves a different but equally important purpose: to establish what happened, why it happened, what lessons can be learned and whether enforcement action may be required.

These investigations can take time because the evidence must be reliable, complete and capable of supporting fair and appropriate outcomes. This careful approach is essential to credible enforcement, meaningful learning and maintaining confidence in the regulatory system.

This edition also highlights our recent Better Practice Forum on psychosocial health in the offshore energy industry. The forum brought together regulators, industry representatives and specialists to discuss how psychosocial hazards are understood and managed offshore. It reinforced an important message: risks such as bullying, harassment, fatigue, remote and isolated work, and limited job control must be managed with the same seriousness as physical safety risks.

We also share key findings from NOPSEMA's 2025 Stakeholder Engagement Survey. The results show stakeholders continue to view NOPSEMA as an effective, capable and independent regulator. They also remind us that trust must be continually earned through consistency, professionalism, clear communication and meaningful engagement.

Lifting operations are another important focus. Lifting remains a significant source of risk in the offshore energy sector, with incidents often involving a combination of technical, operational and human factors.

We also reflect on NOPSEMA's engagement with industry and government at the Australian Energy Producers Conference in Adelaide in May. Discussions at the conference were broad, but included safety performance, decommissioning, emerging technologies and regulatory reform. Early and constructive engagement is particularly important in complex areas such as decommissioning, where credible planning, sound evidence and clear expectations are essential.

I was encouraged by the openness of those discussions, particularly at the willingness of industry to engage constructively on how we manage complex decommissioning challenges while maintaining safe and environmentally responsible outcomes.

This edition also reports on the release of Australia's Offshore Energy Industry Performance Report 2025, which provides a comprehensive overview of offshore energy activity and performance across Australia's regulated jurisdictions. The report highlights areas of strong performance, while reinforcing the need for continued focus on leadership, environmental controls, well integrity, psychosocial health and decommissioning.



Finally, as offshore renewable energy activities progress, the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator is building transparency and understanding around its regulatory approach.

This edition outlines early inspection activity and what licence holders can expect as the sector moves from concept to more active phases of development.

Across all these areas, our focus remains consistent: protecting workers, safeguarding the environment and supporting an offshore energy sector that is well managed, accountable and continually improving.

I hope you enjoy this edition.

**Sue McCarrey**  
Chief Executive Officer



# How NOPSEMA investigates – and why it matters

**When there is a serious accident or dangerous occurrence at an offshore energy facility, the public response is understandable: something went wrong and the regulator should act. At NOPSEMA, we do act – and we take that responsibility seriously.**

But what a formal regulatory investigation involves, and why it takes the time it does, is often misunderstood. This article sheds light on the investigation process and notable improvements to NOPSEMA's investigative capacity.

## Two things happening at once

When NOPSEMA becomes aware of a serious incident or suspected non-compliance, two separate but parallel processes begin.

The first is an immediate response to assess and manage any ongoing risk. NOPSEMA inspectors can attend facilities, assess conditions, issue notices and directions, and require operators to take specific action. These tools are powerful and can be deployed quickly – even while an investigation is underway. The aim is to ensure the immediate risk is properly managed on the ground.

The second process is a formal investigation. This serves a different purpose and operates in a different way. An investigation is not the mechanism used to control immediate risk on site. Instead, it is a structured, evidence based process designed to establish root causes and contributing factors including establishing what happened and how it happened.

Once the evidence has been gathered and analysed, consideration can then be given to whether an enforcement option is warranted. This may include a range of actions, such as issuing an improvement notice or general direction, entering into an enforceable undertaking, or pursuing a prosecution or civil penalty through the courts.

These two functions are deliberately separate but usually run at the same time. Understanding how they differ is essential to understanding why investigations take time.

It is also important to note that not all investigations are lengthy or very complex. NOPSEMA conducts many smaller investigations each year, which due to lower complexity or seriousness of consequence are managed quickly and efficiently within much shorter timeframes.

## Why thorough investigations take time

A formal regulatory investigation in the offshore energy sector is a complex undertaking. Incident sites are often remote and difficult to access, meaning extensive planning and preparation is required before heading offshore. Once on a facility, investigators must work with whatever equipment and materials they have brought with them – there is no opportunity to “pop down to the local hardware store” if some critical equipment is not available to the investigators.

Key witnesses may also be based or reside across Australia or even in different countries, often working fly-in fly-out rosters that complicate the scheduling of interviews. Interviews generally follow a deliberate sequence to ensure investigators have the necessary facts from one witness before speaking with the next. As new evidence emerges, it is common for key witnesses to be interviewed more than once. This careful, structured approach is essential to obtaining the best and most reliable evidence.

Physical evidence – such as mechanical components, electronic systems or environmental samples – often requires specialist analysis undertaken by external subject matter experts (SMEs). The extent of this technical work varies from case to case, and the expertise needed is not always available locally. In some circumstances, items must be sent interstate or overseas for testing. Engaging the right expertise early is essential to understanding what happened and why.

