

**AUSTRALIA'S REPORTING ON THE CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE NATURAL  
RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC REGION AND RELATED PROTOCOLS  
(NOUMEA CONVENTION)**

***For the Period covering 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2025.***

**1. What are the main issues and priorities concerning marine pollution for your country? You can attach relevant sections of annual reports, policy documents etc.**

Every five years, in accordance with Australia's principal environment legislation, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999*, the Government conducts a comprehensive review of the state of the Australian environment. The national State of the Environment (SoE) reports provide information about environmental and heritage conditions, trends and pressures for the Australian continent, surrounding seas and Australia's external territories.

The last SoE report in 2021 reported that 'pressures associated with human population have high impact on Australia's marine environment...the state of marine debris and plastics continues to worsen.' Population pressure globally is leading to an 'increasingly crowded and noisy' ocean with the impacts of anthropogenic noise and pollution (including plastics, marine debris, petrochemicals, excess nutrients, sediments and pesticides) degrading marine ecosystems.

The next SoE report will be published in 2026 and will be made available at:  
<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/>.

**Marine Debris**

In 2025, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) adopted an update to the Action Plan to address marine plastic litter from ships. Originally agreed in 2018, this Action Plan identifies actions to reduce or eliminate plastic litter from ships. The Action Plan is referenced in Australia's National Waste Policy Action Plan (2019).

The 2025 update to the Action Plan identifies actions that have been completed and refocuses efforts on remaining measures. A new action relating to the development of a mandatory measure to reduce the risk posed by the transport of plastic pellets by sea was also added into the updated Action Plan.

The updated Action Plan includes agreement that the IMO will consider measures on fishing gear to:

- Require the mandatory marking of certain types of fishing gear through a 'goal-based' approach, and
- Require vessel operators to report fishing gear lost or discharged into the sea (to a vessel's flag Administration, the coastal state where the loss occurred and the IMO), not just gear that poses a significant threat to the environment or navigation, as currently required under MARPOL.

**Ghost Nets**

Abandoned, lost and discarded fishing gear, often referred to as ghost nets, can stretch several kilometres and weigh several tonnes. They entangle, lacerate and even strangle birds, turtles and cetaceans. They also smother reefs and present a hazard to shipping. Ghost nets have been the focus of considerable ongoing attention, effort and engagement by Australia, both domestically and regionally.

Australia also recognises the profound impact of ghost nets on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's connection to Country, culture and way of life, specifically the impact ghost nets has on culturally significant species and areas (sacred sites). This impact extends to Traditional food sources and the impact on those.

### **Circular Economy**

Australia has taken a significant step towards making its economy more circular with the release of Australia's Circular Economy Framework in December 2024. The framework provides the policy blueprint for driving Australia's circular economy transition. It includes an overarching goal of doubling circularity by 2035 and sets clear priorities and targets to reduce waste and keep materials in our economy for as long as possible. The framework focuses on four key sectors to drive the transformation, and identifies opportunities to take action in each sector, such as a focus on more durable, re-usable and sustainable goods and circular packaging.

### **Sea Dumping**

Australia is a Contracting Party to the *1996 Protocol to the Convention of the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and other Matter, 1972* (London Protocol). Our obligation to prohibit the discarding or dumping of waste at sea is implemented by the *Environmental Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981* (Sea Dumping Act). In 2023, Australia amended the Sea Dumping Act by passing the *Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Amendment (Using New Technologies to Fight Climate Change) Bill 2023* (additional information is provided at section 3).

### **Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from international shipping**

The Australian Government is working with the IMO to address GHG emissions from ships.

In 2023, the IMO adopted a revised strategy on the reduction of GHG emissions from ships (the Strategy), which set out the future vision for international shipping, the levels of ambition to reduce GHG emissions and guiding principles. The Strategy aims to:

- Reduce the carbon intensity of ships by 40% by 2030, compared to 2008
- make zero or near-zero GHG energy, fuels and technologies 5-10 per cent of international shipping's energy mix by 2030.
- reach net-zero GHG emissions by or around 2050.

