

CEO comment



Neil Williams – CEO Geoscience Australia



The United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf confirmed the location of the outer limit of Australia's continental shelf last year (see *AusGeo News* 90). This decision means Australia is the first country to be in a position to proclaim the outer limits of its continental shelf. However the continental shelf is only one of a number of maritime zones that make up Australia's marine jurisdiction and the article in this issue explains the characteristics and rights associated with these zones as well as the impact of national legislation and treaties with neighbouring countries.

There is also an article on the compilation of the recently-released new digital seamless surface geology map of Australia. This baseline dataset will be invaluable for national and regional evaluation of resources, as well as environmental management and land-use decision making. Another major new continental-scale product, the Radiometric Map of Australia dataset (see *AusGeo News* 92), was released by the Minister for Resources and Energy, The Hon. Martin Ferguson AM MP, on 22 February.

I am pleased to report that the seismic survey covering several frontier areas off the coast of southwest Western Australia (outlined in *AusGeo News* 92) has recently concluded after acquiring over 7000 line kilometres of seismic data as well as geological samples. During the marine reconnaissance survey in the same area, the research team collected more than 200 000 square kilometres of multibeam bathymetry – this covers an area almost the size of the state of Victoria. The data collected will make a major contribution to our assessments of the petroleum prospectivity, geological setting and environmental significance of these areas.

Geoscience Australia has successfully collaborated with state and Australian Government emergency management agencies to manage tsunami risk in Australia. There is an article outlining a major partnership with Fire and Emergency Services Western Australia to raise community awareness and provide the scientific knowledge on which emergency managers can base their planning and preparation for tsunamis.

There is also an update on mineral exploration in Australia. Although Australian and global mineral exploration reached record highs during 2008, the end of the commodity boom (a consequence of the global economic downturn) is likely to see a sharp drop in exploration expenditure in the immediate future.

Over the last five years Geoscience Australia has been providing advice to government about the physical properties of the seabed and water column in Australia's Exclusive Economic Zone. This issue also includes a report on the preparation of the draft assessments of both Key Ecological Features and adjacent environments in the North-west Marine Region off Western Australia.

As usual we always appreciate your feedback and I encourage you to use the online rating mechanism with each article.

