New acreage for petroleum exploration off the Northern Territory, Western Australia, the Territory of Ashmore and Cartier Islands, Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia coastlines was released on 24 March 2003 by the Federal Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, Ian Macfarlane.

The announcement coincides with the Annual Conference of the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association being held in Melbourne.

The 35 areas being made available for open bidding by the petroleum exploration industry include:

- 15 areas off Western Australia
- 7 areas off Northern Territory
- 4 areas off Victoria
- 4 areas off Tasmania
- 2 areas off South Australia
- 3 areas off the Ashmore and Cartier Islands.

These areas will be the principal release of offshore acreage this year. They will be subject to the work program bidding system and any subsequent exploration permits will be awarded for an initial term of six years.

For the first time, any exploration permits arising from this release will be subject to a maximum of two 5 year renewals. This new initiative follows from the 2000 review of petroleum legislation against competition policy principles, and should expand the opportunities available for exploration in the future.

Bids for the areas will close either on 25 September 2003 or 25 March 2004, as described below.

Today’s announcement was made in conjunction with Minister Macfarlane’s ministerial counterparts in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania.
A new offshore exploration permit has been awarded from the closing round of 24 October 2002, details are set out below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permit No</th>
<th>Basin</th>
<th>Area No</th>
<th>Date Granted</th>
<th>Successful Applicant(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WA-340-P</td>
<td>Carnarvon</td>
<td>W02-12</td>
<td>6 Mar 03</td>
<td>Strike Oil NL, Pancontinental Oil &amp; Gas NL, Sun Resources NL, Victoria Petroleum (WA-209P) P/L</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Permit **WA-340-P** (originally released as area W02-12 in the Dampier Sub-Basin) has been awarded to Strike Oil NL (40% operator), Pancontinental Oil & Gas NL (20%), Sun Resources NL (20%) and Victoria Petroleum (WA0-209P) Pty Ltd (20%), which proposed a guaranteed program for the first three years of 100km 2D seismic survey, 200km 2D seismic reprocessing and geoscience studies at an estimated cost of $0.28m. The companies also propose a secondary program of 1 well and data review at an estimated cost of $4.1m. The permit was awarded on 6 March 2003. There were no other bids for the area.

The permit is awarded for a term of six years under the work program bidding system, and each component of the program must be completed in the designated year or earlier.

### Areas currently available for bidding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th>Bid Closing Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002 Release areas (2nd bidding round)</td>
<td>10 April 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT02-2 to 9, W02-1 to 11, S02-1 to 8, V02-1, V02-3 to 4, T02-1 to 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 Re-release area (1st bidding round)</td>
<td>10 April 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W02-14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003 Release areas (1st bidding round)</td>
<td>25 September 2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V03-1, T03-4, W03-7 to 15 and NT03-1 to 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[18 areas]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003 Release areas (2nd bidding round)</td>
<td>25 March 2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V03-2 to 4, T03-1 to 3, S03-1 to 2, W03-1 to 6 and AC03-1 to 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[17 areas]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further information on any of these areas can be obtained by requesting a free CD-ROM by e-mailing petroleum.exploration@industry.gov.au, or by visiting our website at www.industry.gov.au/petexp.

### Promotion of Australian offshore acreage
Departmental representatives will be available to discuss Australian offshore acreage matters at the following conferences:

**APPEA Melbourne, Australia 23-26 March 2003**
(Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association)

**SEAPEX Singapore 9-11 April 2003**
(South East Asia Petroleum Exploration Society)

**AAPG Salt Lake City, USA 11-14 May 2003**
(American Association of Petroleum Geologists)

**Seminars** will be held in early April in Beijing, Tokyo, Seoul and Taipei, as well as Houston and Calgary in mid-May.

We would be happy to try and organise private meetings with companies in conjunction with any of the above events. To take advantage of this offer, please e-mail your interest in meeting with our representatives to: petroleum.exploration@industry.gov.au.

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**Progress on new Regulations and Guidelines**

Work has been continuing on the replacement of the ‘Schedule of Directions’ under the *Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act 1967* with objective based regulations and guidelines. The latest development is the completion of the harmonisation of the current regulations (Safety, Environment, Pipelines and Diving) and the draft regulations (Resource Management, Drilling and Data Management) to ensure that there is consistency in approach and definitions where possible across the suite of regulations. On 14 March 2003, the recommendations arising from the harmonisation process were approved by the Upstream Petroleum Sub-Committee, a working group under the Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources.

The next step is to finalise the text of the draft regulations through the Resource Management, Drilling and Data Management Regulations Working Groups, in consultation with the Office of Legislative Drafting. These Groups include representatives from the Commonwealth, States/ Northern Territory and industry. If you would like to be involved in the Working Groups, or would like further information please contact Carolyn Barton, phone 02 6213 7203, or email carolyn.barton@industry.gov.au.

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**Geoscience Australia Petroleum Exploration Databases**

Geoscience Australia’s nationwide Oracle databases will again play an integral part at APPEA, to be held late in March, when the new acreage release blocks are promoted to industry. The petroleum exploration databases can be accessed via the Internet and include comprehensive data for over 200 key wells in and nearby new acreage. The data can be downloaded free of charge.

The databases include PEDIN (well & seismic header data), STRATDAT (biostratigraphy, well picks, events), RESFACS (REServoir, FACies and hydrocarbon Shows), ORGCHEM (organic geochemistry) and DEVIANT (down hole survey data). They represent more than 50 person years of effort, and have already proven powerful tools for petroleum exploration companies and researchers.
The related nature of the databases facilitates rapid generation of information on a time-series basis (timeslices, palynological zones, sequences, millions of years, etc) so that variables in wells from either a permit or entire petroleum system can be compared for specific time intervals.

In addition to providing raw data, Geoscience Australia has incorporated special web applications for the databases, allowing users to produce plots of hydrocarbon indices and age-depth curves for wells on-line. Time-series movies of organic geochemistry and reservoir parameters will also be downloadable after APPEA.

As well as supporting Geoscience Australia’s acreage release promotion program, the databases provide essential support to Geoscience Australia’s regional projects and have proven effective in refining a global geological timescale (AGSO 95 Phanerozoic Timescale).

The following web addresses have links to the online databases:


For further information please phone David Rowland on +61 2 6249 9253 or e-mail David at david.rowland@ga.gov.au
Map of Kimmeridgian (146-151 MA) thickness and hydrocarbon shows for the North West Shelf

Results box generated from web query.
Depth vs various geochemical parameters for Bedout 1.

**Australian Petroleum Statistics**

The Australian Petroleum Statistics monthly publication is now available via e-mail in Microsoft Excel format, with the January 2003 edition out now. The publication contains statistics on petroleum production, refining, consumption, and stocks. Also available in the January issue are petrol prices and taxes in OECD Countries for the September quarter. Annual subscriptions cost $270 or $27 per issue. Copies can be obtained by contacting Ms Rae Fisher on +61 2 6213 7967, or alternatively by e-mail at rae.fisher@industry.gov.au. Archived issues are now also available electronically.

**Staff Changes**

Farewell to Debbie Elmslie who is leaving the Exploration Section after 5 years of, among other things, editing this Newsletter. Best wishes in your new role in the Minerals Development Section.

**Are you on our distribution list?**

If you or your colleagues would like to receive future annual Offshore Petroleum Exploration Acreage Releases on CD-ROM and/or be notified when new editions of this Newsletter are issued, simply forward your address, phone/fax and e-mail details to the e-mail address below.
There is no charge for this service or the CD-ROM. This distribution list is not used for purposes other than notifying registered parties of relevant petroleum issues, as indicated above.

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