

MELBOURNE 17TH - 19TH SEPTEMBER, 2024

**ICOE 2024 – Discussion session around the role of coordinated strategic environmental research and monitoring in de-risking the consenting process**

12:30pm – 1:30pm

Room 215

**Session team**

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Navigating uncertainty around the environmental impacts of marine renewable energy (MRE) projects remains pivotal for their sustainable development in Oceania. This uncertainty remains one of the key barriers to the sustainable development of the sector, particularly as the industry scales from demonstration projects and small arrays to larger arrays and explores a wider range of market applications.

Experience from other sectors tells us that to help address key consenting risks, manage uncertainty and facilitate sustainable development, it is important that a strategic, coordinated and prioritised approach to monitoring and research is implemented. It is essential that this approach is endorsed by industry, regulators, stakeholders and communities.

This can be achieved through models such as Joint Industry Programmes which can help organisations whose role it is to fund and manage research to do so efficiently and effectively. A key part of this is creating a structured approach to knowledge and expertise; directly addressing the needs and practicalities from industry, regulators and stakeholders, whilst helping ensure that knowledge, information and data is available in a way that can be readily understood and acted upon.

Support can also be provided to project developers by coordinating research and monitoring to ultimately assist with commercialisation. Programmes such as the UK's Offshore Renewables Joint Industry Programme for Ocean Energy, which produced a coordinated, strategic research and monitoring strategy for the UK MRE sector, and OES Environmental, which synthesizes information and scientific research about MRE and the environment on a global scale into collaborative reports and documents, and hosts workshops and webinars to bring researchers together around environmental effects research and supports environmental effects tracks at international conferences, have both demonstrated success.

Emulating such models in Oceania holds promise in identifying sector-specific priorities and fostering a cohesive approach towards uncertainty reduction and risk mitigation. An overview of how these programmes have been setup and implemented in other jurisdictions, along with key lessons learnt and how a similar approach could be adopted in Oceania will be discussed in this informal interactive session.