



ACTUAL AND EXPECTED  
**PRIVATE MINERAL  
EXPLORATION**

AUSTRALIA

EMBARGO: 11:30AM (CANBERRA TIME) FRI 20 MAR 1998

**C O N T E N T S**

	<i>page</i>
Notes .....	2
Summary of findings .....	3

TABLE

<b>1</b> Private Exploration, Actual and Expected Expenditure .....	7
<b>2</b> Mineral Exploration,(other than for Petroleum), Expenditure and Metres Drilled .....	8
<b>3</b> Mineral Exploration,(other than for Petroleum), Expenditure by State and Territory .....	9
<b>4</b> Mineral Exploration,(other than for Petroleum), Expenditure by Mineral Sought .....	10
<b>5</b> Petroleum Exploration Expenditure .....	11
<b>6</b> Petroleum Exploration by Region .....	12

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Explanatory notes .....	13
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**I N Q U I R I E S**

- For more information about these and related statistics, contact Maureen Geer on Darwin (08) 8943 2171 or refer to the back cover of this publication.

# NOTES

## FORTHCOMING ISSUES

<i>ISSUE</i>	<i>RELEASE DATE</i>
March quarter 1998	23 June 1998
June quarter 1998	22 Sept 1998

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## CHANGES IN THIS PUBLICATION

There are no changes in this publication.

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## SYMBOLS AND OTHER USAGES

n.a.	not available
n.p.	not available for publication but included in totals where applicable
n.y.a.	not yet available
r	figure or series revised since previous issue
..	not applicable
—	nil or rounded to zero

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## INQUIRIES

For information about other ABS statistics and services, please refer to the back of this publication.

For further information about these statistics, contact Maureen Geer on Darwin (08) 8943 2171.

W. McLennan  
Australian Statistician

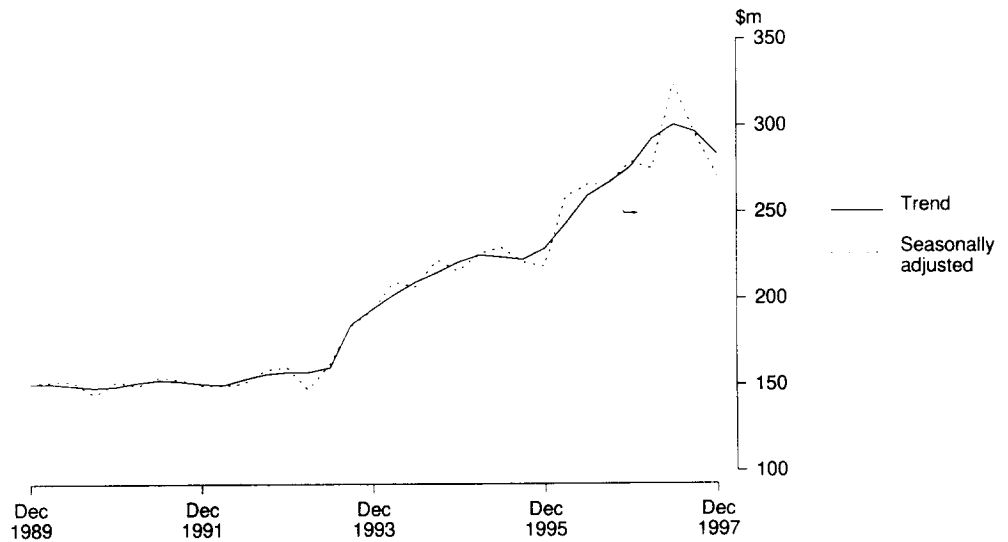
# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

## MINERAL EXPLORATION EXPENDITURE (other than for petroleum)

### TREND ESTIMATES

Following four years of strong upward movement, the trend estimate for mineral exploration expenditure for Australia fell in the December quarter, the second consecutive quarterly decline.

Between the September and December quarters of 1997, the trend estimate fell by 4.2% (\$12.4m) to \$283.9m. Although falling from the previous period, the estimate is still 2.7% (\$7.5m) higher than the estimate for the December quarter 1996.



### States and Territories

The most significant fall occurred in Western Australia where the estimate decreased by \$10.7m (down 6.0%), with smaller falls for Queensland (down \$1.9m), Tasmania (down \$1.3m) and South Australia (down \$0.3m). There were small increases in the other States and the Northern Territory.

### Metres drilled

The trend estimate for total metres drilled fell in the December quarter, down 10.0% from the September quarter to 2.9 million metres. This was 4.5% less than the December quarter 1996.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS *continued*

### DECEMBER QUARTER

In seasonally adjusted terms, there was a fall of 8.3% to \$270.9m in the December quarter 1997. Western Australia was the most significant contributor to the decrease with a fall of 11.5% (\$20.3m) on the previous quarter.