Documentary evidence may also be extensive. Employment records, fitness for work assessments, safety procedures, maintenance histories, technical specifications, communications and training records all need to be gathered, verified and cross referenced as new information emerges. Ensuring the completeness and integrity of this material is a significant part of the investigative process. This may also involve more than one company where contractors and subcontractors are involved.

Expert witnesses are frequently required to establish what was technically feasible, what a duty holder knew or ought to have known, and what caused a specific failure. Identifying the right expertise, confirming independence, and obtaining expert reports is a detailed and time-consuming process. Many SMEs are located overseas and are in high demand, making them difficult to engage. Depending on the complexity of the matter, NOPSEMA may need to engage several SMEs to assist the investigation by providing independent technical analysis.

These SMEs must be genuinely independent. Their role is to assist the court where required, not to support the investigation, and they must be provided with the full evidentiary picture so they can form their own informed view. This process cannot be rushed without compromising the quality and credibility of the outcome.

Throughout all of this, investigators must operate strictly within the legal framework established by Parliament. Evidence must be gathered, documented and preserved to a standard that can withstand rigorous scrutiny if the matter proceeds to court. This is not bureaucratic caution – it is the foundation of any credible enforcement action. It is common for investigators to work with both internal and external legal advisers to ensure NOPSEMA is acting lawfully and to progress the investigation appropriately. Legal teams representing duty holders also frequently raise queries that must be considered and responded to in a timely and accurate manner.

## Why quality matters beyond the individual case

The quality of an investigation directly shapes how well NOPSEMA can identify root causes, contributing factors and meaningful lessons. For lessons to be credible and useful across industry, the underlying evidence must be thorough and reliable.

These lessons may come from the incident itself, from similar incidents in Australia or overseas, or through engagement with industry bodies that hold specialist knowledge.

When an incident is serious and may result in prosecution, the standard of the investigation becomes even more important. A well prepared brief of evidence, supported by solid expert analysis, provides the court with a clear and dependable basis for decision making. Before recommending prosecution, NOPSEMA must be confident a breach has occurred. The Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions (CDPP) must also be satisfied that there is sufficient evidence and that prosecution is in the public interest. This process often requires detailed engagement with the CDPP over an extended period.

Strong, comprehensive evidence enables enforcement outcomes that reflect the seriousness of the conduct and the risks involved. Weak or incomplete investigations, by contrast, can lead to outcomes that fail to capture the gravity of the incident – and, over time, this can affect expectations and precedents across the regulatory system.

For NOPSEMA, this is not theoretical. The offshore oil and gas industry operates in some of Australia's most challenging environments, where the consequences of safety failures can be severe. High quality, credible investigations not only support the identification of lessons but also underpin effective and appropriate enforcement action. Together, these elements help maintain the strong safety culture the industry depends on.

#### **Building an enhanced investigations function**

Over the past two years, NOPSEMA has invested heavily in strengthening its investigative capability and that investment is already delivering results.

Where investigations were once carried out by regulatory inspectors drawing primarily on their compliance experience, NOPSEMA now has a dedicated team of specialist investigators with deep expertise in complex evidence gathering, brief preparation and enforcement. These investigators bring skills and knowledge the organisation has not previously held, enabling a far more sophisticated approach to investigations.

Policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated, and the use of investigative powers has been strengthened. From the initial triage and scoping of a matter through to identifying lessons or preparing a comprehensive brief of evidence, NOPSEMA's investigative framework has been rebuilt on a more rigorous, systematic foundation.

NOPSEMA Chief Executive Officer Sue McCarrey said the transformation reflects a deliberate strategic choice.

“Effective investigation is one of the most important things a regulator can do for education, accountability, deterrence and safety culture within the industry we regulate. Over the past few years we have built a genuinely specialist investigations function: new people, new processes, a thorough review of our powers and a much more sophisticated approach to complex evidence. We are a more capable regulator than we were and that capability is now being put to work,” Ms McCarrey said.

“This matters for timeliness as well as quality. With a specialist team, clearer processes and greater capacity, NOPSEMA is now targeting a two year maximum timeframe for investigations. This reflects both our commitment to accountability and our recognition that prolonged investigations serve no one well.

“We are not complacent about the time our investigations take. Industry deserves to know that when NOPSEMA investigates, we do it thoroughly and we do it as efficiently as we can. Two years is our target. We are building the capability to meet it consistently,” she said.

A final group of significant legacy investigations is now nearing completion. As these conclude, NOPSEMA's investigations program is moving into a new phase – more focused, more efficient and better resourced to respond to new matters quickly and thoroughly.

#### **What this means for industry**

For operators and duty holders, the message is clear: the announcement of a formal investigation does not mean NOPSEMA's focus shifts away from the facility and toward the courts. NOPSEMA's immediate priority is always to ensure that risks are being properly managed on site.



At the same time, investigators work to understand the circumstances of the incident and identify any lessons that could help prevent a similar occurrence across industry. This is the key focus for investigations.

