THE REGULATOR

2026 - Issue 3

Focus on health and safety

Protecting workers offshore

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 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**.

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Message from the

Chief Executive

Sue McCarrey

A safe offshore energy industry depends on people having the right systems, information and support to manage risk effectively. This edition of The Regulator reflects that across a diverse range of issues – from workforce health and safety and emerging biological hazards, to decommissioning, digital transformation and the continued development of Australia's offshore renewables industry.

We begin with a focus on health and safety representatives (HSRs), following our recent HSR Forum in Perth. More than 100 HSRs, industry representatives, union representatives and NOPSEMA staff came together to share experiences and consider how HSRs can be most effective in supporting healthy and safe workplaces. We were also honoured to welcome the Hon Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia, who addressed attendees and reinforced the important contribution HSRs make to the health and safety of Australia's offshore workforce.

The forum also provided an opportunity to recognise this year's HSR Award recipients. HSRs play an important role in giving workers a voice, identifying emerging risks and helping ensure concerns lead to meaningful action. I congratulate this year's award recipients and thank everyone who contributed to such a valuable day.

This edition also looks at several occupational health issues that require ongoing attention. While the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have faded, the offshore environment remains particularly susceptible to the spread of respiratory illness.

Our article on airborne infectious diseases highlights the importance of maintaining effective outbreak management arrangements, including early identification of cases, clear workforce communication, and practical controls to reduce transmission and support safe offshore operations.

We also examine the new workplace exposure limit for diesel particulate matter, which will take effect from 1 December 2026. Diesel engine emissions remain a significant health hazard in many workplaces, including offshore facilities. The new limit provides an important opportunity for duty holders to review existing exposure assessments and controls and ensure they are taking reasonably practicable steps to minimise worker exposure.

Elsewhere in this edition, we provide an update on CORE, NOPSEMA's major digital transformation program. Following extensive design work and engagement with staff and industry, CORE has now moved into the build phase. Industry feedback has played an important role in shaping the future portal, with a strong focus on making regulatory interactions more efficient, transparent and consistent while preserving the value of direct engagement between NOPSEMA and the organisations we regulate.

Decommissioning is another area of growing importance as Australia's offshore petroleum industry moves into a new phase of asset retirement. Our article on NOPSEMA's attendance at the 2026 Decommissioning and Abandonment Summit explores some of the challenges and opportunities ahead, including well integrity, early planning, clear accountability and greater collaboration across industry.

Successful decommissioning depends on these issues being considered well before the end of an asset's operating life, with safety and environmental outcomes remaining central throughout.

We have also developed new information to help witnesses understand what to expect when they are involved in a NOPSEMA investigation. Witness information can be critical to understanding what happened during an incident and identifying opportunities to improve safety. The new guidance explains how information may be obtained and used, the distinction between voluntary and compelled information, and the protections available to people who assist our investigations. We hope it provides greater clarity and confidence for workers and others who may find themselves involved in this process.

As Australia's offshore renewables industry continues to develop, we also look at the importance of establishing a strong safety culture from the outset. Good safety outcomes depend on more than compliance with systems and procedures. They require visible leadership, meaningful worker participation, open communication and a willingness to learn and improve. Building these foundations early will help support a safe, sustainable and trusted offshore renewables industry as the sector grows.

Finally, our next Better Practice Forum will be held in Perth on 18 November, focusing on lifting operations in the offshore environment.

With lifting incidents increasing in recent years, the forum will bring industry together to share lessons, discuss NOPSEMA's expectations and explore opportunities to strengthen safe lifting practices. I encourage those with an interest in this important area to register – more information on this is available inside this edition.

Across each of these areas, the common thread is preparedness, learning and continuous improvement. Whether managing established risks or responding to new ones, strong outcomes depend on duty holders understanding their risks, engaging their workforce and taking action before problems arise.

Thank you to industry, workforce representatives, stakeholders and our own people for your continued contribution to safer and more environmentally responsible offshore energy activities.

Until next time, please take care and stay safe.

Sue McCarrey
Chief Executive Officer

NOPSEMA CEO Sue McCarrey with the Hon Madeleine King, Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia.

Effective and empowered HSRs: driving healthy and safe workspaces

More than 100 health and safety representatives (HSRs), along with industry, NOPSEMA and union representatives, gathered at Perth's Optus Stadium on 26 August for the 2026 HSR Forum and Awards.

Delivered by NOPSEMA in partnership with the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and Australian Energy Producers, the forum explored the theme, Effective and empowered HSRs: driving healthy and safe workspaces, highlighting the important role HSRs play in strengthening safety outcomes across Australia's offshore energy industry.

