CENTRE OF DECOMMISSIONING AUSTRALIA

Preparing for Emerging Industries across Northern Australia

Centre of Decommissioning Australia submission

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1 Introduction

1.1 Centre of Decommissioning Australia (CODA)

First established in 2019 and becoming wholly independent in December 2021, CODA is Australia's peak body for the decommissioning industry. CODA works with a network of partners spanning Australian oil and gas producers, members of the domestic and international decommissioning service sector, regulators and domestic and international research and peer peak bodies to pursue its objectives of; supporting the establishment and growth of Australia's decommissioning sector; promoting the local execution of work and employment of Australian personnel; promoting the maximum recycling and reuse of recovered materials and; establishing Australia as a global leader in decommissioning.

Operating as a partner (member) based organisation, where the majority of partners pay an annual fee which covers their access to CODA's products and services. CODA operates several different partner tiers that collectively enable CODA to operate as an independent entity, representing the industry as a whole, rather than any one segment of the industry. This partner network has rapidly grown from the first sign up in mid 2022 to around 150 partners at time of writing.

CODA constantly consults with its network of formal and informal partners and connections both within Australia and internationally to ensure it has access to current ideas and practices as well as emerging trends, barriers and opportunities in decommissioning. Additionally, CODA personnel are regularly invited to speak at domestic and international conferences on decommissioning, both to share to the rest of the world the size and scale of opportunities in Australia as well as to remain current on global trends.

Since its establishment, CODA has additionally worked to establish and raise the profile of Australian decommissioning through a series of carefully considered and targeted initiatives, namely:

1.1.1 Reports

- 2020 – release of the **decommissioning liability study**[1], the first quantification of the total volume and timeline of decommissioning in Australian waters. This report has been widely quoted and referenced and was pivotal in energising the global supply chain to consider Australia as a meaningful destination for investment.
- 2022 – release of three reports:
    - Global Review of **Decommissioning Planning and Execution Learnings**[2]. This study examined at best practice in decommissioning in established jurisdictions such as the USA, UK and Norway and considered how those learnings could be translated to Australia's specific needs.

[1] https://www.decommissioning.org.au/work/offshore-oil-and-gas-decomissioning-liabiltiy-australia/
[2] https://www.decommissioning.org.au/work/global-review-ofdecomissioning-planning-and-execution-learnings/

- ○ **Decommissioning Innovation and Technology Roadmap**[3]. This work looked at gaps and emerging technologies across the entire offshore decommissioning work breakdown structure to highlight areas of focus.

- ○ **Disposal and Recycling Pathways** report[4]. This report for the first time attempted to quantify the volumes of materials being recovered through decommissioning, looking at their nature, location and timeline. It also began to surface some of the gaps in port infrastructure, waste and recycling capacity across Australia.

- 2024 – release of two reports;
  - **Western Australia Decommissioning Hub Location Study**[5]. Working with the support of the WA government, this report looked at the state's port infrastructure to determine the opportunities for existing ports to accommodate anticipated decommissioning needs
  - **Skills Review for the Australian Oil & Gas Decommissioning Industry**[6]. Undertaken to begin to identify gaps and opportunities in skills for the decommissioning industry, this report, which was built on a significant consultation process, identified key skills gaps that need to be filled for Australia to deliver its decommissioning works effectively.
- 2025 – release of two reports:
  - **Decommissioning Waste Disposal Pathways** Report[7]. Accompanied by a waste facilities database[8], this report looked at the status and capacity of the nation's waste management and receival facilities needed to underpin decommissioning. The Waste Facilities Database is an interactive online platform that enables users to explore facilities' locations, capabilities, and licenses. It specifically focuses on facilities and businesses that can process decommissioning waste streams, such as hydrocarbons, mercury, NORMS, and PFAS-contaminated materials. The database consolidates data from public domain sources and surveys of waste facilities, making it the most comprehensive resource for the Australian decommissioning sector.
  - **Northern Territory Decommissioning Location Study**[9]. Supported by the NT government, this report explored the status and capacity of the NT ports and their ability to accommodate anticipated decommissioning activity in the region.