NOPSEMA will also work with duty holders to bring them back into compliance, and where appropriate, may use enforcement powers to achieve this. Non compliance with notices and directions is a serious matter. This type of conduct is exactly what can lead to more significant enforcement action when an investigation is reviewed.

The offshore industry has made genuine progress in safety culture over many years, and NOPSEMA's relationship with industry is built on a shared commitment to protecting workers, the environment and the communities that depend on both. Investigations are part of that relationship – not a departure from it.

If serious incidents occur, thorough and credible investigations are how lessons are identified and accountability is established. They provide the foundation for preventing further occurrences and ensuring duty holders return to compliance where standards have not been met.

NOPSEMA has a range of regulatory tools available, and a robust investigation ensures the right tool is used for each situation. Investigations also signal to industry what the expected standards are, and what the consequences may be when those standards are not upheld.

That is what NOPSEMA's investigations are for – and that is why getting them right is worth the time it takes.

# Investigating lifting incidents offshore

**L**ifting operations remain a significant source of risk in the offshore oil and gas industry, both in Australia and internationally. Despite advances in technology, procedures and safety systems, lifting incidents continue to occur at a concerning rate.

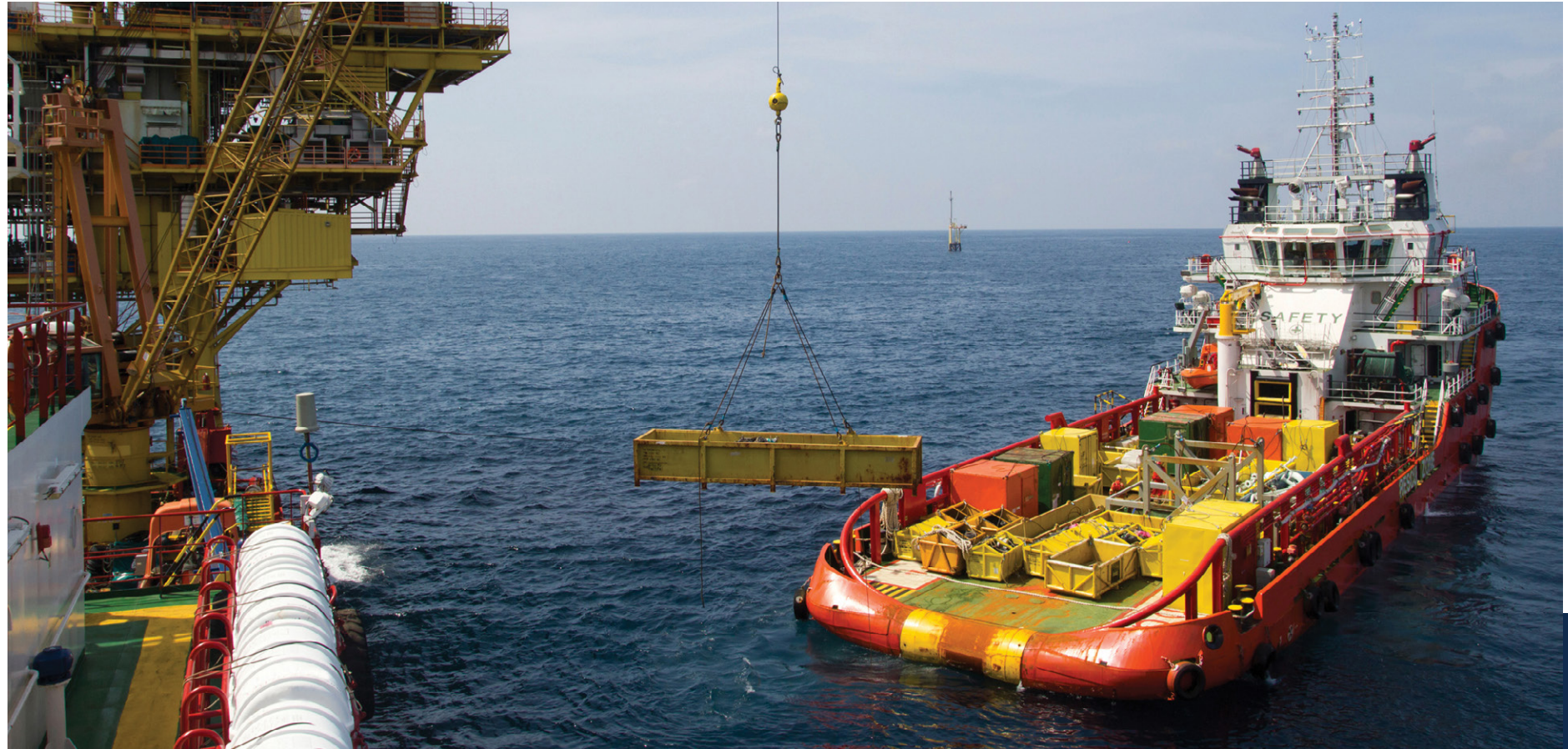
Over the past year, NOPSEMA's regulatory operations division conducted more than 700 investigations. Around 100 to 150 of these were directly or indirectly related to lifting activities. These investigations range from minor issues that can be resolved quickly through existing controls, to more serious matters that require detailed regulatory oversight.