Opening the forum, NOPSEMA Chief Executive Officer Sue McCarrey reflected on the significant changes to offshore health and safety laws introduced last year, noting that the forum provided an opportunity for HSRs to better understand the changes, share experiences and discuss how updated requirements are working in practice.

"HSRs have an incredibly important role to play in representing workers, supporting consultation and helping identify emerging risks, including psychosocial hazards," Ms McCarrey said. "We also acknowledge the valuable insights that NOPSEMA inspectors gain through direct engagement with HSRs during their offshore inspections."

The Hon Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia, also attended the event and provided a keynote address. The Minister recognised the vital contribution HSRs make as a link between workers and management in some of the most challenging work environments in the world.

The Minister reaffirmed the Australian Government's commitment to offshore worker safety, also highlighting the 2025 reforms that strengthened HSR roles and training, improved protections against discrimination and coercion, and formally recognised psychological health as part of workers' health and safety.

Minister King outlined ongoing work to further align offshore safety laws with Australia's broader work health and safety framework while maintaining strong protections for offshore workers.

"Let me reiterate my appreciation for the role you all play across the sector in fostering one of the best safety regimes in the world," she said.

"The government will always be there to support a strong and resilient offshore energy sector. Our priority will always be the physical and mental wellbeing of the tens of thousands of hardworking people who keep the sector humming.

"They are the sector's most precious asset, and they deserve safe and healthy workplaces."

Attendees heard an impactful address from Ed Punchard, a survivor of the Piper Alpha disaster, in which 167 lives were lost. The explosion and sinking of the Piper Alpha oil platform in the North Sea on July 6, 1988, remains the world's deadliest offshore oil disaster.

The disaster occurred when a gas pump was restarted even though an associated safety valve had been removed from service, causing a major gas leak that ignited a series of explosions. The resulting fires destroyed the platform's safety systems and structural integrity, causing the platform to collapse into the sea.

Mr Punchard's presentation provided a powerful reminder of why constant vigilance, effective leadership and a strong safety culture remain critical across high-hazard industries. He spoke about the conditions which led to the disaster, how he escaped, and how he came to terms with surviving the disaster – a haunting and heartfelt story that left many in the room visibly moved.

Kath Jones, NOPSEMA's Regulatory Specialist for Psychosocial Health and Safety, explored the role HSRs can play in identifying and managing psychosocial risks.

Her presentation highlighted how factors such as workload, fatigue, isolation, workplace relationships and job design can impact worker health and safety. Ms Jones encouraged HSRs to act as a conduit between workers and duty holders by identifying concerns early, promoting consultation and focusing on practical controls that address workplace risk factors. She also outlined NOPSEMA's new psychosocial benchmarking campaign, designed to improve understanding of psychosocial hazards across the offshore industry.

NOPSEMA Principal Investigator Trent Trewben introduced a new resource, NOPSEMA investigations: information for witnesses (see article on pages 10-11). This plain-language brochure explains the investigation process, outlines the rights and protections available to witnesses, and clarifies the difference between voluntary requests for information and situations where legal powers are used.

Piper Alpha disaster survivor Ed Punchard receives a standing ovation at the HSR Forum.

NOPSEMA Principal Investigator Trent Trewben.

Mr Trewben highlighted the important role HSRs can play in supporting workers who may be involved in an investigation while maintaining the integrity of the process.

Acting Executive Director Production Percy Dhanbhoora spoke about offshore safety as a shared responsibility. Drawing on recent industry data, he highlighted increases in offshore activity and the need for continuous focus on risk management and critical controls. Mr Dhanbhoora encouraged HSRs to remain curious, ask questions about how risks are being managed, and help ensure that safety controls are effective in practice. He reinforced that strong worker participation is essential to ensuring every worker returns home safely.

Occupational Hygiene Regulatory Specialist Michael Tolmie examined the ongoing management of occupational exposure risks, focusing on noise and hazardous substances. His presentation outlined common hazards encountered offshore and the importance of verifying that controls are effective. Mr Tolmie encouraged HSRs to seek evidence that exposure risks are being managed and challenged assumptions about workplace controls, reinforcing the importance of preventing both immediate and long-term health impacts.

Following lunch, ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien presented findings from the Beneath the Surface survey of offshore workers. The presentation explored worker experiences of physical and psychological hazards, workplace culture and safety representation, while highlighting opportunities to strengthen health and safety protections across the offshore sector.

