

Tuesday, 28 August 2012

## Unions warn more workers will die unless health and safety laws are extended to the offshore industry

The deaths of two workers on a drilling rig off the Victorian coast yesterday is a tragic reminder of the dangers of the industry, leading unions to renew calls for offshore petroleum workers to be given the same workplace health and safety rights and protections those on dry land.

While investigations are continuing into the circumstances of the deaths, ACTU Assistant Secretary Michael Borowick said it was not appropriate for the offshore petroleum industry to have a different health and safety regime than the rest of the workforce.

“We need to get to the bottom of this tragedy, but unfortunately, unions have been warning for some time that the offshore petroleum industry is an accident waiting to happen,” Mr Borowick said.

“The harmonised OHS laws should be extended to the offshore petroleum industry, so that workers in the industry can have the same standard of training and regulation as other workers.

“Occupational health and safety representatives in the offshore industry do not have the same rights to OHS training or access to OHS experts as on-shore representatives.

“The offshore regulator, the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA), has taken a completely hands-off approach to policing its patch, putting workers at risk every day on the job.

“Until the new OHS laws are extended to the offshore industry, workers and their families cannot be confident they are protected as well as they could and should be.

“The lack of inclusion of offshore workers in these laws, combined with the hands-off approach of NOPSEMA, frustrates the involvement of workers and their unions in improving health and safety in a very dangerous industry.

“We cannot fathom why the Federal Government has one set of laws for workers on dry land, and a cavalier attitude and different laws in the dangerous offshore industry.”

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