Lifting activities are complex and high consequence. They rely on multiple controls working effectively in practice, including sound planning, clear roles and responsibilities, competent personnel, fit for purpose equipment and effective supervision.

## Why incidents are increasing

Analysis from NOPSEMA and international regulators shows that lifting incidents have increased over the past decade, even as safety systems have improved.

This trend reflects changes in the offshore environment. Even though the number of cranes used offshore has not increased over the past 10 years, operations are becoming more complex, with heavier lifts, more simultaneous activities and increased use of large-scale equipment. Offshore decommissioning and the growth of offshore wind have also contributed to a rise in lifting activity.



Ageing infrastructure is another factor. As assets mature, maintaining structural integrity and equipment performance becomes more challenging, particularly where inspection and maintenance tasks are deferred.

However, technical factors are only part of the picture. Wouter Pattynama, NOPSEMA's Executive Director – Production said human factors remain the most consistent contributor to lifting incidents.

“The common factor we see time and again is human behaviour. This includes complacency, normalisation of risk, and reduced situational awareness,” he said.

“These issues can affect both inexperienced workers and those who have been doing the same task for many years.”

NOPSEMA has identified several recurring causal factors, including:

- deferred inspection, maintenance and repair
- failure to follow procedures and lifting plans
- substandard planning and poor response to changing conditions
- misapplication of standards
- weak supervision and limited use of stop work authority.

These factors often interact, increasing the likelihood of incidents when conditions change or controls are not applied effectively.

## Complexity and decision making

Lifting operations offshore involve multiple parties, live systems and competing priorities. Activities are often carried out during simultaneous operations, where several vessels, contractors and facilities are working together.

Each element has its own safety case, procedures and responsibilities. Ensuring these elements align in practice is a key regulatory focus.

“As a regulator, we need oversight of all the elements involved. It is not just one activity. There are many components that must align,” Mr Pattynama said.

Environmental conditions can also change quickly. Weather, wind and sea state can all affect lifting operations, sometimes at short notice.

A central tenet of operational safety is the expectation that any worker can pause, step back, and reassess a situation when necessary, effectively ‘stopping the job’. For many years already, this principle is consistently reinforced in toolbox talks and embedded within every Job Safety Analysis (JSA), forming a cornerstone of operators’ safety culture.



However, the reality on the ground often tells a different story. In high-pressure operating environments - where facility day rates mean that every lost minute can translate into thousands of dollars, and where strict contractual penalties loom if timelines or scopes are missed - the decision to stop work becomes far from straightforward.

Under such conditions, making the call to pause operations is not just a safety judgement, but a complex and often difficult choice for anyone on the facility. Pausing work when something doesn't feel right demands a high level of confidence, experience, and sound judgment. Yet, as Mr Pattynama observes, it requires an even greater measure of courage, accountability, and leadership to accept that such decisions may sometimes, with the benefit of hindsight, prove unnecessary.

Recognising and owning these moments, he suggests, is an equally important part of building a mature and resilient safety culture.

### Learning from investigations

Recent investigations highlight how gaps in maintenance, planning and decision-making can lead to potential incidents.

In one incident, a crane wire failed during offshore operations, causing a 40-tonne subsea module to plunge to the seabed. Subsequent investigation revealed that the wire had been in a degraded condition for several years. Multiple opportunities to identify and rectify the issue had arisen yet were repeatedly deferred, largely due to the persistent pressures of contractual obligations and tight operational timelines.

In another case, a last-minute change to a lifting method resulted in a 2.4 tonne section of wire falling from height. Against all protocol and common lifting practices, workers found themselves under the suspended load, increasing the potential for serious harm.

A separate incident involved a one tonne hook assembly dropping 60 metres to the deck after safety systems were overridden and procedures were not followed. The dropped load narrowly missed critical equipment and workers.

These incidents demonstrate how small decisions, maintenance gaps or deviations from procedure can escalate quickly in high-risk environments.

### Sharing lessons internationally

These challenges are not unique to Australia. They were a key focus at the 29th International Offshore Crane and Lifting Conference in Amsterdam, attended by NOPSEMA representatives alongside more than 250 industry professionals from 16 countries.

Mr Pattynama and Director, Production (Safety), Percy Dhanbhooa, presented on safer operations through people, learning and standards. Their presentation highlighted that human factors remain the common denominator in lifting incidents globally.

"If we want safer lifting operations, we need to focus not just on systems and technology, but on how people think, make decisions, learn and apply standards in real world conditions," Mr Pattynama said.

The strong engagement at the conference reinforced the value of sharing lessons and experiences across jurisdictions.

### Supporting safer outcomes

NOPSEMA will continue to investigate incidents, identify trends and share learnings with industry.

Improving lifting safety requires attention to both technical systems and human performance. This includes maintaining equipment, following procedures and supporting workers to make safe decisions in dynamic environments.