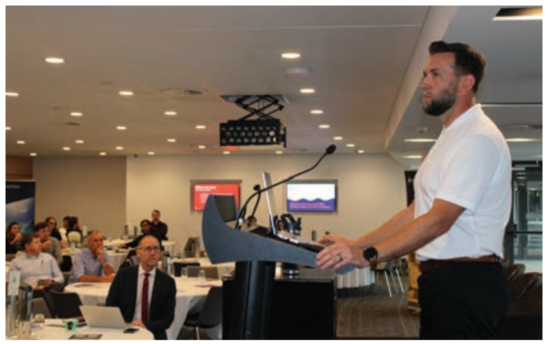
The afternoon program included interactive breakout sessions, where participants shared experiences, discussed common challenges and engaged directly with NOPSEMA inspectors. These sessions provided practical opportunities for HSRs to learn from each other and strengthen connections across the industry.

The forum concluded with a presentation from Monadelphous HSR Jonathan McCluskey, recipient of a 2025 HSR Award. Drawing on his own experiences, Mr McCluskey outlined how improved communication, visibility of actions and workforce engagement can help create more effective and empowered HSR networks. His message underscored the importance of ensuring workers can see that concerns raised are leading to meaningful action.

HSRs play a critical role in Australia's offshore energy industry. By representing workers, supporting consultation and helping identify emerging risks, HSRs contribute to safer and healthier workplaces both offshore and onshore.

Events such as the HSR Forum provide valuable opportunities to share knowledge, learn from experience and strengthen the partnerships that underpin a strong safety culture across the industry.

NOPSEMA psychosocial health expert Kath Jones.



Speaker Jonathan McCluskey was nominated eight times at last year's HSR Awards.

Liam O'Brien and Sue McCarrey with HSR Award winners Ben Clements, Stephen McKellican and Jason Wathall.

This year's HSR Award winners

THE HSR Awards were introduced in 2025 to celebrate health and safety representatives who are excelling in their role.

The awards recognise HSRs who demonstrate any or all of the following criteria:

1. **Continuous improvement -** identification and implementation of improvements that reduce OHS risk.
2. **Advocacy –** setting an example in advocating for OHS in the workplace.
3. **Leadership –** promoting and demonstrating through their actions the importance of the HSR role.

NOPSEMA is pleased to announce this year's winners, who received their awards at the HSR Forum from NOPSEMA CEO Sue McCarrey and ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien.

Ben Clements – BW Opal FPSO
Leadership

Travis Cranage – Safe Boreas
Leadership

Donovan Da Silva – Goodwyn Alpha
Continuous improvement, Advocacy, Leadership

Gavin Farrant – Ichthys LNG Facility
Continuous improvement

Andrew Goold – Ichthys Venturer
Continuous improvement, Advocacy, Leadership

Cade Green – Ichthys Venturer
Continuous improvement, Advocacy, Leadership

Stephen McKellican – North Rankin Complex
Continuous improvement

Adam Mervyn-Jones – Crux DLV 2000
Continuous improvement, Advocacy, Leadership

Eliza October – Saipem Constellation
Continuous improvement, Advocacy, Leadership

Roger Vermoter – CPF Ichthys Explorer
Continuous improvement, Advocacy, Leadership

Jason Wathall – Transocean Equinox
Continuous improvement, Advocacy

NOPSEMA releases new witness information brochure

Witness information is often critical to understanding what happened during an offshore incident, identifying contributing factors and root causes, and improving safety outcomes across the industry.

To help workers and other participants understand what to expect if they are involved in an investigation, NOPSEMA has developed new guidance for witnesses. The guidance explains how witness information is collected, the difference between voluntary and compelled information, and how information may be used during an investigation.

The role of witnesses

Witnesses often provide important information about the circumstances surrounding an incident. Their observations and experiences can help investigators build an accurate understanding of events and identify factors that may have contributed to the outcome.

NOPSEMA may obtain witness information in two ways:

- through voluntary interviews or witness statements, or
- by exercising statutory powers under the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* (OPGGS Act) to require information or documents.

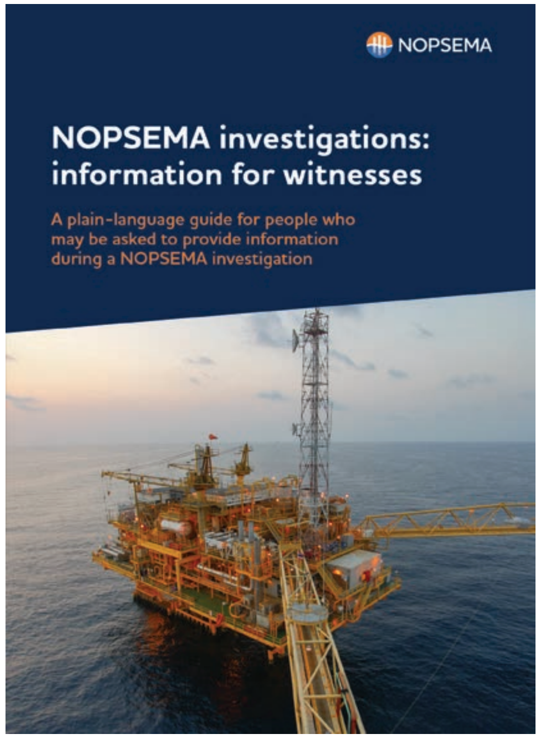
In most circumstances, NOPSEMA will seek information voluntarily before considering the use of formal powers.