In original terms, mineral exploration expenditure reported for the December quarter was \$282.0m. This was \$19.8m (6.6%) less than for the September quarter, and \$9.6m (3.3%) lower than the \$291.6m reported for the December quarter 1996.

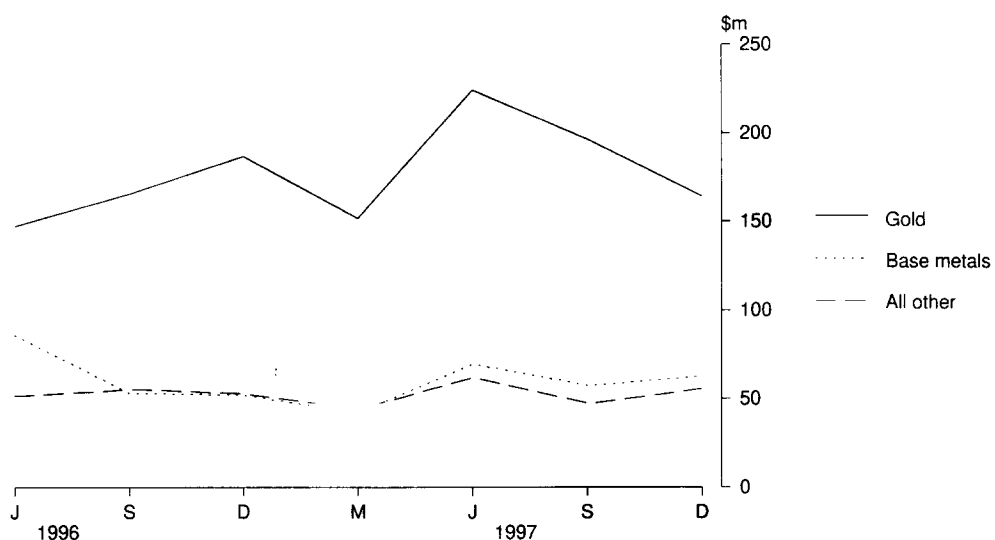
Exploration expenditure on both production leases and on all other areas decreased in the December quarter.

Expenditure on production leases fell by \$18.7m (22.4%) to \$64.6m, while expenditure on other areas fell slightly by \$1.1m (0.5%) to \$217.4m. Exploration expenditure on other areas represented 77.1% of total expenditure in the December quarter 1997.

Between the December quarter 1996 and the December quarter 1997, expenditure on production leases fell by \$3.5m (down 5.1%) and expenditure on all other areas fell by \$6.1m (down 2.7%).

Although gold remained the predominant mineral sought, lower gold prices accounted for most of the decline in both the level of expenditure and proportion of total during the September and December quarters 1997. Increases in exploration expenditure occurred for most of the other minerals.

Exploration expenditure for gold in the December quarter 1997 (\$163.9m) was 16.7% lower than the September quarter and 12.3% lower than the December quarter 1996. The proportion of total mineral exploration expenditure was 58.1%, down from 65.2% in the September quarter and 64.1% in the December quarter 1996.



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS *continued*

### METRES DRILLED

The trend estimate of the number of metres drilled for exploration fell during the last two quarters following a long period of steady growth, with the December quarter 10.0% lower than the September quarter.

The number of metres drilled also fell from the September quarter in both seasonally adjusted and original terms. The seasonally adjusted estimate of 2.7 million metres for the December quarter was 19.3% lower than the estimate for the September quarter 1997. This was 6.7% less than the estimate for the December quarter 1996.

In original terms, a total of 2.9 million metres was drilled in the December quarter. This was 0.7 million metres (19.9%) less than for the September quarter, and 6.7% lower than the metres drilled in the December quarter 1996.

Drilling on production leases was down almost 30.0% from the September quarter, the lowest quarterly level since the March quarter 1995. Drilling on all other areas also fell by 15.7% to 2.1 million metres.

The number of metres drilled on areas other than production leases represented 73.9% of the total in the December quarter 1997. This proportion has risen from 65.6% in the December quarter 1996 and from 63.9% in the December quarter of 1995.