Sustained effort from industry, supported by clear regulatory expectations and shared learning, will be critical to improving safety outcomes offshore.

# Better Practice Forum: Psychosocial health in the offshore energy industry

**N**OPSEMA's most recent Better Practice Forum shone a light on improving how the offshore energy industry understands and manages psychosocial health risks.

Staged on 30 April, the forum brought together regulators, industry representatives and specialists to explore recent legislative changes, clarify regulatory expectations and share practical approaches to managing psychosocial hazards offshore.

In her opening address, NOPSEMA Chief Executive Officer Sue McCarrey highlighted the growing focus on psychosocial health as a core part of work health and safety.

She noted that recent changes to psychosocial health laws are already having an impact, with around 30 incidents reported to NOPSEMA in the past year. These figures point to a stronger awareness across the industry that psychosocial risks must be treated with the same seriousness as physical injuries. "In the same way that a physical injury is a reportable incident to us, so is a psychosocial incident," she said.

While most reported matters have been lower risk, Ms McCarrey acknowledged that offshore environments can heighten psychosocial pressures, particularly for FIFO workers spending long periods away from home.

NOPSEMA Regulatory Specialist Kath Jones followed with an explanation of recent amendments to the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage legislation, in effect since June 2025, which now explicitly include psychological health within the definition of health.

These changes introduce clearer expectations for operators to prevent and manage psychosocial hazards such as bullying, harassment and sexual harassment. Operators must also report relevant incidents, include them in monthly activity

reports and outline controls within their safety cases.

Turning to what psychosocial hazards look like in practice, Ms Jones explained that they arise from how work is designed and managed, as well as from the work environment and workplace interactions. These are not individual shortcomings, but risks embedded in systems of work. In an offshore context, this can include high job demands, fatigue, remote and isolated work, limited job control, unclear roles and harmful behaviours such as bullying.

A fireside discussion between Ms Jones and WorkSafe WA's Justine McGillivray considered how psychosocial risks are regulated across jurisdictions on either side of the three nautical mile limit. The discussion highlighted the importance of collaboration and consistent expectations, particularly for operators working across both offshore and onshore settings.

A panel discussion featuring Wouter Pattynama, NOPSEMA's Executive Director – Production alongside industry representatives Kerrie Saverimutto from Prosafe and Emma Gauld from Monadelphous explored the practical challenges of implementation.

Topics included reporting thresholds, interpreting new requirements and the rise in psychosocial notifications following legislative change. Panellists agreed that increased reporting reflected greater awareness and openness, rather than a decline in workplace standards.

Ms Gauld then shared from a contractor perspective, outlining Monadelphous' approach to strengthening its psychosocial risk framework through governance, training and improved reporting systems. She spoke about challenges such as navigating evolving regulatory expectations and clarifying the interface between human resources and safety functions.



Her message was clear: sustained progress depends on structure, not standalone initiatives. This includes setting clear behavioural expectations, building leadership capability and ensuring safe and trusted pathways for reporting concerns.

The afternoon session, led by organisational psychologist Sandra Lam from FIFO Focus, zeroed in on the practical side of managing psychosocial risks. She highlighted how these risks can affect critical human performance and, if left unaddressed, contribute to serious incidents.

Through interactive exercises, participants worked through how psychosocial hazards emerge offshore and how they can be identified through meaningful consultation with workers. Ms Lam outlined a simple four step process: identify hazards, assess risk, implement controls with a focus on work design, and review effectiveness. She reinforced that psychosocial health should be managed in the same way as any other safety risk and embedded into day-to-day operations.

Closing the forum, NOPSEMA Deputy CEO Graham Blair reinforced that effective psychosocial risk management is essential to safe and sustainable offshore operations.

He encouraged continued collaboration between regulators and industry and called for psychosocial health to be normalised as part of everyday safety leadership.

"Let's maintain the action on this topic," he said. "Let's keep on this journey towards increased awareness and understanding of this subject. Maintain proactive support, share best practices and learn from other industries. Together, we can achieve even better outcomes in safety management and risk reduction."

NOPSEMA stages Better Practice Forums throughout the year to support its legislative function to advise and promote matters across its regulatory remit. The forums bring stakeholders together to share better practice across the offshore energy sector, including the areas of workplace safety, environmental performance and decommissioning.



## The 2026 HSR Forum and HSR Awards

NOPSEMA's HSR Forum brings together Health and Safety Representatives from across the offshore energy industry to discuss current work health and safety issues and strengthen their role in protecting workers. The forum provides a practical opportunity to engage directly with NOPSEMA, share experiences and learn about emerging trends in safety management and offshore operations.

The 2026 forum is the fifth in the series and is delivered in partnership with Australian Energy Producers and the Australian Council of Trade Unions. Held at Optus Stadium on **Wednesday 26 August**, it will focus on supporting HSRs to be effective and empowered in their roles, with a strong emphasis on collaboration, capability and continuous improvement across the offshore industry.