Voluntary and compelled information

A voluntary witness statement allows an individual to decide whether they wish to participate and whether they answer particular questions.

Voluntary statements and interviews are generally the preferred approach where appropriate. However, witnesses should understand that information provided voluntarily may be used as evidence, including in court proceedings.

Where necessary, NOPSEMA inspectors can use statutory powers under the OPGGS Act to require a person to answer questions or provide information and documents.



If a formal requirement is issued, the recipient must comply. Failure to do so may constitute an offence.

A key distinction between voluntary and compelled information is that different legal protections apply. Information provided under compulsion is generally not admissible as evidence against the individual in criminal proceedings, providing an important safeguard for witnesses.

For some individuals, a formal legal requirement to provide information may also help address concerns about employment, contractual or professional obligations.

Witness protections

The OPGGS Act contains several protections designed to support people who assist NOPSEMA investigations.

1. Protection from self-incrimination

Where information is provided under statutory powers, that information is generally not admissible as evidence against the person in criminal proceedings.

This protection allows witnesses to answer questions fully and honestly when legally required to do so.

2. Protection from discriminatory conduct

Workers may sometimes be concerned about potential repercussions from assisting an investigation.

Clause 88 of Schedule 3 of the OPGGS Act makes it an offence for an employer to engage in, or threaten, discriminatory conduct against a person for certain prohibited reasons, including because they:

- have raised or propose to raise a health, safety or welfare concern
- have assisted or propose to assist a NOPSEMA inspection or investigation
- exercise health and safety representative powers or seek to do so.

Prohibited conduct may include dismissing an employee, disadvantaging them in their employment, altering their position to their detriment, refusing to engage a prospective employee, or treating a prospective employee less favourably than others.

NOPSEMA may take enforcement action where these provisions are breached. It is also an offence to assist another person to engage in discriminatory behaviour.

These protections are intended to ensure people can participate in investigations without fear of reprisal.

Interview arrangements and support

NOPSEMA aims to conduct witness interviews fairly and respectfully.

Witnesses may request to bring a support person to an interview. This may include a legal adviser, union representative or another person providing support. Witnesses should advise NOPSEMA in advance if they wish to have someone attend.

In some cases, an employer representative or a legal representative acting for an employer may seek to attend an interview. However, their attendance is not automatic.

Whether another person is present during a witness interview is ultimately a matter on which the witness's views will be sought. Witnesses will be given an opportunity to indicate whether they consent to the presence of third parties.

Where appropriate, and particularly where an investigation could be prejudiced, NOPSEMA may conduct an interview directly with the witness without third-party attendance. Witnesses may also request that an interview be conducted privately.

How witness information is used

Information provided voluntarily may be used as evidence in regulatory, enforcement or court proceedings.

Compelled information must be provided if lawfully required under the OPGGS Act. While it generally cannot be used as evidence against the witness personally in criminal proceedings, it may still be used to establish facts, support proceedings against other individuals or corporations, and inform regulatory and enforcement decisions.

Information obtained during witness interviews is treated confidentially. NOPSEMA would not ordinarily publish or release witness information unless required by law, including under relevant provisions of the OPGGS Act, the *Privacy Act 1988* or the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Seeking support and advice

People involved in a NOPSEMA investigation may wish to seek independent legal advice, particularly if they are unsure of their rights or obligations.

Additional support may also be available through union representatives, employee assistance programs or counselling services.

NOPSEMA can provide information about its investigation processes, powers and relevant legislative provisions, but does not provide legal advice.

The key message for witnesses is that their information can play an important role in improving offshore safety outcomes. While participation in voluntary interviews remains a personal choice, strong legal protections exist for people who are required to provide information or who assist NOPSEMA in carrying out its regulatory functions.

Read the brochure

This article provides general information only and is not legal advice. Individuals should seek independent legal advice regarding their specific circumstances.

Managing airborne infectious disease risks offshore

On an offshore facility, a respiratory illness can quickly become more than an individual health issue.

In a closed environment where people live, eat, travel and work together for weeks at a time, an infectious disease can spread rapidly through the workforce, affecting worker health, staffing levels and the ability to maintain safe operations.