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS *continued*

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### PETROLEUM EXPLORATION EXPENDITURE

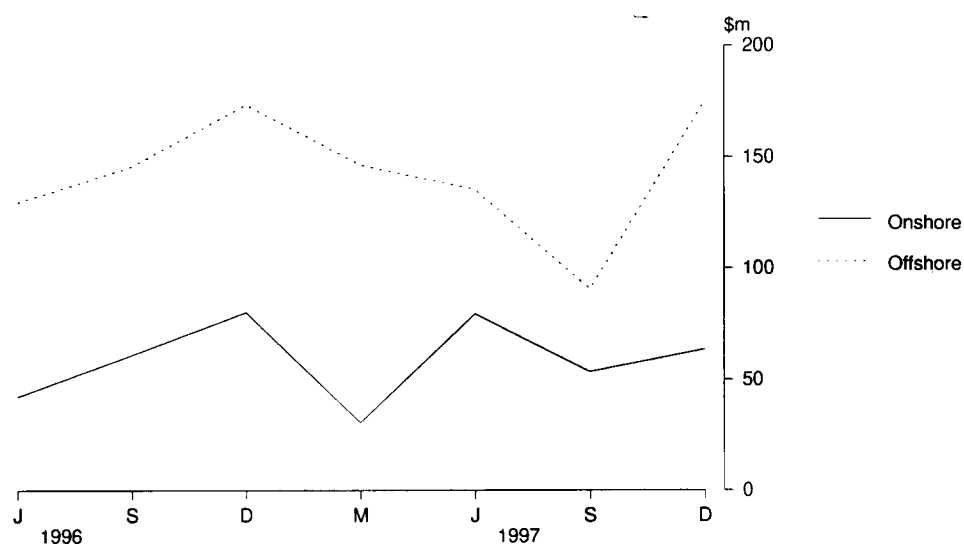
#### OVERVIEW

Total expenditure on petroleum exploration was \$238.5m in the December quarter 1997. This was an increase of 65.4% (\$94.3m) from the September quarter but down slightly by 6.0% (\$15.1m) from the December quarter 1996.

Expenditure on production leases has fallen significantly to \$8.2m (down 24.1%) from the September quarter, and now represents only 3.4% of total expenditure in the December quarter. The proportion of expenditure on production leases has fallen from 7.5% in the September quarter and from 21.5% in the December quarter 1996.

Expenditure on all other areas increased to \$230.3m during the December quarter, up 72.6% (\$96.9m) from the September quarter, and 15.7% (\$31.3m) higher than for the December quarter 1996.

Offshore exploration expenditure rose 93.0% (\$84.3m) from the September quarter to \$174.9m but was at a similar level to the December quarter 1996. Onshore expenditure increased by 18.7% to \$63.6m in the December quarter 1997 but fell by 20.8% (\$16.7m) when compared with the December quarter 1996.



#### REGIONAL DATA

For the December quarter 1997 regional data are available only for Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory (including the Territory of Ashmore and Cartier Islands) and Zone of Cooperation Area A (ZOCA).

Increases in the December quarter 1997 were reported in Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Expenditure in Queensland declined while data for the September quarter for ZOCA were not available.

The most significant increase was in Western Australia where the December quarter 1997 expenditure of \$106.9m was \$60.1m (128.4%) higher than the low expenditure reported in the September quarter. Compared with the December quarter 1996, expenditure in Western Australia was down \$25.7m or 19.4%.

# 1

## PRIVATE EXPLORATION, Actual and Expected Expenditure

Period	MINERAL EXPLORATION.....			PETROLEUM ONSHORE.....			PETROLEUM OFFSHORE.....		
	Actual	Expected(a)	Actual as a proportion of expected	Actual	Expected(a)	Actual as a proportion of expected	Actual	Expected(a)	Actual as a proportion of expected
	\$m	\$m	%	\$m	\$m	%	\$m	\$m	%
<b>1994-95</b>	893.3	768.8	116.2	170.8	120.3	142.0	511.7	592.1	86.4
<b>1995-96</b>	960.2	773.6	124.1	174.8	185.6	94.2	550.3	428.0	128.6
<b>1996-97</b>	1 148.5	808.9	142.0	251.9	206.2	122.2	601.1	446.6	134.6
<b>Six months ended</b>									
December 1996	565.8	361.8	156.4	141.5	91.2	155.2	319.1	207.9	153.5
June 1997	582.8	447.1	130.4	110.4	115.0	96.0	281.9	238.7	118.1
December 1997	583.8	513.7	113.6	117.3	83.3	140.8	265.4	345.8	76.7
June 1998	n.y.a.	388.5	n.y.a.	n.y.a.	61.7	n.y.a.	n.y.a.	427.9	n.y.a.

(a) As reported in previous collections. Refer to Explanatory Notes paragraph 13.