Alongside the forum, NOPSEMA is again hosting the HSR Awards to recognise outstanding HSRs who make a positive impact in their workplaces. The awards highlight individuals who demonstrate leadership, advocate for safer outcomes, and contribute to meaningful improvements that reduce WHS risks.

Nominations are open to recognise HSRs who show:

- leadership in promoting the HSR role
- advocacy for health and safety in the workplace
- continuous improvement in reducing risk.

Anyone can nominate a worthy HSR using the online nomination form. Nominations close on **Friday 24 July 2026**.

Be sure to register for the HSR Forum early, as places are limited and attendance is free. If you know a Health and Safety Representative who is making a difference, submit a nomination before the closing date. This is an opportunity to recognise leadership, share good practice and support stronger safety outcomes across the offshore industry.



Register for the HSR Forum



Nominate a worthy HSR

# NOPSEMA engages with industry at Australian Energy Producers Conference

**N**OPSEMA joined industry, government and regulatory delegates at the **Australian Energy Producers Conference and Exhibition in Adelaide from 19 to 21 May**.

Held under the theme *Energy Evolved*, the conference brought together representatives from across the energy sector to discuss issues shaping Australia's energy future, including safety, decommissioning, energy security, regulatory reform and emerging technologies.

NOPSEMA's attendance provided an important opportunity to engage directly with titleholders, industry bodies, government agencies and other stakeholders on matters central to safe and environmentally responsible offshore energy operations.

It also reflected NOPSEMA's ongoing commitment to fulfilling its advise and promote function under the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* – supporting improved understanding of regulatory expectations and promoting the objects of the Act through open, constructive engagement with industry.



Throughout the conference, NOPSEMA representatives met with a broad range of attendees and hosted an exhibition booth alongside Geoscience Australia and the National Offshore Petroleum Titles Administrator. The shared presence reflected the close working relationship between Australian Government agencies involved in offshore energy regulation, data, titles administration and resource management.

NOPSEMA Chief Executive Officer Sue McCarrey attended discussions with industry leaders on current and emerging safety issues, including the use of artificial intelligence and its implications for industry operations. Ms McCarrey also participated in the conference panel 'Decommissioning at scale: delivering certainty and opportunity,' alongside representatives from ExxonMobil Australia, Santos, the International Association of Oil and Gas Producers and Herbert Smith Freehills Kramer.

The panel explored the scale of Australia's current and future offshore decommissioning task, lessons from other jurisdictions, opportunities for local supply chains, financial assurance, potential infrastructure reuse and the role of new technology in improving safety, environmental and efficiency outcomes.

Ms McCarrey told delegates early engagement with NOPSEMA is important, particularly for complex decommissioning activities.

"The earlier we have those conversations, that actually makes it easier to go through the whole process," she said.

Ms McCarrey added that NOPSEMA was open to practical, phased approaches where they are properly planned and justified, including where timing is influenced by vessel availability, sequencing of work and the nature of the activity.

The panel also discussed new Australian Government guidance for removal of oil and gas property and sea dumping of infrastructure in Commonwealth waters, released the week before the conference. ExxonMobil Australia Chair Simon Younger welcomed the guidance as a helpful step, noting industry had sought clearer direction on when infrastructure may need to be removed and when alternatives could be considered.

Ms McCarrey said the guidance did not change the legislative base case for full removal, but provided greater clarity.

"It gives some greater clarification around what other things might be left in situ, with the right proposal," she said.

She said proposals would still be assessed under the Act and regulations, including environmental impacts and risks, long-term sustainability, ongoing monitoring, safety and relevant person consultation.

NOPSEMA also touched on new technologies, particularly where they can improve safety and environmental outcomes.

"Any of those new technologies which are taking the workforce out of the danger zone, and you can get better environmental and safety outcomes – of course we're open to having those conversations," Ms McCarrey said.

NOPSEMA's participation in the conference supported ongoing engagement with industry and government stakeholders, and reinforced the importance of open dialogue as Australia's offshore energy sector continues to evolve.

# NOPSEMA releases Australia's Offshore Energy Industry Performance Report 2025

**NOPSEMA has released Australia's Offshore Energy Industry Performance Report 2025, providing a comprehensive overview of offshore energy activity and performance across Australia's regulated jurisdictions.**

The report brings together regulatory data, assessments, inspections and stakeholder engagement insights to present a clear picture of industry performance and emerging trends.

It covers offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas storage activities regulated by NOPSEMA, as well as offshore renewable energy activities overseen by the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator. Structured in two parts, the report reflects the growing scale, diversity and complexity of Australia's offshore energy sector.

## **Offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas storage**

The first part of the report focuses on offshore petroleum and greenhouse gas storage activities. It outlines industry activity levels, safety and environmental performance, and NOPSEMA's regulatory approach.

Safety performance in 2025 remained strong. There were no fatalities, and injury rates were close to five-year lows. However, the report highlights the need for continued attention to key risk areas, including psychosocial health, leadership capability, and the effectiveness of systems that manage major hazard risks.

