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## Australian Regolith Conference '94

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The *Australian Regolith Conference '94* was jointly organised by the Australian Geological Survey Organisation (AGSO) and the Centre for Australian Regolith Studies (CARS), and was held at Broken Hill during 14–17 November 1994. The conference attracted over 120 registrants and more than 50 papers were given, either as oral presentations or posters (Pain et al. 1994). Thirteen of those papers are presented in this theme issue of the *AGSO Journal of Australian Geology & Geophysics*.

Twenty years ago, regolith (Merrill 1897) was an almost unknown word in Australia. When CARS was formed as a collaboration between the Australian National University and the University of Canberra in the late 1980s, colleagues, one assumes meaning well, advised “I wouldn’t use that word if I were you, no one knows what it means”. Well, things have changed since then! Perhaps the most important recent change has been the formation in 1995 of the Cooperative Research Centre for Landscape Evolution and Mineral Exploration, funded for 7 years by the Federal Government’s Cooperative Research Centre program.

To date most regolith research has been done by earth scientists, including geologists, geomorphologists and soil scientists, but rarely do they communicate or read the literature from each other’s disciplines. Moreover, the concept of regolith studies being important to land management and mineral exploration has been known to those of us in the game for 20 years or so, but it is fair to say that only over the last

few years has it become clear to almost everyone that regolith knowledge is one of the critical factors for ecologically sustainable development. The water industry is beginning to see relationships between the nature of the regolith and catchment water management and quality. Agricultural scientists have for a long time seen the value of understanding certain aspects of the regolith (the part they call soil) and have over the last 100 years or so collected vast masses of knowledge and data about the regolith. This attention from so many different directions makes the study of regolith truly multidisciplinary.

The papers in this volume cover a wide range of regolith studies. We refrain from commenting on them individually. We think they are representative of the conference, and we look forward to any comments they may generate.

We thank Iain Campbell, Ken McQueen, Tony Eggleton and Steve Hill, who, as members of the organising committee, made the *Australian Regolith Conference '94* a great success.

## References

- Merrill, G.P. 1897. A treatise on rocks, rock-weathering and soils. Macmillan, London.
- Pain, C.F., Craig, M.A. & Campbell, I.D. (editors), 1994. Australian Regolith Conference '94, Broken Hill, 14–17 November 1994, Abstracts. Australian Geological Survey Organisation Record 1994/56, 59pp.

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