

## UN duties continue for geoscientist

The senior advisor on Science and Law of the Sea with Geoscience Australia, Phil Symonds, has been elected to serve another five years as a member of the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf. He has been a member of the Commission since April 2002 and his re-election came during voting in New York by the 153 countries which are party to the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The 21-member Commission is a scientific and technical organisation which facilitates the establishment of the outer limit of a country's extended continental shelf by considering data and other materials submitted by countries.

The extended continental shelf is determined by UNCLOS formulae requiring information on water depth, the shape of the sea-floor and the thickness of sediment which is obtained from geological and geophysical surveys over the continental margin.

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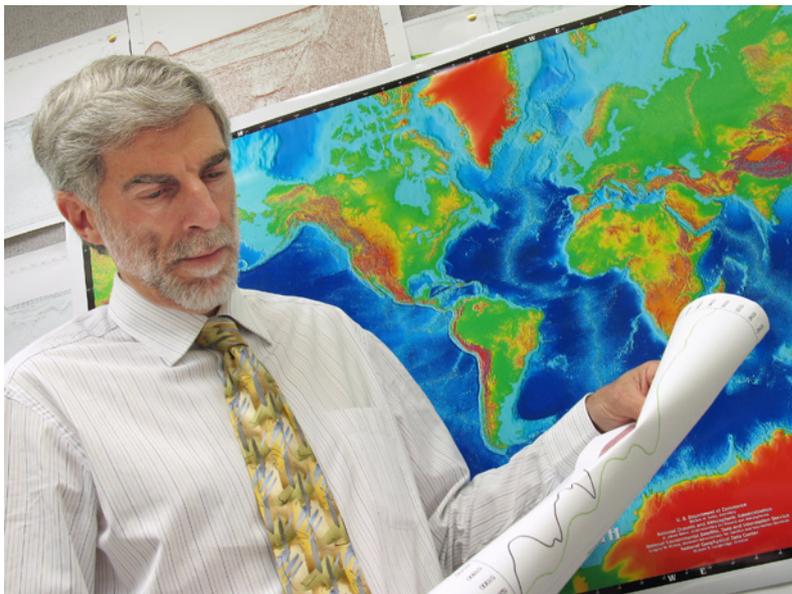


Figure 1. Phil Symonds.

Mr Symonds, who has extensive experience in the collection and analysis of continental margin data, has been closely involved in technical aspects of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea since the late 1970s, and has worked in Geoscience Australia's Law of the Sea project since its inception in 1994. He is also involved in providing ongoing assistance to small-island and developing countries to help them meet the May 2009 deadline for lodging their submissions with the Commission.

Mr Symonds led the scientific team which prepared Australia's November 2004 submission to the Commission seeking extension of the country's jurisdiction beyond the 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone to the outer limit of the extended continental shelf. The Commission's recommendations on the submission, which are expected later this year, could result in Australia gaining almost three million square kilometres of seabed and subsoil over which it will have environmental and resource management responsibilities.

### Related websites

United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)

[www.un.org/Depts/los/convention\\_agreements/convention\\_overview\\_convention.htm](http://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/convention_overview_convention.htm)