1.1.2 Outlook database

[3] https://www.decommissioning.org.au/work/development-of-a-decomissioning-innovation-and-technology-roadmap/
[4] https://www.decommissioning.org.au/work/understanding-the-opportunity-for-local-disposal-and-recycling-pathways/
[5] https://www.decommissioning.org.au/work/wa-hub-study/
[6] https://www.decommissioning.org.au/work/australian-skills-review/
[7] https://www.decommissioning.org.au/work/waste-disposal-pathways/
[8] https://www.decommissioning.org.au/work/waste-facilities/
[9] https://www.decommissioning.org.au/work/nt-decom-location-study/

Building on the high level and heavily aggregated data in the original 2020 liability study, commencing in 2023 CODA built a new, dynamic, offshore decommissioning forward outlook[10]. This Outlook captures all of Australia's active offshore oil and gas infrastructure, including wells, structures, pipelines and subsea equipment, and presents them in an easy to use, filterable and sortable dashboard. This dashboard allows all parties in the decommissioning industry to understand upcoming work, plan for future campaigns and determine how they may want to engage with the Australian industry.

Each of these reports and databases are made available in two versions, a public version accessible via the front of CODA's website and a partner version available exclusively to CODA's partners.

2 CODA submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia

This submission draws on CODA's recent analytical work, including the *Northern Territory Decommissioning Location Study* and the *Western Australia Decommissioning Hub Location Study,* together with the *Skills Review for the Australian Oil & Gas Decommissioning Industry* to inform the Committee' consideration of supporting the decommissioning industry and enhancing workforce capability in Northern Australia.

CODA acknowledges the Committee's focus on sustainable regional development and economic diversification. The emerging offshore decommissioning sector presents a material opportunity for Northern Australia's infrastructure, workforce and long-term economic resilience.

2.1 Supporting the Decommissioning Industry (Committee Item D)

2.1.1 Strategic Importance of Decommissioning Work in Northern Australia

Australia is approaching a multi-decade phase of offshore oil and gas infrastructure retirement, with significant portions of activity occurring offshore Northern Australia (including Browse and Bonaparte). CODA's Northern Territory Decommissioning Location Study confirms that ports in Darwin Harbour (East Arm Wharf, Marine Supply Base, Darwin Ship Lift and the proposed Middle Arm Module Offloading Facility) are geographically well-positioned to receive, dismantle, and process recovered infrastructure from these basins. Additionally, as can be seen from CODA's Western Australian ports study[11], facilities in Onslow and Ashburton are well positioned to enable Northern Australia to support and capitalise on the opportunities presented by decommissioning.

This represents an identifiable pipeline of industrial work over the next 30-40 years. However, demand will be intermittent, not continuous, and current local waste treatment capacity to receive, clean, dismantle, sort and either recycle, reuse or dispose of materials is limited. Strategic planning and investment will be critical to enable ports and surrounding industrial ecosystems to capture this opportunity and to integrate with national waste processing and recycling networks.

[10] https://www.decommissioning.org.au/work/forward-outlook/
[11] https://www.decommissioning.org.au/work/wa-hub-study/

Material flows from oil and gas decommissioning will contribute to a broader volume of materials needed to make processing and recycling increasingly commercially viable in Northern Australia. This indicates the increasing importance in collective long-term planning.

2.1.2 Infrastructure Investment Priorities

CODA studies highlight a need for investment in:

- Port handing and heavy lift infrastructure capable of managing large offshore modules and subsea hardware.
- Onshore dismantling and processing facilities tailored to a range of asset types, including topsides, substructures and pipelines.
- Waste treatment and recycling capacity (particularly for complex materials) aligned with national waste management systems.
- Transport and logistics linkages between regional economic centres to enable efficient movement of materials and goods.

Prioritising such infrastructure in Northern Australia supports regional industries, provides multi-sector employment opportunities, and strengthens Australia's ability to retain value within the domestic economy rather than exporting dismantling work offshore.

2.1.3 Regulatory Certainty and Coordination

Both location studies observe that clear, coordinated regulatory pathways and enablers are necessary to translate potential into investment-ready opportunities. This includes alignment across jurisdictions on environmental approvals, port planning, customs and quarantine processes and waste management licensing to reduce transactional risk for investors and operators.