While the immediate impacts of COVID-19 have receded, the lessons remain relevant. Offshore environments continue to present unique challenges for managing airborne infectious diseases because workers share accommodation, dining areas, transport and recreation spaces, often for extended periods.

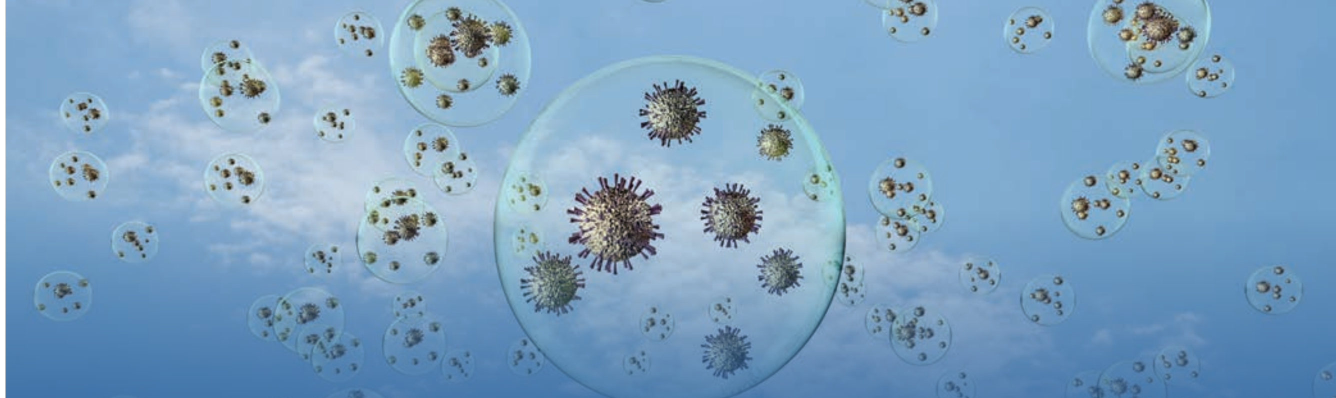
For operators, infectious disease preparedness is not simply about responding to the next pandemic. It is about ensuring systems remain capable of identifying an outbreak early, implementing effective controls and maintaining safe operations when workforce health is affected.

A key consideration is understanding when routine controls are no longer sufficient and enhanced measures should be activated.The Ipieca-IOGP Infectious Disease Outbreak Management guidance recommends maintaining a low threshold for recognising a potential outbreak.

Two or more linked cases of the same illness, or a single case involving a significant pathogen, may indicate that an outbreak response should be initiated. Early recognition is important because infectious diseases can spread before a specific pathogen has been confirmed. Waiting for definitive test results before acting may allow additional transmission to occur.

Once a potential outbreak has been identified, medical personnel should assess cases promptly and investigate factors such as symptoms, timing, shared exposures and potential transmission pathways. Rapid testing, where available and appropriate, can help identify the causative pathogen and support decisions about treatment, isolation requirements and workforce management. Understanding the nature of the illness may also assist operators in determining whether workers should be cohorted or separated within recreation, accommodation or quiet spaces to minimise further transmission.

Clear and consistent communication is critical throughout an outbreak response. Workers need to understand the current situation, the risks involved and any measures that are being introduced. The guidance recommends providing regular updates and ensuring information is accessible to all personnel through multiple communication channels.



This becomes particularly important during periods of uncertainty, when misinformation or conflicting advice can undermine confidence and compliance. Establishing trusted sources of information and communicating transparently about what is known, what is being investigated and what actions are required can help maintain workforce cooperation.

Common areas often present the greatest opportunities for disease transmission and should be a focus of enhanced controls.

Dining facilities are a particular concern due to the large number of workers interacting with food, utensils and shared surfaces. During an outbreak, operators should consider enhanced food handling arrangements that minimise common touchpoints. According to the Ipieca-IOGP guidance, meals should ideally be served by catering personnel rather than through self-service arrangements. Shared serving utensils should be avoided, condiments should be provided in individual portions where practicable, and food items such as fruit, salads and snacks should be individually packaged. Workers should be required to wash or sanitise their hands before entering dining areas, and hand sanitiser should be readily available at entrances.

Similar attention should be given to recreation rooms, smoking areas, transport arrangements and other shared spaces. Depending on the nature of the disease and the level of transmission, operators may consider physical distancing measures, staggered meal times, reduced occupancy limits or temporary changes to communal activities. Mask use may also form part of the control strategy where airborne transmission is possible, particularly in crowded indoor areas.

Enhanced cleaning and disinfection processes should be implemented as soon as an outbreak is suspected. Frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, handrails, tables, bathrooms, gym equipment, telephones and shared workstations should be disinfected regularly. Areas occupied by an infected worker should be cleaned and disinfected immediately.

