

Thursday 5 July, 2018

Australia must act on offshore safety to avoid repeat of disaster

On the 30th anniversary of the world's most deadly offshore oil and gas disaster, the peak body for working people has warned that Australia must bring its health and safety laws in the industry into line or risk repeating the fatal incident.

On 6 July 1988, 167 people died in a series of explosions on the offshore oil and gas production platform Piper Alpha in the North Sea.

The anniversary will be marked by people working in the offshore oil and gas industries and their families and supporters around the country and around the world.

The anniversary comes as a parliamentary committee examines Australia's own work health and safety laws in the offshore petroleum industry.

The *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* has not been independently reviewed or updated since national model work health and safety laws were developed in 2011. It is deficient compared to model laws in terms of its support for health and safety representatives, access to union officials on safety matters, and licensing of high-risk work.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick:

"Everyone has the right to a safe workplace and to be able to return safely to their families."

"As we remember the 167 people who perished in the North Sea three decades ago it is a timely reminder that we must take every step available to us to prevent such disasters from ever happening again.

"The current laws about safety in this extremely dangerous industry are broken. They are utterly out of date and a long way behind best practice.

"Accidents in the offshore oil and gas industry do not typically result in bruises and broken bones – they end lives.

"We are calling on the Turnbull Government to bring the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act* into line with model work health and safety laws when it comes to licensing high-risk work, to support and protections for safety reps, to the right of working people to have their representatives look out for them.

"The people who are most at risk – those who work offshore on these platforms – must be at the centre of the process to make our laws better and stronger to save lives."

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