To reduce the carbon intensity of ships, the IMO's short-term measure became mandatory for relevant ships globally, and in Australian waters, on 1 January 2023. The short-term measure requires ships to make operational improvements under a Carbon Intensity Indicator (CII) framework and technical improvements under an Energy Efficiency Existing Ship Index (EEXI) framework. A stage one review of the measure was completed by the IMO in 2025, with a stage two review expected to conclude in 2028. The review will consider the effectiveness and accuracy of the short-term measure and its ongoing role after the 2030 carbon intensity target.

In April 2025, the IMO approved the IMO Net-Zero Framework (NZF), a global regulatory framework that aims to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions from international shipping by or around 2050. The NZF includes mandatory emissions limits and GHG pricing across the entire industry sector. The new regulations are due for adoption in October 2025, to take effect from 2028. The NZF applies to ships of over 5,000 GT engaged in international trade.

### **Offshore petroleum and GHG storage**

Australia's National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) has identified five National Priorities that focus regulatory efforts on the most critical safety and environmental challenges across Australia's offshore energy activities. While not specifically focused on marine pollution, when considered wholistically, addressing

National Priorities would contribute to preventing, reducing and controlling pollution in the Australian EEZ. The five National Priorities are:

- i. Structural Integrity - *Ensuring offshore assets remain safe and well-maintained.*
- ii. Addressing redundant wells - *Strengthening oversight to ensure wells are decommissioned responsibly*
- iii. Psychosocial health - *Protection of worker mental health and wellbeing.*
- iv. Control of work - *Promoting effective systems to ensure work is carried out safely and we learn from incidents to continually improve.*
- v. Leadership and management - *Sharing how decision-making impacts safety and environmental outcomes on offshore facilities*

For more information about National Priorities see [www.nopsema.gov.au](http://www.nopsema.gov.au).

## **2. What measures generally have you initiated to implement this Convention and Protocols?**

### **Marine Protected Areas**

Australia's marine protected areas are important for conserving biodiversity, supporting the sustainable management of our marine resources and protecting our natural and cultural heritage. Australia's National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas is made up of Commonwealth, state and territory marine protected areas.

Australia supports the designation and effective management of marine protected areas to achieve conservation and sustainable use outcomes. Australia currently protects around 4.6 million km<sup>2</sup> or 52% of its waters in marine protected areas; around 24% of Australian waters are under a high level of protection (including from extractive uses). This places Australia as a world leader in marine protection and making a globally significant contribution to the 30 by 30 target and the Global Biodiversity Framework.

The Australian Government manages 62 marine protected areas— 60 Australian Marine Parks are managed by the Director of National Parks; the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park is managed by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, and Heard Island and McDonald Islands Marine Reserve is managed by the Australian Antarctic Division. A further 255 marine protected areas are managed by states and territories.

The Australian Government recently committed to protect 30% of Australia's marine environment in highly protected zoning (IUCN 1a and II) by 2030. The review of five Australian Marine Park management plans expiring in 2028 and covering 44 marine parks is the primary opportunity to achieve this target.

### **Sustainable Ocean Management**

A key priority for Australia is to enhance measures to sustainably manage our marine estate, including finalising Australia's first ever national Sustainable Ocean Plan, a commitment made through the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (Ocean Panel). This body comprises sitting world leaders from 18 nations who are setting and delivering on global ambition for a rapid transition to a sustainable ocean economy.

Being a marine nation, Australia relies on our ocean for food, energy, livelihoods, transport, climate regulation, recreation, and wellbeing. The sea inspires our art and is central to our national identity. As Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia, First Nations people have been sustainably caring for the ocean for millennia, and it holds important cultural and spiritual significance.

Australia also co-leads the 100% Alliance for Sustainable Ocean Management with Chile, which calls on all coastal and ocean states to commit to sustainably manage 100% of ocean areas within national jurisdiction by 2030.

The Plan identifies a new vision for Australia's ocean and eight national priorities for collective action. The plan will guide collective action for our ocean to 2040 and identify the actions needed to address complex ocean issues that no single jurisdiction, sector or group can tackle alone. Regional collaboration is a key part of the draft plan, including consideration of opportunities to boost transboundary cooperation for shared challenges, such as marine pollution.

