

Offshore petroleum exploration set to increase

Recent successes have significantly increased known oil and gas reserves

Jenny Maher

Each year the Australian Government releases new opportunities for offshore petroleum exploration through the annual release of offshore acreage. Interest in offshore exploration for oil and gas is increasing rapidly with the take-up rate of acreage released rising from just short of 50 per cent in 2002–03 to 90 per cent for the 2005 acreage release. Borrowings of pre-competitive data from Geoscience Australia, used by explorers to define the best drill locations, have trebled between 2004 and 2006.

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The 2007 Release of Offshore Petroleum Exploration Areas was announced on 16 April by the Hon. Ian Macfarlane MP, Minister for Industry, Tourism and Resources, at the annual Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association (APPEA) conference in Adelaide.

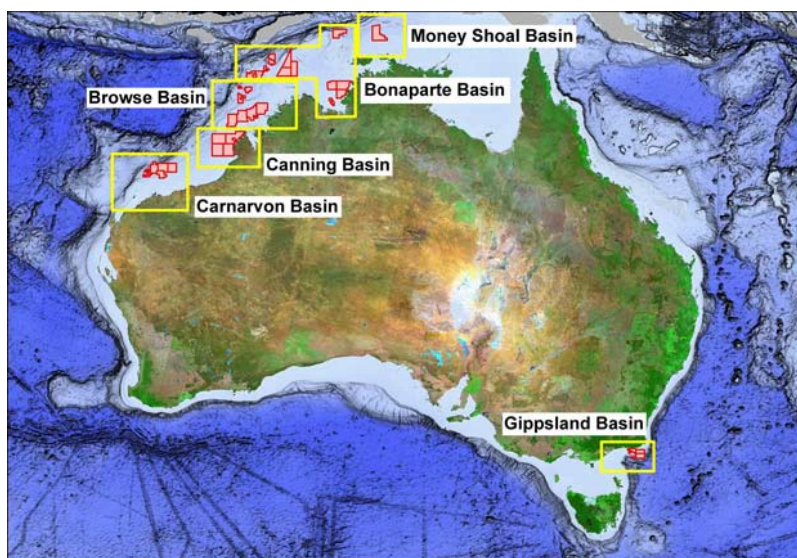


Figure 1. Location of Australia's 2007 Offshore Petroleum Exploration Areas.

Thirty four new exploration areas, located in six of Australia's offshore sedimentary basins, were released (figure 1).

The new areas on offer include:

- Money Shoal Basin—one area adjacent to the 2006 acreage release areas, a region where Geoscience Australia has recently completed a major study (figure 2).
- Bonaparte Basin—thirteen areas of various levels of exploration maturity and in a range of water depths (figure 2).
- Browse Basin—three areas in the Caswell Sub-basin near giant gas fields and four areas on the Yampi-Leveque Shelf (figure 3).
- Offshore Canning Basin—four large shallow water blocks in the offshore extension of the Fitzroy Trough and all are Designated Frontier areas and attract the 150 per cent tax uplift (figure 3).
- Carnarvon Basin—two areas on the northern Exmouth Plateau near one of Australia's major developed resource projects, the North Rankin/Goodwyn gas field, plus four areas in the Beagle Sub-basin (figure 4).

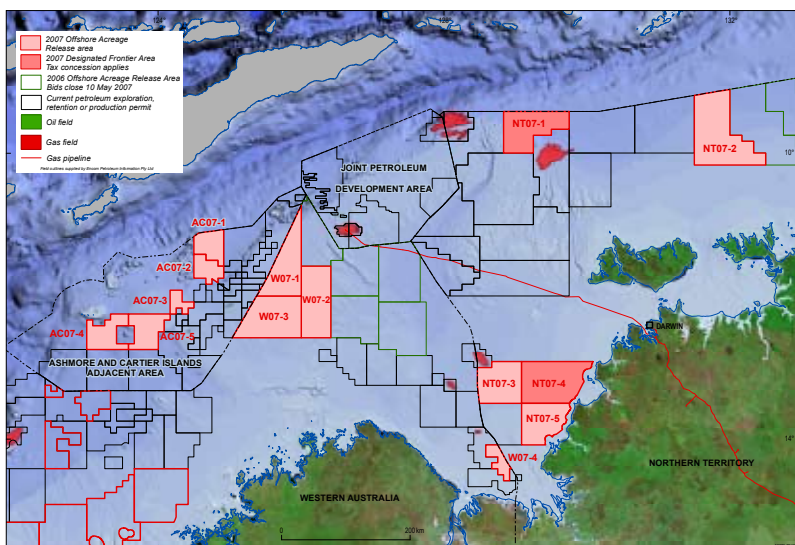


Figure 2. 2007 Offshore Release Areas in Money Shoal and Bonaparte Basins.