Environmental performance remained broadly stable. Reportable incidents decreased from a peak in 2024, although levels remain above earlier years. The report reinforces the importance of maintaining effective environmental controls and responding to emerging risks.

Well integrity performance improved in 2025, with fewer reported incidents. This reflects ongoing regulatory focus on maintaining the integrity of wells and critical infrastructure across the asset lifecycle.



The report also notes increasing decommissioning activity as offshore assets age. Plugging and abandonment work continues to grow, with an ongoing need for timely and effective planning and execution.

## **Offshore renewable energy**

The second part of the report addresses offshore renewable energy activities, marking the early stages of the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator's operational role.

As offshore renewable projects move from early development into more active phases, the report highlights the increasing scale and complexity of regulatory oversight. It outlines the importance of clear regulatory frameworks, capability development and proactive engagement with stakeholders, including communities and First Nations groups.



The report emphasises the opportunity to apply lessons from offshore petroleum regulation to support safe and environmentally responsible development of the offshore renewables sector.

**Supporting transparency and continuous improvement**

Across both parts, the report highlights trends and lessons that reinforce the importance of strong leadership, effective systems and meaningful stakeholder engagement in achieving safe and environmentally responsible outcomes.

The report is intended to support transparency, improve regulatory understanding and encourage ongoing dialogue across industry, government and the community.

NOPSEMA Chief Executive Officer Sue McCarrey said the report provides clear insights into performance, emerging trends and areas for ongoing attention.

“The trends and lessons outlined in this report reinforce a central message,” Ms McCarrey said.

“Strong outcomes are achieved when robust systems, capable leadership, meaningful engagement and effective regulation work together.

“We encourage industry and stakeholders to reflect on the information in this report and to continue engaging constructively with us as the offshore energy sector continues to develop and a call to action.”

Read the report [nopsema.gov.au](http://nopsema.gov.au)



# A trusted regulator: insights from the 2025 Stakeholder Engagement Survey

**In 2025, NOPSEMA commissioned an independent stakeholder engagement survey to assess its performance and effectiveness, alongside the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator (OIR), in delivering its statutory functions.**

The survey gathered insights from a broad cross-section of external stakeholders through interviews and an online survey. In total, 34 stakeholders participated, representing industry, government, conservation groups, unions and First Nations representative bodies.

Out of 90 organisations invited to participate, 50 individuals registered for the online survey and 34 completed it.

The results show that stakeholders continue to view NOPSEMA as an effective, high-performing regulator that is largely meeting its vision, purpose and legislative responsibilities.

Across both qualitative interviews and quantitative survey responses, feedback was consistently positive, with only a small minority expressing stronger criticism. Stakeholders reported improved perceptions over time, with average performance ratings increasing from around 5.3 to 5.4 in previous years to between 6.3 and 6.6 out of 10 in 2025.

For NOPSEMA, stakeholders who participated in interviews provided an average rating of 6.6 out of 10, while online respondents reported an average of 6.3 out of 10. These results reflect a generally positive view of the organisation's role and performance, particularly given the complex and often contested nature of offshore energy regulation.

Confidence in NOPSEMA's independence and regulatory approach was a consistent theme. More than 80 per cent of respondents reported medium to very high confidence in the organisation.

Stakeholders highlighted several key strengths, including:

- strong confidence in independence and fairness in decision making
- effective delivery of organisational vision and purpose
- high levels of competence, professionalism and technical capability.

Feedback on NOPSEMA staff was also highly positive. Stakeholders described staff as high calibre, proactive and responsive, with more than 75 per cent rating their engagement as effective or very effective.

Importantly, stakeholders distinguished between regulatory systems and individual conduct, consistently noting the professionalism of NOPSEMA personnel.

Stakeholders continue to view NOPSEMA favourably compared with other regulators. More than 65 per cent of online respondents indicated that NOPSEMA performs better than comparable regulatory bodies.

Many participants described NOPSEMA as more consistent, professional and effective than other regulators they engage with. Around 70 per cent also agreed that enforcement activities are carried out in a professional and fair manner.

These results reinforce NOPSEMA's reputation as a credible and impartial regulator operating in a complex and high-profile policy environment.

The survey also suggests that NOPSEMA's engagement approach continues to improve. Stakeholders noted broader outreach across regulated communities and increased interaction with diverse groups.

More than 60 per cent of respondents agreed that NOPSEMA is focused on the right issues, indicating alignment between regulatory priorities and stakeholder expectations.

The survey also provides insights into stakeholder perceptions of the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator, which commenced operations in 2022 and is at an earlier stage of maturity.

Engagement with the OIR remains more limited, with a smaller pool of stakeholders and fewer operational activities to assess. Participation in the OIR-specific online survey was low, reflecting the early stage of the offshore renewables sector.

Despite this, early perceptions are positive. Stakeholder interviews produced an average performance rating of 8.2 out of 10, while online responses averaged 6.6 out of 10. More than 55 per cent of respondents reported high or very high confidence in the OIR.

Stakeholders described OIR staff as knowledgeable, proactive and responsive, and more than 60 per cent rated engagement as effective or very effective.

