

Unions win stronger laws that will improve health and safety for offshore oil and gas workers

Unions welcome the passage of new safety legislation by the Parliament to improve safety standards for offshore oil and gas workers.

Recognised as one of Australia's most high-risk professions, offshore oil and gas workers are required to undertake dangerous tasks in remote and isolated areas. Despite the physical and psychological hazards, offshore workers currently have limited health and safety rights and protections compared to workers in other sectors.

Key provisions of the Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Legislation Amendment (Safety and Other Measures) Bill 2024 include:

- Strengthening the role and training of Health and Safety Representatives;
- Allowing Health and Safety Representatives the right to request a review of safety management documents;
- Improving worker protection against discrimination and coercion;
- Strengthening the mental health protections for offshore oil and gas workers;
- Improving health and safety rules for diving operations and dive vessels; and
- Strengthening and simplifying 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 Acting Secretary Liam O'Brien:

“Unions welcome the Albanese Government's efforts in improving the health and safety of working people in the offshore oil and gas industry.

“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.

“Every worker has a right to safe and healthy work. The new laws passed by the government will protect workers and save lives.

“This is a win for workers' rights and safety and their unions. The measures to strengthen the rights of Health and Safety Representatives in particular will make a real difference to the conditions of offshore oil and gas workers.”

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