



CEO comment



Neil Williams – CEO Geoscience Australia



In the September issue of *AusGeo News* I reported on the Prime Minister's Energy Security Initiative which included the injection of \$134 million in new program funding into Geoscience Australia over the next five years. This includes \$75 million to continue offshore frontier basin research to identify a new oil province as well as \$59 million for the application of the latest geophysical imaging and mapping technologies to attract investment in exploration for onshore petroleum, geothermal and energy mineral sources.

This issue contains reports on progress to date in the implementation of the program. Meetings with national and international petroleum exploration companies to discuss potential frontier areas for inclusion in the new offshore program are currently being held. Consultations have been held with the state and Northern Territory geological surveys to develop a 'first pass' program for the onshore initiative detailing the national data acquisition work to be done, including where and in what order. Consultations with industry will follow.

New geoscience datasets developed during the Tanami-North Australia Project will provide a better understanding of the evolution and metallogensis of this area and will greatly assist the exploration industry's search for gold and base metals. A major focus of the project was the refinement of geology, geochronology, geochemistry and controls on lode-gold mineralisation in the Tanami region. The six-year project was carried out in collaboration with the Northern Territory Geological Survey and the Geological Survey of Western Australia.

Geoscience Australia is making a major contribution to marine research which is helping to characterise and protect the valuable marine environment within Australia's marine jurisdiction. A major article outlines research to develop methodologies to predict marine biodiversity using geoscience information on the nature of the seabed. This article also places the research in an international context. Another article examines the use of physical parameters such as the morphology of the seabed, the water depth and the sediment properties to define and map distinct marine habitats.

There is also a report on the recently completed detailed spatial analysis of seabed environments in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park which will provide baseline information that can be used to monitor potential changes to seabed habitats and biological communities.

Another article outlines how turbidity modelling in Torres Strait to explain seagrass dieback is contributing to a better understanding of biophysical processes in the strait. In related news Geoscience Australia is also contributing to a major international effort to define the biodiversity of Antarctic waters.

This issue includes a report on the preliminary investigations of Amplitude Versus Offset (AVO) anomalies in two proven gas areas which suggest the technique may have value in evaluating the exploration potential of the North West Shelf. Nickel explorers will be greatly assisted by a new map which summarises the major known Proterozoic mafic and ultramafic events and associated mineral deposits in Western Australia.

Finally, I wish to thank all our readers for your continuing support and extend to you best wishes for the festive season and the new year.