The draft plan has been informed by extensive engagement, with representatives across all levels of government, First Nations people, ocean industry sectors, the marine science community, NGOs and regional stakeholders.

### **Marine Debris**

Australia has been an active participant in the Correspondence Group on Marine Plastic Litter from Ships, which developed expanded reporting requirements for fishing gear, and reported to the Pollution Prevention and Response (PPR) Sub-Committee in 2025. Discussions will continue in 2026 on how the IMO will collect and use this data.

As part of the IMO Action Plan (refer Section 1), Australia has contributed funding towards an IMO study on marine plastic litter. This study aims to estimate the contribution of ships to marine plastic litter (including both macro and microplastics) and identify any knowledge gaps in determining this contribution.

In 2024, the IMO issued a voluntary guideline on the carriage of plastic pellets by sea. This guideline was implemented in Australia, with reflections after a year of operation being reported back to the IMO in 2025. At PPR in 2025, Australia was active in contributing to the committee's initial analysis of options that could reduce the risk of plastic pellet loss during shipping. The analysis, including the feedback from implementation of the voluntary guideline, formed the baseline of information for IMO members' consideration of a mandatory measure to reduce the risk posed by transport of plastic pellets by sea. This is a priority for the IMO and discussion will continue in 2026.

### **Ghost Nets**

Australia has invested AUD14.8m over five years from 2020 to 2025 to tackle ghost nets and marine plastic debris in Northern Australia through the Ghost Nets Initiative (GNI).

- The GNI funds the Indigenous Ranger Coastal Cleanup Project, which supports Indigenous Ranger teams to locate and remove ghost nets and marine debris from their beaches and coastline. Under this program, Rangers have so far removed at least 860 ghost nets and 181,623 kilograms of marine debris from hundreds of beaches and reefs in the Gulf of Carpentaria and northern Australia.
- The GNI also funded an Innovative Solutions Grants Program, which supports a range of projects looking at new technologies and approaches for locating, removing and recycling ghost nets and marine debris.
- Funding for the GNI expires in December 2025. More information on the program can be found here: [Ghost Nets Initiative | Australian Marine Parks | Parks Australia](#)

In October 2024, at the Global Nature Positive Summit, Australia announced its membership of the Global Ghost Gear Initiative (GGGI), a multi-sectoral global initiative that drives solutions to the problems of ghost nets worldwide.

Australia also announced a commitment of AUD \$1.4 million through the Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action (ATSEA) program to work on a regional action plan to address the source of ghost gear that impacts Australia's northern marine estate and coastline, severely impacting marine biodiversity and the health of sea Country and First Nations Australians.

Australia is working with ATSEA and its members – Indonesia, Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea – to develop the regional action plan.

### **Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan**

The Reef 2050 Plan continues to be the overarching framework outlining how the Australian and Queensland governments work together to protect and manage the Reef. The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan guides our actions to restore and protect the Reef, including:

- limit the impacts of climate change
- reduce the impacts from land-based activities
- reduce impacts from water-based activities
- influence the reduction of international sources of impact
- protect, rehabilitate and restore.

### **Water Quality Improvement Plan**

Supporting delivery of the Reef 2050 Plan is the Water Quality Improvement Plan 2017-2022 (WQIP). The WQIP aims to reduce the amount of sediment, nitrogen and phosphorus lost to the Reef from broad scale land use through erosion control in priority grazing regions, improving fertiliser efficiency on sugar cane farms and improving grazing land management practices.

The Australian Government has committed \$1.2 billion to Reef Protection and Restoration through to 2029-30. More information can be found at <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/parks-heritage/great-barrier-reef/protecting/our-investments/reef-trust/programs>.

### **National Waste Policy Action Plan**

Under the National Waste Policy Action Plan, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) in collaboration with Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) undertook a project (2024-2025) to develop a nationally consistent framework for the recycling of ship's garbage in Australian ports. The project aimed to encourage recycling of ships' recyclable wastes, reduce the volume of ships' garbage going to landfill and reduce the likelihood of illegal discharge into the marine environment. The success of this trial continues to inform DAFF's work on a longer-term solution through the Maritime Waste Recycling Pilot, which has expanded the scope of the Maritime Recycling Risk Assessment Trial (MRRAT) to include more ports and explores on-board cleaning and segregation requirements for recycling waste.