Regulatory advice and guidance were also viewed as clear and consistent, with no major safety concerns raised.

Taken together, the findings present a positive assessment of NOPSEMA's established regulatory performance and an encouraging early view of the OIR as a new regime develops.

The results highlight growing stakeholder confidence, strong perceptions of independence and capability, and continued improvement in engagement. They also reinforce the importance of maintaining trust and transparency in a complex regulatory environment.

You can find out more in the full 2025 Stakeholder Survey Executive Summary available on our website.





# Offshore Infrastructure Regulator: what to expect when we're inspecting

**As Offshore Electricity Infrastructure (OEI) licence holders begin their feasibility studies, the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator (OIR) has commenced inspections focused on these early-stage activities.**

The purpose of our inspections is to verify whether licence holders are conducting activities in accordance with their approved management plan and complying with requirements of the law. This includes meeting their duties and obligations under the OEI Act framework in relation to work health and safety, infrastructure integrity, environmental management, consultation and the removal of property and equipment.

For industry, inspections are a routine part of regulatory oversight and play a key role in supporting safe and well-managed activities.

## Why we inspect

Inspections are one of our core tools for monitoring compliance with duties and obligations under the OEI Act framework. They work to support safe, environmentally responsible and well-managed operations and aim to build public trust and confidence when people see companies are monitored and held to account.

The intent of an inspection is not only to identify issues, but to prevent harm before it occurs and ensure compliance.

Our approach to inspections is risk-based, proportionate and consistent across the industry. This means our inspection activities are informed by the nature of the activity, the level of risk involved, and the licence holder's compliance history.

They are also targeted to drive greater risk-reduction outcomes. This ensures regulatory effort is directed where it matters most, while maintaining consistency across the sector.

## Conducting an inspection

In most cases, the OIR will provide advance notice of an inspection to minimise disruption. However, there are circumstances which will require immediate compliance monitoring with little or no advance notification. This may occur where there is a need to verify compliance at short notice or in response to emerging risks or concerns.

Inspections can take place at offshore facilities, at related onshore premises, or remotely using online platforms, and may be conducted with the consent of the licence holder, or under monitoring or investigation powers where required.

In all cases, before we commence an inspection, our inspectors will hold an entry meeting to outline the scope and focus of the inspection, so licence holders are aware of what to expect.

Inspections can include site visits, interviews with personnel, observation of systems and processes, and review of documents and records.

Where issues arise during the inspection, they are typically discussed at the time. This allows licence holders to provide context, clarify information, or present additional evidence. Inspectors gather information throughout the process to form a view on the degree of compliance.

An exit brief which includes preliminary observations is usually provided once the initial information gathering phase is complete, giving licence holders early visibility of the potential findings.

## Reporting

Upon completion, inspectors analyse the information in detail to form conclusions about compliance. Licence holders will receive a draft report to review, with a focus on confirming factual accuracy.

The report will set out the inspectors' conclusions, reasons for those conclusions, and any recommendations. Where non-compliance or areas for improvement are identified, licence holders are expected to respond with a plan to address these matters.

## What we expect from licence holders

We encourage OEI licence holders to take a proactive approach to compliance. This includes seeking to meet obligations in a deliberate and consistent way, rather than responding only when issues arise.

During inspections, cooperation and transparency are essential. Timely access to people, documents and facilities supports an efficient process and helps inspectors form an accurate view.

Licence holders are also expected to be open and responsive to any issues raised by inspectors, including taking appropriate steps to address them.

## Driving continuous improvement

Inspections contribute to the OIR's broader focus on continuous improvement. Insights gained help inform future regulatory priorities and identify common challenges across the industry.

Where appropriate, we use insights to inform future focus areas, support better practice, and lift overall performance. In this way, inspections not only assess compliance at a point in time but also contribute to ongoing improvement across the offshore renewables sector.

# Offshore activity Q1 2026

# 2.78M

TOTAL HOURS WORKED  
OFFSHORE



WELL  
INTEGRITY  
INCIDENTS

# 18

# 66

ASSESSMENTS

Includes:

- 25 health and safety
- 10 environmental management
- 19 well integrity
- 12 other



21  
INSPECTIONS



3  
ENFORCEMENT  
ACTIONS  
& non-statutory compliance actions



9 INVESTIGATIONS



# 3

ENVIRONMENTAL  
MANAGEMENT  
INCIDENTS



4  
PSYCHOSOCIAL  
INCIDENTS

# 1



ACCIDENT

# 157

DANGEROUS  
OCCURRENCES



# 0

 SERIOUS  
INJURIES

# 13

  
INJURIES

Includes:

- 1 lost time  $\geq$  3 days,
- 1 lost time injury  $<$  3 days,
- 8 alternative duties injury and
- 3 medical treatment injuries

# 5



COMPLAINTS  
regarding duty  
holder performance



**NOPSEMA**

Australia's offshore energy regulator

[nopsema.gov.au](http://nopsema.gov.au)

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

**ABN 22 385 178 289**