

Joint Media Release

The Hon Julie Bishop
Minister for Education, Science
and Training
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for
Women's Issues

The Hon Ian Macfarlane
Minister for Industry, Tourism and
Resources

1 MAPPING WORLD FIRST FOR AUSTRALIA

10 August 2006

A world-first map launched today aims to uncover Australia's untapped, underwater mineral resources.

Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP and Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, the Hon Ian Macfarlane MP today revealed the unique map, highlighting areas of mineralisation off Australia's coastline.

The *Australian Offshore Mineral Locations* map is the first of its type in the world and has been developed in collaboration with CSIRO's Wealth from Oceans Flagship, Geoscience Australia, and the State and Northern Territory Geological Surveys.

Minister Bishop said data collected in the compilation of the map would also help researchers better understand the seafloor environment in Australian waters.

"Our oceans, the 'last frontier', present substantial challenges and opportunities for the coming decades," she said.

"This information provides new knowledge about the seafloor and in the seas surrounding Australia. We can expect the map to act as a catalyst for future surveys and exploration of Australia's offshore region which will help in the longer term development of strategic resource planning."

Minister Macfarlane said the map's documentation of known mineralisation in the huge expanse of Australia's seabed was an important instrument for encouraging future exploration and scientific study of the water column.

"Australia has one of the largest marine jurisdictions in the world, but very little is known about its make-up or resource potential," Mr Macfarlane said.

"There is an enormous gap in Australia between exploration and mineral production on land and on the seafloor, with one commercial marine mining operation, two active exploration licences and one pending in Commonwealth waters.

"Past exploration expenditure in Commonwealth waters totals only \$17 million, compared with Australia's annual mineral exploration expenditure of more than \$800 million.

"There is a growing interest in marine minerals being found, particularly minerals located in readily accessible shallow waters such as those illustrated by the commercial drilling of seafloor sulphides in New Zealand and Papua New Guinea Territorial waters."

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