The guidance also recommends that enhanced cleaning continue for a period after the last identified case has been isolated or evacuated from the facility.

However, implementing additional cleaning is only part of the response. Duty holders should ensure enhanced cleaning requirements are documented, monitored and verified. Cleaning schedules, inspection records and compliance checks provide assurance that controls are being implemented as intended and enable operators to demonstrate that outbreak response procedures have been followed. Similar verification should be applied to food handling protocols, isolation arrangements and other enhanced measures introduced during an outbreak.

Additional controls may include isolating symptomatic workers, undertaking contact tracing, increasing hand hygiene requirements and reviewing ventilation performance in accommodation and common areas. The most effective response will depend on the pathogen involved, workforce vulnerability and the specific characteristics of the facility.

COVID-19 demonstrated how quickly an infectious disease can affect offshore operations and highlighted the importance of preparedness, adaptability and effective workforce communication. As time passes, there is a risk that outbreak management arrangements developed during the pandemic become outdated or less rigorously applied.

Regular reviews can help ensure thosearrangements remain fit for purpose. By establishing clear triggers for action, communicating expectations effectively and implementing proven controls when cases emerge, operators can reduce the likelihood of disease transmission and help maintain the health, safety and resilience of their offshore workforce.

Read the guidance

Diesel engine emissions: new workplace exposure limit

Diesel engine emissions remain a significant workplace health hazard in a range of industries including the offshore energy industry, where workers frequently operate or work around diesel-powered equipment.

Safe Work Australia has introduced a new workplace exposure limit (WEL) for diesel particulate matter (DPM) of 0.01 mg/m³, measured as respirable elemental carbon, which will apply from 1 December 2026.

The limit reflects increased understanding of the health risks associated with diesel engine emissions, including respiratory disease and cancer, and provides a nationally consistent benchmark for assessing worker exposure.

To support implementation, Safe Work Australia has published the Guide to managing the risks of exposure to diesel engine emissions in the workplace, along with other transition resources to help organisations understand the changes and prepare for the new workplace exposure limit.

As part of their duty to take all reasonably practicable steps to provide and maintain a physical environment that is safe and without risk to health, duty holders should review how diesel engine emissions are currently managed, assess potential worker exposure, and verify that existing control measures remain effective.

Consistent with the hierarchy of control, priority should be given to eliminating or minimising emissions at the source through substitution and engineering controls, so far as is reasonably practicable.

Duty holders should consider whether existing exposure assessments remain adequate in light of the new workplace exposure limit and undertake exposure monitoring where necessary to assess worker exposure and verify the effectiveness of control measures.

Learn more:

SafeWork Australia guide

WES/WEL transition stakeholder kit

NOPSEMA at the 2026 Decommissioning and Abandonment Summit

NOPSEMA well integrity specialist Miles Ponsonby at the Decommissioning and Abandonment Summit.

Australia's offshore decommissioning activities are gathering momentum, bringing increased attention to well integrity, regulatory compliance and industry collaboration.

Speaking at the Decommissioning and Abandonment Summit in Perth in June, NOPSEMA's Sam Chadwick and Miles Ponsonby outlined the regulator's expectations for well plug and abandonment (P&A) activities and highlighted the opportunities and challenges facing industry as decommissioning programs expand across Australian waters.

The summit brought together regulators, operators and service providers to discuss the future of decommissioning and abandonment activities. NOPSEMA's presentation focused on regulatory priorities, recent changes to the well integrity framework and the importance of proactive planning to support safe and environmentally responsible outcomes.

Australia's offshore petroleum sector is entering a significant period of decommissioning activity.

NOPSEMA noted that offshore infrastructure slated for eventual retirement includes platforms, floating facilities, pipelines, subsea structures and hundreds of wells off Western Australia and Victoria.

As this workload grows, addressing redundant wells remains one of NOPSEMA's national priorities. The regulator is strengthening oversight to ensure wells are decommissioned responsibly and within an acceptable timeframe. A major theme of the presentation was the importance of maintaining confidence in well integrity throughout the life of a well, including during suspension and abandonment. Speakers highlighted recent regulatory changes that have increased transparency and strengthened assurance requirements.

Changes to the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Resource Management and Administration) Regulations include more explicit requirements for Well Operations Management Plans (WOMPs), stronger incident reporting obligations and the introduction of annual well integrity reporting.

Operators are now required to provide information on a well's operational status, integrity testing, maintenance activities and compliance with performance standards.