### **GHG emissions from international shipping**

In 2023, the short-term measure under the MARPOL Convention entered into force internationally, and in Australia. Australia gives effect to this measure through the *Protection of the Sea (Prevention of Pollution from Ships) Act 1983* and *Marine Order 97 (Marine pollution prevention – air pollution) 2022*. The short-term measure requires international ships to take technical and operational measures to reduce their carbon intensity by an average of at least 40% by 2030 (compared to 2008 levels).

## **3. Give details of new or amended legislation that covers marine pollution beyond internal waters including any definition of 'pollution' and the institutions responsible.**

### **Sea Dumping**

In 2023, Australia amended the Sea Dumping Act to implement the 2009 and 2013 amendments to the London Protocol that allow for the issue of permits for the export of carbon dioxide for

offshore sequestration into sub-seabed geological formations, and the issue of permits for the placement of wastes or other material for marine geoengineering activity for the purpose of scientific research. Both the 2009 and 2013 amendments have not yet entered into force; however, Australia has made a declaration of provisional application for the 2009 amendment to allow for application for permits for the export of carbon dioxide.

With an interim National Action List for Offshore Carbon Capture and Sequestration (Offshore CCS NAL) and permit application form currently in place, a revised Offshore CCS NAL and permit application form, as well as new National Assessment Guidelines for Offshore Carbon Capture and Sequestration (NAGOCCS) have been released for public comment. Consultation on these documents is open until 12 September 2025. The guidance for permits to export carbon dioxide is being developed and will build on these documents that are focussed on domestically sourced carbon dioxide.

### **Offshore petroleum and GHG storage**

On 10 January 2024, the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage (Environment) Regulations 2023* (Environment Regulations) came into effect, following review of the 2009 version of this instrument. The instrument re-orders and re-numbers the previous 2009 version, without major changes. For more information on the Environment Regulations see Section 6.

### **Marine Order 91 (Marine pollution prevention – oil pollution) (MO91)**

In 2025, AMSA amended MO91 to ensure the marine order is consistent with current drafting policy and to give effect to changes to MARPOL Annex I. The reviewed MO91 allows for the approved use of an electronic Oil Record Book in lieu of a hard copy, and a procedure was introduced for granting exemptions for UNSP barges from certain survey and certification requirements relating to the International Oil Pollution Prevention (IOPP) Certificate.

### **Minamata Convention on Mercury**

On 20 June 2025, further to Australia's ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury in 2021, standards for mercury and its compounds were added to the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard (IChEMS) Register. The IChEMS helps minimise environmental harm from chemicals. It sets national standards in Australia for the import, manufacture, export, use and disposal of industrial chemicals.

## **4. What is the estimated volume/type of marine pollution per year in the Convention area from the following sources; the number of permits/licenses issued; and any other measures taken to prevent, reduce and control such pollution:**

### **a. vessels (art. 6)**

The number of pollution reports in Australian waters reported to AMSA from (or potentially from) vessels during the reporting period was 410. This includes all reports, confirmed and unconfirmed, regardless of the amount of the pollutant reported. However, with regard to significant pollution incidents, there were none reported during 2023-2025 ([AMSA Annual Report 2023-2024](#)). A significant pollution incident is defined as a Level 2 (or higher) incident in accordance with the [National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies](#).

Measures taken to prevent and reduce such pollution are primarily based on active administration and enforcement of IMO conventions, including MARPOL, through mechanisms such as port State control. AMSA's compliance strategy can be viewed here: [AMSA's Compliance Strategy 2023-2027](#).

Australia's National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies includes national arrangements for emergency towage capability, managed by AMSA, and is supported by



arrangements with States and the Northern Territory to manage pollution risks within their respective jurisdictions.

AMSA assesses all reported vessel incidents (e.g. machinery failure, main engine breakdowns, fire, flooding, groundings, collisions) to determine whether preventative action is required.

