

Senate Standing Committee on Economics

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Resources, Energy and Tourism Portfolio

Supplementary Budget Estimates

18 October 2012

Question: SR17

Topic: Health and Safety Representative (HSR) engagement policy

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Senator Cameron asked:

Senator CAMERON: Other than the production of a health and safety handbook, what actions does NOPSEMA undertake to support the role of the HSRs? Can you take that on notice because I have run out time? Does NOPSEMA have a formal HSR engagement policy?

Ms Cutler: We have a very formal policy built into our inspections that the first-

Senator CAMERON: No, I am not asking about inspections. I am asking about a general engagement policy with health and safety representatives.

Ms Cutler: It is a specific requirement that all inspections commence with a meeting between the inspectors and the health and safety representatives on the facility.

Senator CAMERON: So that is an inspection. Is that the only engagement you have with them?

Ms Cutler: We have a number of other engagements.

Senator CAMERON: So can you take it on notice and can you provide me with details of all engagements, formal engagements and the policy within NOPSEMA for engagement with HS representatives?

Ms Cutler: I am very happy to provide the background details to our 223 meetings with HSRs over the last 1 years.

Senator CAMERON: Okay. Can you also advise me then of the outcome of these 230-odd meetings? What changes did you make to policy? What advice have you been given during these meetings and what practical steps did you take to implement issues arising out of that engagement? In the UK, I understand that there is an annual HSR conference. Are you aware of that?

Ms Cutler: In the UK I believe there is a workforce involvement forum that has active involvement by health and safety representatives.

Senator CAMERON: And the union movement?

Ms Cutler: And a range of other people. I am not specifically across the exact details.

Senator CAMERON: Can you check for me and give me details of what that engagement is in the UK?

Answer:

From July 2010 to June 2012, NOPSEMA OHS inspectors conducted 223 meetings with HSRs as part of planned inspections on offshore facilities. NOPSEMA OHS inspectors typically meet with the facility HSRs to provide any clarification and advice where required, listen to any concerns that they raise, and assess how workforce consultation processes are working. Following up on issues raised during such meetings may lead to recommendations in the planned inspection report which the facility operator is required to respond to. As with all inspection recommendations, NOPSEMA tracks an operator's progress on action they have taken during subsequent liaison meetings and inspections until satisfied the underlying issue has been appropriately addressed. The majority of recommendations arising directly from meetings with HSRs relate to: effective communication between the operator and workforce/HSRs, timely provision of HSR training, and standards, policies and administrative controls.

The *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* stipulates the provision and distribution of inspection reports, including a requirement that the operator of a facility must give a copy of the report to the health and safety committee or health and safety representative, as applicable. Please refer to SR18, question 18a for further information.

NOPSEMA comes into regular but more informal contact with HSRs through events like the HSR Forum.

The Offshore Industry Advisory Committee in the UK is a tripartite group that focuses on the offshore sector and meets three times per year. It is not classified as an official HSC advisory committee but describes itself as a forum for discussion of health and safety matters in the offshore industry. The Committee has two permanent sub-groups, one of which is the Workforce Involvement Group, which meets to discuss worker involvement in health and safety matters. Details about the committee and sub-groups are available at the Health and Safety Executive website ([ww.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)).