

ACTU welcomes government announcement to strengthen safety for offshore oil and gas workers

The Minister for Resources and Northern Australia Madeline King has introduced new safety legislation to parliament aimed at improving safety standards for offshore oil and gas workers.

The offshore oil and gas sector is one of the highest-risk sectors in Australia. It involves workers undertaking dangerous tasks in remote and isolated areas. Despite the significant physical and psychological hazards, offshore workers have the least health and safety rights and protections of any workers in the country.

The Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Legislation Amendment (Safety and Other Measures) Bill 2024 makes significant progress towards closing that gap and providing stronger protections. It will:

- Strengthen the role and training of Health and Safety Representatives;
- Allow Health and Safety Representatives to request a review of safety management documents;
- Improve worker protection against discrimination and coercion;
- Strengthen the mental health protections for offshore oil and gas workers;
- Improve health and safety rules for diving operations and dive vessels; and
- Strengthen and simplify reporting requirements for serious injury notifications.

Importantly the Government has also announced that it will commence a review to identify the opportunities to harmonise the offshore petroleum safety regime with national work health and safety laws.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Assistant Secretary Liam O'Brien:

“Offshore oil and gas workers are exposed to some of the most serious health and safety risks in the country and yet have some of the least rights and protections. The high-risk nature of the industry is further exacerbated by the remoteness of the worksites and the insecure working arrangements that dominate the industry.

“We welcome the Albanese Government’s ongoing commitment to improve work health and safety. Health and Safety representatives play an important role in keeping workplaces safe. Strengthening their role, along with enhancing the protections against discrimination is vital if safety is going to improve.

“We also welcome the government’s ambition to harmonise offshore petroleum safety with our national laws. Workers in Commonwealth waters shouldn’t have less protection than those on land. Every worker has a right to safe and healthy work.”

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