**b. land based sources (art. 7)**

The most recent Reef Water Quality Report Card, released in May 2024, assessed progress up to June 2022. It showed continued improvement, particularly in reducing particulate nutrients, while highlighting the need for further action to meet dissolved inorganic nitrogen and sediment targets. These findings were informed by regional report cards and the Paddock to Reef Integrated Monitoring, Modelling and Reporting Program.

To reduce emissions and releases of mercury and meet our Minamata Convention obligations, the import, manufacture, use, export of mercury and mercury added products are controlled in Australia through the following Commonwealth Government legislation: *the Industrial Chemicals Act 2019, the Therapeutic Goods Act 1989, the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Administration) Act 1992, the Customs Act 1901 and the Recycling and Waste Reduction Act 2020*. Australia has an obligation to control mercury emissions (to the air) and releases (water and land) from industrial facilities. Responsible authorities employ a variety of mechanisms, including licencing frameworks, to implement pollution controls at these sites, aligning with measures required by the Convention.

**c. mining and coastal erosion, ie, dredging, land reclamation (art. 14)**

Management of Australia's coastal areas is a shared responsibility between the States and Territories, and the Australian Government. The Australian Government has in place a range of programs and policies designed to minimise the environmental impact of, amongst other threats, land based sources of marine pollution (as outlined in Sections 1 and 2).

**d. sea-bed and sub-soil activities (art. 8)**

NOPSEMA reports quarterly on industry performance, including in relation to environmental management incidents such as chemical and hydrocarbon releases. Note this reporting is national and not limited to areas relevant to the Convention. For more information on this reporting see Section 8 and [Industry and NOPSEMA performance reports | NOPSEMA](#).

**e. discharges into atmosphere (art. 9)**

Emissions from oil and gas facilities in Australian Commonwealth waters are regulated by NOPSEMA. For response regarding emissions from international shipping refer section 1 and response regarding to mercury emissions refer section 4 (b).

**f. dumping and disposal from vessels, aircraft, man-made structures of waste including radioactive waste or matter (art. 10)**

The Australian Government regulates the disposal of waste materials at sea under the Sea Dumping Act (refer to section 5 and 6 for further discussion on the Sea Dumping Act and the London Protocol). In Australia, sea dumping permits are most commonly issued for disposal at sea of dredged material and for placement of artificial reefs. Information on permits issued under the Sea Dumping Act is provided annually to the IMO. As placement of artificial reefs is not considered dumping, the regulation of artificial reefs exists under the Sea Dumping Act only. As such, the issuing of artificial reef permits are not required to be reported to the IMO and are therefore not reflected in the table below.

A summary of items disposed in Australia in 2023-24 can be found in the following table.

Note: values in this table covers disposal in all Australian waters, and is therefore not specific to the Convention area of Australia (east coast and islands eastward including Macquarie Island).

Material / permit type	Number of dumping permits issued in 2023-2024 calendar years	Number of valid dumping permits as of June 2025	Permitted volume / amount for dumping in 2023 <sup>1</sup> calendaryear	Actual volume / amount dumped in 2023 <sup>1</sup> calendaryear	Permitted volume / amount for dumping in 2024 <sup>1</sup> calendaryear	Actual volume / amount dumped in 2024 <sup>1</sup> calendaryear	Total volume / amount dumped in 2023-2024 <sup>1</sup> calendaryears
Dredged material (maintenance and capital)	13	42	111,438,762 m <sup>3</sup>	3,570,455 m <sup>3</sup>	104,533,837 m <sup>3</sup>	4,150,532 m <sup>3</sup>	7,720,987 m <sup>3</sup>
Vessels, platforms or manmade objects	4	6	87 wooden vessels + 3 platforms (97.5 tonnes)	37 wooden vessels + 2 platforms (24.2 tonnes)	400 wooden vessels + 2 platforms (81 tonnes)	54 wooden vessels + 1 platform (7.5 tonnes)	91 wooden vessels + 3 platforms (31.7 tonnes)
Treated sewage	0	2	1,161,150 litres	902,300 litres	66,150 litres	27,000 litres	929,300 litres
Organic material of natural origin (human burials)	2	0	1	1	1	1	2
Excavated material	0	1	700,000 m <sup>3</sup>	0 m <sup>3</sup>	700,000 m <sup>3</sup>	0 m <sup>3</sup>	0 m <sup>3</sup>
<b>Total</b>	19	51					

