



MONASH
University



AIP

Australian Institute of Petroleum

Frequently Asked Questions

HEALTH WATCH:

***A STUDY OVERVIEW AND
KEY INFORMATION & RESOURCES***

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

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OVERVIEW: WHAT IS HEALTH WATCH

What is *Health Watch*?

For over 40 years, the Australian Institute of Petroleum (AIP) has sponsored an independent health study called *Health Watch*. *Health Watch* is a university-based research study most recently conducted by the Monash Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health (MonCOEH), a leading international centre for health and epidemiological research at Monash University.

Since 1980, *Health Watch* has been tracking new cases of cancer and causes of death of about 20,000 past and present employees from major participating oil and gas companies, who joined the Study from work sites across Australia.

What were the objectives of *Health Watch*?

For participating employees (past and present), *Health Watch* recorded any occurrence of cancer and, eventually, the cause of death. By comparing the findings for people in different jobs and sectors within the petroleum industry, with the cancer and death rates in the general Australian population, *Health Watch* provided valuable information about the risks associated with working with petroleum products and ways in which these risks may be controlled.

Health Watch has made a highly valuable contribution to the knowledge base of the petroleum industry and provides important information to the Australian community to understand the health impacts of exposure to petroleum products.

Why is *Health Watch* concluding?

Health Watch has followed the health of petroleum industry workers for over 40 years (since 1980) and there has been little in the way of major change in the findings over the past five years since the last report. *Health Watch* is therefore no longer providing new scientific information for the industry and its employees. However, the longstanding and independent conduct of the Study and its strong international reputation provides confidence in its clear published analysis and findings over this extensive study and investigation period.

All data will be kept securely for the next seven years so that researchers have the opportunity to check findings and reopen the study if the need arises. After this, data will be securely destroyed under the guidance of the Chief Investigators.

Was participation in *Health Watch* compulsory?

Participation in *Health Watch* was always voluntary, and the employee participation rate has been outstanding. Historically, about 95% of the industry's employees who were previously approached to participate in the Study joined *Health Watch* including employees from refineries, distribution terminals, and production sites onshore and offshore. The study has enjoyed very strong support from employees, unions, and companies. Participating companies were committed to supporting the Study as it is internationally recognised and respected and is highly valued by its employees. Employees in the industry were enrolled in *Health Watch* by participating in one or more of five industry surveys over the past three decades, using a detailed job and health questionnaire.

What did *Health Watch* study?

The main focus and output of the study was an analysis of cancer and death incidence among petroleum industry employees compared with the general Australian population.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) compiles data for the National Death Index (NDI) and the Australian Cancer Database (ACD) on behalf of all State Death and Cancer Registries. Deaths and cancers for past and present employees in *Health Watch* are obtained by matching the *Health Watch* participants' names and birthdates obtained in the Surveys with the data from the Registries. Results of the Study were published in periodic *Health Watch* reports (of which the latest report is the 16th *Health Watch* Report and final analysis).

FINDINGS OF HEALTH WATCH

What did the *Health Watch* study find?

Overall, the *Health Watch* Study clearly shows that petroleum industry employees have better health than the general Australian community and are less likely to die from cancer and from heart, respiratory and digestive diseases.

Where can I get the detailed findings?

The detailed findings of the Study are independently published in *Health Watch* reports, and these are available to employees and the general community.

The latest *Health Watch* reports (ie. the 16th, 15th, 14th, 13th, 12th and 11th Reports) and the *Health Watch* Case Control Report (called the Lympho-haematopoietic Cancer and Exposure to Benzene in the Australian Petroleum Industry, Technical Report and Appendices) are available from the AIP website at <https://aip.com.au/programs/health-watch>.

HOW WAS HEALTH WATCH CONDUCTED

Health Watch covered those petroleum industry employees from all major oil and gas companies who voluntarily joined the program. Employees in the industry were enrolled in the Study by participating in one or more of five industry surveys (including during worksite visits by the Study team) over the past three decades using a detailed job and health questionnaire.

Monash University conducted a new survey in 2010-2012 to recruit petroleum industry employees from relevant Australian worksites and covering new employees that have joined the industry since the last major survey, as well as existing *Health Watch* members. Over 2,000 employees were recruited to the *Health Watch* Study through this survey, funded by the Participating Companies.

WHO RAN THE *HEALTH WATCH* STUDY

Who conducted the *Health Watch* Study?

Health Watch was most recently conducted by the Monash Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health (MonCOEH), a leading international centre for health and epidemiological research at Monash University.

The Study was designed by Professor David Christie and was previously carried out by the University of Melbourne from 1980 to 1998. The University of Adelaide ran the study from 1999 to 2005, before being transferred to Monash University with the retirement of Dr Richie Gun (the lead researcher at the University of Adelaide).

Who is in the Monash University *Health Watch* team?

