**Western Australia**

Perceptions of prospectivity of the onshore Perth Basin have been enhanced in recent years by the new play gas discovery Waitsia. Interest in the Canning Basin has also revived significantly in recent years, with new play oil discoveries at Ungani 1 and Ungani Far West 1, and large estimates for shale gas.

Partnering with industry has proved highly successful, with Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) geologists collaborating with a WA-based petroleum exploration company The drilling of the Theia 1 exploration well targeting the Middle Ordovician Goldwyer III shale in Western Australia’s Canning Basin is being viewed as a model for future partnering between DMP and industry.

Early in 2015 nearly all of Western Australia’s petroleum prospective acreage was covered by petroleum Exploration Permits and petroleum Exploration Permit applications. However, even when the oil price was high onshore explorers found it hard to raise capital for their work programs and had to rationalise their acreage footprint due to this and other factors. The ensuing low world oil price regime did not help and numerous titles and applications have now been surrendered. The Canning Basin in particular has opened up (refer figure). It is hoped that acreage opportunities will be taken by new players that are willing to engage in a counter-cyclical approach. It is hoped that by the time native title negotiations are concluded prior to award of onshore permits, the oil price may will have improved.

Western Australia’s Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) continues to promote the petroleum potential of Western Australia’s vast sedimentary basins using a specific area release system in onshore and State Waters areas. Release information is available on the Department’s website from gazettal dates:

[www.dmp.wa.gov.au/acreage\_release](http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/acreage_release)

Release information includes prospectivity of release areas and of relevant basins, available data listings, new bid assessment guidelines, land access and environment considerations, schedule of fees, and how to make a valid application for an Exploration Permit. This information will also be available on USBs for distribution at events and meetings. Updated work program bid assessment criteria include applicant profile, geological evaluation and exploration rationale, environmental management, native title and heritage management and land access management.

<http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/Documents/Petroleum/PD-PTLA-AR-106D.pdf>

Acreage release Round 1 of 2015, comprised one block in the onshore Canning Basin and three blocks in the State Waters Northern Carnarvon Basin, and closed on 28 Apil 2016. A petroleum acreage release is proposed for September 2016 timed to coincide with the DMP Petroleum Open Day as well as the Good Oil Conference, both at the Hyatt Hotel in Perth. This release may include blocks in the onshore Canning Basin and the Officer Basin.

Western Australia’s whole-of-government regulatory framework for shale and tight gas has been outlined in a document prepared in collaboration with, and endorsed by, those government agencies charged with assessing and regulating petroleum resources - the ‘Guide to the Regulatory Framework for Shale and Tight Gas in Western Australia’. The document was coordinated by DMP, the lead agency for regulating the resources sector in Western Australia. The guide has been endorsed by the Environmental Protection Authority, Office of the Environmental Protection Authority, and the Departments of Water, Health, Environment Regulation, Aboriginal Affairs, Parks and Wildlife, Planning and State Development.

The WA Government aims to add value for explorers through making data available and by conducting basin studies. Core Library holdings are now included in the new online version of the Western Australian Petroleum Information Management System (WAPIMS) database which was launched at the department’s Petroleum Open Day on 4 September 2015 in Fremantle.

The Exploration Incentive Scheme is a state government initiative that aims to encourage exploration in underexplored areas of Western Australia for the long-term sustainability of the State’s resources sector. A total of $130 million has been allocated for eight years to June 2017 for petroleum and mineral studies.  This includes airborne geophysical surveys, deep crustal seismic traverses, and joint government and industry funded exploration drilling.

A number of mining companies operating remote mine sites are considering converting their primary fuel for on-site power generation from diesel to gas.  Two such mining companies, the Fortescue Mining Group (FMG) and the Anglo Ashanti Australia Ltd (AAA) have made the change from using diesel to gas as the primary fuel source for on site power generation.  The 270 km long Fortescue River Gas Pipline conveys gas from the Dampier to Bunbury Natural Gas Pipeline (DBNGP) to FMG’s Solomon iron ore minesite power station. The 293 km long Eastern Goldfields Gas Pipeline conveys gas from the Goldfields Gas Transmission Pipeline (GGT) via a connection to the Murrin Murrin gas lateral pipeline to AAA’s Tropicana gold minesite power station. Both pipelines were constructed and put into operation in 2015. The opportunity to use gas as the main fuel for onsite power generation is now available to other minesites in the vicinity of these pipelines.

Further Information may be obtained from WA’s APPEA exhibit booth (number 340). Information is also available on DMP’s website:

* Acreage releases [www.dmp.wa.gov.au/acreage\_release](http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/acreage_release)
* Operators and applicants maps [www.dmp.wa.gov.au/petop](http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/petop)
* WAPIMS database <http://www.dmp.wa.gov.au/Petroleum-and-Geothermal-1497.aspx>

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