<sup>1</sup> Actual data is only available on calendar year basis and data for 2025 is not currently available

**g. the storage of toxic and hazardous wastes, including radioactive wastes or matter (art. 11)**

The Australian Government and each State and Territory government have passed laws establishing a regulatory framework for the acquisition, use, storage, transfer and disposal of material (including radioactive waste) to help ensure that storage of toxic and hazardous wastes is conducted in a manner that will protect human health and the environment. In addition to controlling storage facilities, there are requirements for appropriate labelling, handling, packaging and transport of these wastes. The tools used to promote sound storage practices include legislation, codes of practice, permits and licences.

For further information see:

- <http://www.infrastructure.gov.au/transport/australia/dangerous/index.aspx>
- <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/safety-topic/hazards/chemicals/hazardous-chemicals>
- <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/hazardous-waste>
- <https://www.amsa.gov.au/marine-environment>

**h. testing of nuclear devices (art. 12).**

Australia does not test any nuclear devices and has signed and ratified the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Australia firmly supports the entry into force of the CTBT and establishment of a fully effective treaty verification system. Australia is also a signatory to the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, which prohibits the use, testing, and possession of nuclear weapons within the borders of the treaty zone.

**5. Have you prohibited the storage and disposal of radioactive waste in the Convention area and the continental shelf beyond the Convention area? If so, what is the legislative provision and what is the penalty? (art. 10)**

The Sea Dumping Act prohibits ocean disposal of radioactive waste in accordance with the provisions of the London Protocol. Offence provisions and penalties are included in the Sea Dumping Act at: <https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2023A00099/latest/text>.



**6. What technical guidelines and legislation do you have concerning EIA of development activities likely to impact on the marine environment (art. 16)? How many assessments occurred, what were the measures adopted to prevent pollution and what was the extent of public involvement.**

**London Protocol**

Australia fulfils its international obligations under the London Protocol through the Sea Dumping Act. In accordance with Annex 1 of the London Protocol, the only wastes that Australia will consider permitting for ocean disposal, following a rigorous assessment process, are:

- i. dredged material;
- ii. fish waste, or material resulting from industrial fish processing operations;
- iii. vessels and platforms or other man-made structures at sea;
- iv. inert, inorganic geological material;
- v. organic material of natural origin;
- vi. bulky items primarily comprising iron, steel, concrete and similarly unarmful materials for which the concern is physical impact, and limited to those circumstances where such wastes are generated at locations, such as small islands with isolated communities, having no practicable access to disposal options other than dumping; and
- vii. Carbon dioxide streams from carbon dioxide capture processes for sequestration.

Contracting Parties agreed in October 2022 to remove sewage sludge as a permit category from Annex 1. Effective from January 2023, permits are no longer able to be applied for or granted for disposal of sewage sludge. Table 1 includes data from previously granted sewage sludge disposal permits.

In accordance with Annex 2 of the London Protocol, measures to prevent pollution include waste management auditing, consideration of alternatives to disposal, and detailed analysis of the chemical, physical and biological properties of the material proposed for disposal. Permit applicants must provide an assessment of the potential impacts from disposal and undertake monitoring and management of the disposal. Permit applicants must also demonstrate that they have consulted with other users of the sea that may be impacted by the action.

Applications for sea dumping of dredged material are assessed in accordance with the National Assessment Guidelines for Dredging. These guidelines are available here: [National Assessment Guidelines for Dredging 2009 - DCCEEW](#)

**Offshore petroleum and GHG storage**

Regulating environmental management of offshore petroleum and GHG storage activities, the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006* (OPGGS Act) establishes the overarching national framework for regulation of offshore petroleum and GHG operations in Australian Commonwealth waters and coastal waters of States and the Northern Territory, where powers have been conferred. Under the OPGGS Act framework, NOPSEMA is the regulator for occupational health and safety, well integrity and environmental management.