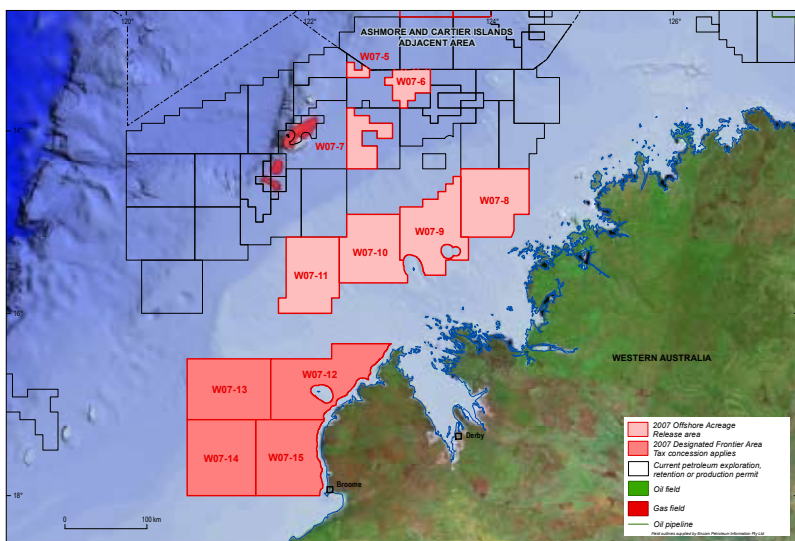


Figure 3. 2007 Offshore Release Areas in Browse and Canning Basins.

- Gippsland basin—three areas in the eastern extension of this major hydrocarbon province (figure 5).

All areas are available for uptake through a work program bidding system. The closing date for those release areas in the first closing round is 18 October 2007 whilst bids for the areas in the second round close 17 April 2008.

Geoscience Australia has a number of products that could assist explorers in reviewing potential acreage. In particular an Acreage Release Data Room has been established at Geoscience Australia's Symonston ACT headquarters and the Data Room is available for visitors interested in the 2007 release areas from mid-June 2007 until

bids for the 2007 release areas have closed.

Alternatively, packages of specific seismic surveys are now available in either Geoframe, Kingdom or Landmark format. These data packages also include digital Well Completion Reports and the 2007 release area shapefiles and can be ordered through the Geophysical Repository at the cost of transfer.

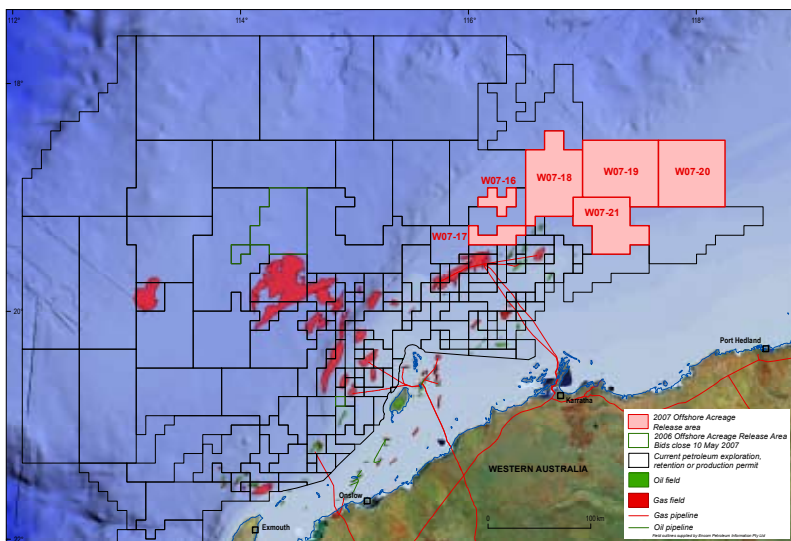


Figure 4. 2007 Offshore Release Areas in the Carnarvon Basin.

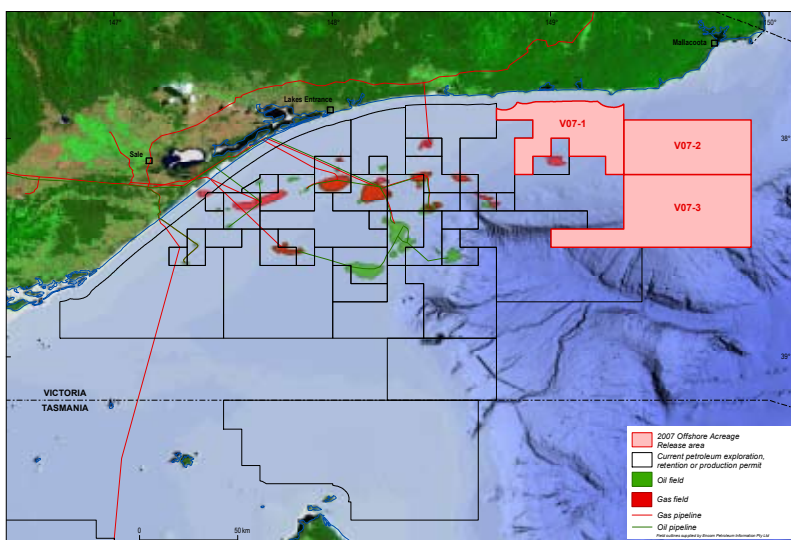


Figure 5. 2007 Offshore Release Areas in the Gippsland Basin.

For more information

For more information on the 2007 Offshore Acreage Release or to book into the 2007 Acreage Release Data Room

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Information on the 2007 Release of Offshore Petroleum Exploration Areas can also be obtained from the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources website.

Related websites

2007 Offshore Acreage Release
(Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources)

www.industry.gov.au/petexp

Data supporting the 2007 release areas (Geoscience Australia)

www.ga.gov.au/oceans/ss_Acreage.jsp

Geophysical Repository

ausgeodata@ga.gov.au