The updated framework also requires titleholders seeking to surrender a title to demonstrate how wells will be plugged and closed off, and how natural resources will be protected in the long term. These reforms are aimed at supporting greater accountability and help ensure decommissioning considerations are integrated early in the asset lifecycle rather than deferred until late-stage planning.

NOPSEMA also shared observations from its regulatory activities, identifying several recurring compliance challenges. These included gaps in available information, reliance on assumptions, uncertainty around responsibilities between WOMPs and Safety Case arrangements, workforce competency issues and Management of Change processes.

NOPSEMA's Director – Decommissioning (Safety) Sam Chadwick.

Mr Ponsonby and Mr Chadwick encouraged titleholders to take a proactive approach to these issues, supported by robust maintenance, inspection and repair programs that preserve well condition and reduce future abandonment risk. Early planning and clear allocation of responsibilities can help reduce risk and improve the efficiency of future abandonment campaigns.

While challenges remain, they also highlighted opportunities for industry to improve performance through greater collaboration.

One opportunity is increased transparency around rig availability. Industry discussions are already exploring ways to reduce lead times for mobilising rigs back into Australian waters, with potential benefits for future decommissioning programs. NOPSEMA noted that broader participation across titleholders could help maximise these benefits.

The speakers also pointed to the potential for rig-sharing arrangements and joint campaigns between operators. Such approaches may help reduce costs, optimise rig utilisation and support the sharing of technical expertise across the sector.

Knowledge-sharing initiatives were identified as another important enabler. Forums such as the Centre of Decommissioning Australia and industry working groups provide opportunities to exchange lessons learned, discuss emerging issues and strengthen safety and environmental outcomes across decommissioning activities.

The presentation also addressed the growing interest in new technologies to support P&A and decommissioning work. NOPSEMA acknowledged the potential benefits of innovation but emphasised that technologies not covered by established standards can introduce additional uncertainty and risk.

In Australia's goal-setting regulatory framework, duty holders are responsible for demonstrating that new technologies are suitable for their intended application. This includes providing sufficient information regarding qualification, verification, operational support arrangements and recovery planning. New technologies must also align with concept selection processes and broader risk management requirements.

The overarching message from the session was that successful decommissioning depends on early planning, strong governance and collaboration between regulators and industry. As Australia's offshore sector moves into a new phase of asset retirement, NOPSEMA expects titleholders to continue strengthening well integrity management, addressing redundant wells proactively and ensuring decommissioning activities deliver safe and environmentally responsible outcomes.

Project CORE moves into the build phase

CORE is NOPSEMA's digital transformation program to modernise regulatory operations, information management and business processes through new digital platforms, improved workflows and enhanced data capabilities.

It has reached a significant new milestone, with the recent approval of the functional design phase and the project's progression into the build phase. The project is scheduled to go live in early June 2027 following build, testing, training and readiness activities.

This milestone confirms that CORE's detailed design is sufficiently mature to move into development and reflects the extensive collaboration that has taken place with NOPSEMA staff, industry and other stakeholders throughout the design phase.

A key part of this work has been ongoing engagement with industry to help shape the future design and functionality of the CORE portal.

Earlier this year, NOPSEMA facilitated eight focus group sessions in Perth, Adelaide and Melbourne, bringing together more than 60 participants from 14 oil and gas companies and three offshore renewables companies. The workshops built on earlier engagement undertaken in late 2025 and were designed to test proposed functionality and gather input on how CORE can deliver a more efficient and user-friendly regulatory experience.

Overall, participants expressed confidence in the progress of the project and welcomed the opportunity to continue influencing the portal's development. Their feedback has helped inform the detailed design that will now be translated into a working system during the build phase.

A key theme from the workshops was the desire for greater efficiency through reduced duplication, reuse of information and integration with existing duty holder systems and processes. Participants also identified import and export capability as an essential feature across regulatory workflows.

Security and information management were highlighted as critical success factors. Industry representatives emphasised the importance of strong access controls, secure handling of sensitive information and maintaining a clear separation between public complaints and formal incident notifications. A dedicated online briefing on security and access management was also held in June, providing industry with an opportunity to review the proposed access model, explore how user roles and permissions would operate, and provide feedback on potential opportunities and concerns.

Several proposed features were especially well received, including dashboards, notifications and email reminders to help organisations track submissions, obligations and due dates. Mapping and asset visualisation tools also attracted strong support, with participants noting the value of being able to view assets, activities, permissioning documents and spatial information in one central location.

Participants also identified opportunities to improve transparency around finances and levies, including visibility of invoices, payments and cumulative costs. While industry sees significant benefits in digitisation, participants stressed that technology should support, not replace, personal engagement. Effective regulatory relationships remain highly valued, and stakeholders want to ensure that digital services enhance communication rather than create a more transactional experience.