The Environment Regulations provide the regulatory framework for environmental management of offshore petroleum and GHG activities in Commonwealth waters. On 28 February 2014, Australia's Environment Minister endorsed the environmental management authorisations process under the Environment Regulations as meeting the requirements of Part 10 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). This decision made NOPSEMA the sole national regulator for environmental management of offshore petroleum activities in Commonwealth waters. For more information see [www.nopsema.gov.au](http://www.nopsema.gov.au).

*New offshore petroleum projects*

The Environment Regulations provide for project-level environmental impact assessment (EIA) and early decisions on overall environmental acceptability of new projects through NOPSEMA's assessment and acceptance of Offshore Project Proposals (OPPs). Offshore project proposals are prepared by project proponents and must include a comprehensive evaluation of all environmental impacts and risks for the project and demonstration that these impacts and risks will be of an acceptable level. OPPs are also subject to a mandatory public period of at least four weeks, during which time public comments may be received. Proponents are required to summarise public comments received and assess the merits of each objection or claim made about the project or any project activity before submitting the proposal for assessment and a decision by NOPSEMA.

#### *Offshore petroleum and GHG activities*

Before commencing, all offshore petroleum and GHG storage activities in Australian Commonwealth waters (including activities that are included in an OPP) must have an Environment Plan (EP) assessed and accepted by NOPSEMA under the Environment Regulations. The EP is an activity-specific document that provides evaluation of all environmental impacts and risks associated with the activities. It describes how those impacts and risks will be managed to an acceptable level and reduced to as low as reasonably practicable (ALARP) for the life of the activity. The EP includes control measures that are tailored to the circumstances of the activity, including arrangements for responding to, and monitoring impacts of, unplanned oil pollution emergencies.

A 30 day public comment period applies to EPs for seismic surveys and exploratory drilling. For all EPs, the titleholder is also required to consult with 'relevant persons' (persons or organisations whose functions, interests or activities may be affected by the activities to be carried out under an EP) during development of the EP. EPs must be published in full both on submission to and acceptance by NOPSEMA.

NOPSEMA implements legislated powers to monitor and enforce duty holder compliance with legal requirements and carries out investigations into potential breaches. For further information regarding regulatory submissions received and completed assessments, including for EPs and OPPs, over the reporting period see [Industry and NOPSEMA performance reports | NOPSEMA](#).

From time-to-time, NOPSEMA publishes and updates information and guidance materials applicable to implementation of the Environment Regulations. These materials along with the publication dates are available at: [www.nopsema.gov.au](http://www.nopsema.gov.au).

#### **7. Outline the cooperation/coordination with the other Contracting Parties in implementing the Convention and Protocols (such as agreements for protection, development or management of the marine environment, information sharing, research, monitoring and technical assistance, protection against the threat and effects of 'pollution incidents' (arts. 4, 17, and 18).**

##### **PACPLAN Resilience Project (2022-2025)**

Australia is an active participant in the Pacific Islands Regional Marine Spill Contingency Plan (PACPLAN), that was developed as part of the SPREP Pacific Ocean Pollution Prevention Programme (PACPOL).

Concluded in June 2025, the PACPLAN Resilience Project (AUD 2m) is a core commitment under the Noumea Convention, and delivers against the PACPOL objectives. The PACPLAN Resilience Project's objective is to support Pacific island countries to improve their response

capabilities and preparedness to respond to marine spill disasters, in accordance with commitments under the regionally agreed PACPLAN.

The project focuses on six Pacific island countries for which Australia has primary oil spill response obligations. In 2024, the PACPLAN Resilience Project supported the development of Country Agreements and National Plans to mitigate and respond to oil spills. The program has also undertaken legislative reviews leading to the development of a new Pacific Marine Pollution legislation template which will aide other countries to review their legislation.

### **Pacific Ocean Litter Project**

The AUD16m Pacific Ocean Litter Project (POLP) is being delivered in partnership with SPREP (2019-2027). The POLP is supporting Pacific island countries to refuse, reduce and replace single-use plastics with sustainable alternatives. Examples of activities that are being delivered in collaboration with Pacific island governments and communities include coastal monitoring surveys, the introduction of new regulations to ban single-use plastics, education and awareness raising, and working with Pacific tourism organisations and local businesses to phase out single-use plastics.

