



MEDIA RELEASE

Largest earthquake near Melbourne in 36 years

For immediate release: 6 March 2009

A magnitude 4.6 earthquake occurred near the town of Korumburra, 96 kms south-east of Melbourne, at 8:55pm on Friday 6 March.

"While people have felt this earthquake up to 110km away from the epicentre, it was not a structurally damaging earthquake," said Duty Seismologist Dr Phil Cummins. "While it's possible there may be some aftershocks, it's unlikely that people will feel them."

"This is the third largest earthquake in the Melbourne-Gippsland region for over twenty years, but an earthquake this large has not occurred this close to Melbourne since 1973. Larger earthquakes occurred at Thomson Reservoir in September 1996 and at Boolarra in August 2000.

On average, Australia has an earthquake of this size or larger every two years and they can occur anywhere in Australia. The largest earthquake in Australia was estimated to be a magnitude of 7.2 in 1941 in Meeberrie, WA," he said.

"This type of event, called an intraplate earthquake, occurs due to the build up of stress in the Earth's crust, caused by the movement of the tectonic plates. This is part of the Earth's natural dynamic processes. The Australian continent is part of the Indian-Australian plate which is being pushed slowly north-east at approximately 7cm per year, resulting in collisions with the Eurasian, Philippine and Pacific plates. The stress from these collisions is released during an earthquake," said Dr Cummins.

For more information or to arrange interviews, please contact:
Geoscience Australia 24 hour Media Hotline 1800 882 035



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Information from the public provides valuable information about the impact of any earthquake. To fill out an earthquake report, and see a map showing the location of this earthquake, please visit www.ga.gov.au/earthquakes.

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