Emeritus Professor Malcolm Sim AM is the Principal investigator for *Health Watch*. Professor Karen Walker-Bone is the Director of the Monash Centre for Occupational and Environmental Health (MONCOEH) and is also an investigator for *Health Watch*.

Professor Deborah Glass is a researcher with MONCOEH and has been involved with *Health Watch* since 1995. She was the Principal Investigator for the *Health Watch* Case Control study.

Ms Elisa Wood is a Senior Research Officer with MONCOEH currently involved with the *Health Watch* study and Anthony Del Monaco was the Data Manager.

COMPANY PARTICIPATION IN *HEALTH WATCH*

Which petroleum companies participated in *Health Watch*?

Health Watch was sponsored by the Australian Institute of Petroleum (AIP), so AIP member companies involved with petroleum products participated in the Study (called 'Participating Companies'). These companies include Ampol Australia, BP Australia, ExxonMobil Australia, Viva Energy Australia, Shell Australia, Woodside Energy, Santos Ltd, Chevron Australia and Airport Fuel Services.

What is the Australian Institute of Petroleum (AIP)?

AIP was established in 1976 as the key representative body of Australia's petroleum industry. The AIP's mission is to promote and assist in the development of a strong internationally competitive Australian petroleum products industry, operating efficiently, economically, and safely, and in harmony with the environment and community standards. Through the active involvement of its member companies, AIP provides responsible, professional, and principled representation of the industry along with factual and informed discussion of petroleum issues – including those related to the health of industry employees.

What were the governance arrangements for *Health Watch*?

Health Watch was an independent university-based research study, conducted by Monash University most recently. The study has been approved by the Monash University Ethics Committee and is conducted according to The School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine's Guidelines for Good Epidemiological Research.

All information volunteered by employees or collected through the cancer and death registries remain confidential to *Health Watch* and will not be shared with employers or third parties.

Health Watch is sponsored by AIP and overseen by a joint technical/advisory committee with participation from the AIP, medical, health and hygiene practitioners and experts from participating companies and also from union representatives over time on the advisory committee.

EMPLOYEE PARTICIPATION IN HEALTH WATCH

How many employees participated in *Health Watch*?

Since 1980, *Health Watch* has examined the mortality and cancer incidence of about 20,000 past and present employees from participating major oil and gas companies, who joined the Study from worksites across Australia.

Given the significant benefits of the Study, AIP and participating companies funded Monash University to conduct a major survey of petroleum industry employees across Australia in 2010-12, covering new employees that joined the industry since the last major survey, as well as existing *Health Watch* members.

Employees who joined the *Health Watch* remain part of the Study - including if they left the company or industry or changed jobs within a petroleum company. If they joined *Health Watch* previously (that is, they have completed a questionnaire before as part of a survey), they were still included in *Health Watch* - even if they have changed jobs.

I joined *Health Watch*, is my privacy and information protected?

YES, at all times. Your employer did NOT have access to personal information about you and your data was not reported individually in any *Health Watch* documents (so that you cannot be identified). Participating companies will only have the benefit of the Study's overall research findings to assist it to meet its employee and community obligations.

In addition, storage of the data collected will adhere to Monash University regulations. All data will be stored in a secure, staff access only area and the study's administrative are only accessible by *Health Watch* research staff.

Were contractors included in the Study?

NO. *Health Watch* only included people who worked in the petroleum industry as an employee of the AIP member companies participating in the Study.

Why weren't retail operators and attendants in the Study?

The *Health Watch* study only investigated employees who worked in the production and distribution sectors of the petroleum industry and had regular exposure to petroleum products.

The exposure at retail worksites is generally similar to that of the general community. That is, the occupational exposure is very low. This is because petroleum companies have, over many years, introduced a range of measures (e.g. vapour recovery) to reduce exposure.

CONTACT THE HEALTH WATCH RESEARCH TEAM

Participants in the Study and other interested stakeholders can contact the Monash Research team on - healthwatch@monash.edu

PUBLISHED HEALTH WATCH REPORTS

The detailed findings of the Study are independently published in *Health Watch* reports and these are available to employees and the general community.

The latest *Health Watch* reports (ie. The 16th, 15th, 14th, 13th, 12th, and 11th Reports) and the *Health Watch* Case Control Report (called the Lympho-haematopoietic Cancer and Exposure to Benzene in the Australian Petroleum Industry, Technical Report and Appendices) are available from:

- the AIP website at <https://aip.com.au/programs/health-watch>
- the Monash website at <https://www.monash.edu/medicine/sphpm/coeh/researchprogram/healthwatch>

WANT MORE INFORMATION

Background information on *Health Watch*, including the latest health results, is available from AIP at <https://aip.com.au/programs/health-watch>. You can also contact AIP at aip@aip.com.au.

For any questions in relation to *Health Watch*, the Monash University study team can be contacted via email at healthwatch@monash.edu.

You can also contact your company's Occupational Health Officer if you have any questions in relation to your company's participation in *Health Watch*.