## **8. How many ‘pollution incidents’ have there been and what were the laws, regulations, institutions and operational procedures used in each? (Protocol on Pollution Emergencies)**

NOPSEMA reports on offshore incident notifications, including environmental management incidents, on its website. Note this reporting is national and not limited to areas relevant to the Convention. For more information regarding incidents notified to NOPSEMA over the reporting period see [Industry and NOPSEMA performance reports | NOPSEMA](#). The number of pollution incidents in Australian waters, reported to AMSA for the reporting period was 410 (refer to section 4).

Australia’s National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies (National Plan) provides a single comprehensive and integrated response arrangement to minimise the impacts of marine pollution from vessels and oil spills from offshore petroleum facilities, as well as other environmental impacts arising from a maritime environmental emergency.

Over 2023 and 2024, AMSA led a national review of the National Plan. The review considered:

- The types and nature of the maritime environmental risks that Australia may face over the next decade.
- The desired operation effects of the National Plan.
- The scope of the National Plan.
- The effectiveness of existing funding and governance arrangements for pollution preparedness and response activities.

In September 2024 a report of the review was considered by Australia’s Infrastructure and Transport Senior Officials Committee, which endorsed all 11 report recommendations. The recommendations acknowledge the adoption of alternative energy in the maritime transport sector, and include identification of:

- The expanded scope of hazards associated with alternative energy.
- An expanded stakeholder group.
- Capability requirements for the expanded scope of hazards.
- Domestic and international frameworks to enable effective response to, and recovery from, maritime emergencies.

Australia is progressing work to address the 11 recommendations.

## **9. What are the reporting requirements regarding ‘pollution incidents’ of:**

### **a. Government officials;**

As a signatory to MARPOL, Australia is required under Article 11 to provide an annual report to IMO, which includes information on significant pollution incidents.

### **b. Masters of vessels flying your flag; and**

Under Australian legislation applying the regulations of MARPOL, masters of Australian vessels must comply with the reporting requirements set out in MARPOL. Article 8 and Protocol I of MARPOL require that coastal states are notified without delay when an incident occurs that involves:

- A discharge or probable discharge of oil or noxious substances carried in bulk, resulting from damage to the ship or its equipment, or for the purpose of securing the safety of a ship or saving a life at sea,
- A discharge or probable discharge of harmful substances in packaged form,
- A discharge during the operation of the ship of oil or noxious substances in excess of the quantity or instantaneous rate permitted under MARPOL, or

From 1 January 2026, the master of Australian vessels will be required to report any freight container(s) loss or when drifting container(s) are observed at sea. Masters must promptly notify nearby ships, the nearest coastal State, and the flag State. This follows the adoption of amendments to Protocol I of MARPOL and SOLAS chapter V in 2024 that aim to enhance navigation and safety at sea and protect the marine environment.

A report must also be made when an incident involves damage, failure or breakdown of a ship (15 metres in length or more) that:

- Affects the safety of the ship, including but not limited to collision, grounding, fire, explosion, structural failure, flooding and cargo shifting, or
- Results in the impairment of the safety of navigation, including but not limited to failure or breakdown of steering gear, propulsion plan, electrical generating system and essential shipborne navigational aids.

The master or other person having charge of any ship involved in an incident is required to make the report. If this cannot be done, then the owner/charterer/manager/operator of the ship, or their agent is responsible for making the report. Reports must include the following details:

- Name of ship/s involved,
- Time, type and location of incident,
- Quantity and type of harmful substance,
- Assistance and salvage measures.

### **c. Masters of all vessels and pilots of all aircraft in the vicinity of your coasts (art. 5).**

The same obligations as set out in 9 (b. above apply to all ships in Australian waters, regardless of flag. The obligations do not formally apply to aircraft, although it is understood reporting pollution incidents is part of standard operating procedure for commercial pilots.

*End*

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*Endorsed by the Fourth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Apia and Noumea Conventions, 1998, paragraph 43 of the Report. National Reports to be lodged biennially and deposited with SPREP no less than three months prior to the Ordinary Meeting of the Parties*