2.2 Training, Attracting and Retaining a Skilled Workforce (Committee Item H)

2.2.1 Workforce Challenges and Capability Gaps

CODA's *Skills Review for the Australian Oil & Gas Decommissioning Industry* finds that while the Australian workforce possesses strong core capabilities (engineering, project planning, environmental management), there are identified gaps in specialized decommissioning skills required across the full lifecycle- from planning and dismantling to recycling and disposal.

The review assesses current and future workforce capability needs, conducts a gap analysis and proposes strategies to bridge those gaps, noting that intermittent demand, diversity limitations and geographic dispersion pose challenges for attracting and retaining skilled workers.

2.2.2 Strategies for Workforce Development

CODA's work suggests the need for national and regional strategies that include:

- Targeted upskilling and reskilling programmes that bridge existing trade and professional capabilities with decommissioning-specific competencies.
- Accredited training pathways developed in partnership with vocational education providers and industry to build recognised qualifications tailored to decommissioning roles.
- Workforce transition initiatives supporting oil and gas professionals to leverage their skills into decommissioning work, enhancing sector mobility and career longevity.
- Incentives and support for regional placements, recognising that opportunities in Northern Australia require workers to operate in remote and intermittent contexts.

These initiatives should be coordinated with existing national programmes, regional economic development strategies, and education-industry collaboration to ensure alignment with projected activity pipelines.

2.2.3 Diversity and Inclusion

In line with national workforce priorities, CODA supports enhancing diversity across the decommissioning sector. Broader inclusion of women and underrepresented groups into technical and leadership roles will expand the talent pool and strengthen workforce resilience, particularly critical where competition for skilled personnel spans decommissioning, oil and gas operations and emerging sectors such as offshore renewables.

2.2.4 Regional employment

With much of the decommissioning activity occurring in regional centers, the industry provides real opportunities for local participation. Additionally, typical decommissioning projects require relatively small workforces in comparison to new resource industry developments, placing less pressure on local communities for accommodation and other services.

2.3 Role of Independent Industry Coordination

CODA, through its independence, reputation, networks and operational capability is ideally placed to assist, and indeed, through its work over the past five years, has an established track record with, many of the following tasks.

1. Evidence-based infrastructure planning: support governments and port authorities
    - Translating decommissioning forecasts into credible demand profiles for ports and precincts.
    - Helping avoid over-or-under investment by aligning infrastructure scale with intermittent, project-based demand identified in the NT and WA studies.
2. Cross jurisdictional coordination
    - Act as a neutral connector and coordination body between jurisdictions (NT, WA, Commonwealth), regulators, ports and industry.
    - Help align port investment decisions with national waste management pathways, rather than duplicating capacity in every region.
3. De-risking investment through shared intelligence
    - Aggregate non-commercially sensitive data across operators to provide greater visibility of future work.
    - Support ports and training providers with confidence in timing, scale and skill requirements.

4. Linking infrastructure and workforce planning: supporting government
    - Align port investment with workforce development strategies, ensuring training programs are timed to real project activity.
    - Connect infrastructure planning with accredited skills pathways identified in the Skills Review for the Australian Oil and Gas Decommissioning Industry report.

3 Recommendations

From CODA's experience we would recommend the following actions be considered:

1. Invest in port and industrial infrastructure in Northern Australia that is purpose-designed to support offshore decommissioning work alongside other activities, including heavy lift, dismantling yards and waste processing facilities.
2. Establish coordinated regulatory frameworks for decommissioning logistics and waste management that reduce investment risk and enable cross-jurisdictional certainty.
3. Support national and regional workforce development strategies that deliver decommissioning-specific training, attract skilled professionals to regional centres, and facilitate transitions from related industries.
4. Encourage collaborative partnerships between industry, education providers, and government agencies to develop accredited training packages and workforce support mechanisms aligned with future activity profiles.

4 Conclusion

CODA's analysis clearly shows that with targeted infrastructure investment and workforce planning; Northern Australia is well placed to play a pivotal role in the national decommissioning industry. In doing so, regional economies will benefit from sustained activity, job creation, and skills development, supporting the Committee's objectives of long-term, regionally embedded industry growth.

CODA stands ready to support governments, ports and industry through independent analysis, coordination and evidence-based insights to help translate this opportunity into practical, investable and workforce-ready outcome for Northern Australia.

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