As the project moves into the build phase, CORE will be developed iteratively, allowing functionality to be built, tested and refined in stages. NOPSEMA and the Offshore Infrastructure Regulator remain committed to engaging with industry throughout this process.

In coming weeks, industry will receive further progress information as different CORE components are developed. These include security and access management arrangements, train-the-trainer activities, opportunities to participate in testing, readiness and implementation activities, and the roadmap towards deployment and go-live. Feedback gathered through these activities will continue to play an important role in shaping the future of the CORE portal.

Register for our next Better Practice Forum

On 18 November, NOPSEMA's next Better Practice Forum will be staged in Perth, focused on lifting operations in the offshore environment.

We will be bringing industry together to share lessons and explore opportunities to strengthen how lifting activities are planned, managed and carried out.

We'll also discuss NOPSEMA's expectations as a regulator.

Lifting operations are a routine part of offshore work, but they can carry significant risks when not effectively planned and controlled.

NOPSEMA has seen an increase in lifting incidents reported in recent years, reinforcing the importance of continued focus on safe lifting practices across the offshore industry.

Register your interest by scanning the QR code below.

Offshore renewables update: the importance of a strong safety culture

A strong workplace health and safety culture is fundamental to the safe and sustainable development of Australia's offshore renewables industry. A positive safety culture supports the effective management of risks associated with offshore infrastructure activities and contributes to safer workplaces, stronger operational performance and improved outcomes for workers, industry and the broader community.

The offshore renewables industry operates in challenging environments characterised by complex marine operations, remote worksites, dynamic weather conditions and multiple duty holders working across the project lifecycle. In these circumstances, compliance with legislative requirements and documented management systems alone is not sufficient to achieve safe outcomes. A strong safety culture is demonstrated when safety is genuinely valued and embedded into everyday decision-making, planning and operational activities.

From a regulatory perspective, a positive safety culture is reflected in the attitudes, behaviours and commitment shown by leaders, workers and organisations towards identifying hazards, managing risks and continuously improving safety performance. It is evident when organisations actively seek to understand their risks, implement appropriate controls and promote open communication about safety concerns without fear of reprisal.

Effective leadership is a cornerstone of a strong safety culture. The Offshore Infrastructure Regulator (OIR) expects leaders to demonstrate visible and sustained commitment to health and safety, setting clear expectations that the protection of workers is a core organisational value. When leaders prioritise safety, allocate appropriate resources and lead by example, they help foster trust, accountability and a shared sense of responsibility throughout their organisations and supply chains.

Meaningful worker participation is equally important. Workers often have firsthand knowledge of operational risks and play a critical role in identifying hazards and opportunities for improvement. Organisations with strong safety cultures encourage workers to speak up, report concerns, contribute to safety discussions and participate in the development and review of risk controls. This engagement supports better decision-making and strengthens an organisation's ability to manage emerging risks.

As a developing industry in Australia, offshore renewable energy also has a unique opportunity to establish strong safety foundations from the outset. The OIR encourages duty holders to learn from both domestic experience and the considerable body of knowledge developed by mature offshore renewables industries internationally. A commitment to learning from incidents, near misses and operational experience is essential for improving systems, strengthening controls and preventing future harm.

Psychosocial health and wellbeing of the offshore workforce is also of paramount importance. Offshore work can present challenges associated with remote work environments, extended rosters, fatigue and time away from family and support networks. A mature safety culture supports both physical and psychosocial safety by fostering respectful workplaces where workers feel supported, included and empowered to raise concerns.

Strong safety cultures deliver benefits beyond regulatory compliance. Organisations that effectively integrate health and safety into their business practices are often better positioned to manage operational risks, maintain workforce capability, improve productivity and deliver projects safely and efficiently. These outcomes contribute to the long-term success of individual projects and support public confidence in Australia's offshore renewables industry.

Offshore activity Q2 2026

3.7M
TOTAL HOURS WORKED OFFSHORE

WELL INTEGRITY INCIDENTS **23**

124 ASSESSMENTS

Includes:
- 51 health and safety
- 16 environmental management
- 47 well integrity
- 10 other

35 INSPECTIONS

2 INVESTIGATIONS

4 ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS
& non-statutory compliance actions

0 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT INCIDENTS

12 PSYCHOSOCIAL INCIDENTS

1 ACCIDENT

136 DANGEROUS OCCURRENCES

9 COMPLAINTS regarding duty holder performance

0 FATALITIES

0 SERIOUS INJURIES

27 INJURIES

Includes:
Includes 1 lost time ≥ 3 days,
1 lost time injury < 3 days,
8 alternative duties injury and
3 medical treatment injuries

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Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA)

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