Period	EXPENDITURE.....					METRES DRILLED.....				
	On production leases	On all other areas	Seasonally Total	Seasonally adjusted	Trend estimate	On production leases	On all other areas	Seasonally Total	Seasonally adjusted	Trend estimate
	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	'000 m	'000 m	'000 m	'000 m	'000 m
<b>1994-95</b>	202.5	690.7	893.3	..	..	3 329	7 001	10 330	..	..
<b>1995-96</b>	208.8	751.5	960.2	..	..	3 520	6 995	10 514	..	..
<b>1996-97</b>	306.1	842.4	1 148.5	..	..	4 453	8 378	12 831		
<b>1996</b>										
March qtr	54.6	164.4	219.0	259.1	243.5	832	1 533	2 364	2 860	2 847
June qtr	60.9	224.0	284.9	266.1	259.5	998	2 071	3 069	3 030	2 946
September qtr	73.0	201.2	274.2	266.6	267.4	1 138	2 110	3 248	2 996	2 961
December qtr	68.1	223.5	291.6	279.2	276.4	1 062	2 025	3 086	2 868	3 078
<b>1997</b>										
March qtr	57.6	178.0	235.6	275.1	292.5	1 021	1 746	2 768	3 351	3 340
June qtr	107.4	239.7	347.2	324.0	300.5	1 232	2 497	3 729	3 677	3 440
September qtr	83.3	218.5	301.8	295.3	296.3	1 072	2 524	3 596	3 318	3 265
December qtr	64.6	217.4	282.0	270.9	283.9	751	2 128	2 879	2 676	2 939



## 3

## MINERAL EXPLORATION (other than for Petroleum), Expenditure by State and Territory

Period	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	Northern Territory	Australia
	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
ORIGINAL								
<b>1994-95</b>	79.2	31.2	176.0	20.9	495.5	14.9	75.8	893.3
<b>1995-96</b>	80.3	42.6	181.0	24.1	519.5	18.7	93.9	960.2
<b>1996-97</b>	94.1	51.9	160.8	35.1	691.7	26.1	88.9	1 148.5
<b>1996</b>								
March qtr	19.2	10.1	40.9	5.1	118.6	6.0	19.1	219.0
June qtr	23.0	12.8	56.9	6.8	147.0	4.7	33.7	284.9
September qtr	21.1	14.9	38.3	5.4	162.8	4.2	27.5	274.2
December qtr	20.6	14.1	45.1	8.0	173.1	5.7	25.0	291.6
<b>1997</b>								
March qtr	22.0	9.6	31.6	7.2	144.2	6.0	14.8	235.6
June qtr	30.4	13.2	45.7	14.5	211.6	10.1	21.6	347.2
September qtr	23.3	9.5	41.9	12.5	182.7	9.7	22.1	301.8
December qtr	26.1	13.4	41.7	11.4	162.3	3.8	23.4	282.0
SEASONALLY ADJUSTED								
<b>1996</b>								
March qtr	20.3	10.1	52.0	6.1	138.1	5.0	27.6	259.1
June qtr	20.9	12.8	54.7	6.1	137.1	4.5	29.9	266.1
September qtr	21.5	15.5	37.0	5.6	157.8	5.2	24.1	266.6
December qtr	21.3	13.7	39.7	7.4	167.0	6.0	24.1	279.2
<b>1997</b>								
March qtr	23.0	9.6	40.0	8.5	167.7	5.0	21.3	275.1
June qtr	27.5	13.2	43.9	13.0	197.4	9.8	19.2	324.0
September qtr	23.7	9.8	40.5	13.1	177.0	11.9	19.3	295.3
December qtr	27.3	13.0	36.8	10.5	156.7	4.0	22.6	270.9
TREND								
<b>1996</b>								
March qtr	19.8	11.3	47.5	6.0	132.9	5.0	21.0	243.5
June qtr	20.6	13.1	48.2	5.9	143.6	5.1	23.0	259.5
September qtr	21.2	13.9	43.8	6.0	153.5	4.9	24.1	267.4
December qtr	22.1	13.4	39.4	7.2	165.6	5.3	23.4	276.4
<b>1997</b>								
March qtr	23.7	11.8	40.2	9.6	178.6	7.2	21.4	292.5
June qtr	25.1	11.2	41.7	11.6	182.1	8.8	20.0	300.5
September qtr	25.9	11.5	40.5	12.3	177.1	8.9	20.1	296.3
December qtr	26.2	12.1	38.6	12.0	166.4	7.6	21.0	283.9

## 4

## MINERAL EXPLORATION (other than for Petroleum), Expenditure by Mineral Sought

State/Territory	Copper, silver-lead-zinc, nickel and cobalt		Gold	Iron ore	Mineral sands	Tin, tungsten, scheelite and wolfram	Uranium	Construction materials		Diamonds	Other	Total
	\$m	\$m						\$m	\$m			
DECEMBER QUARTER 1997												
New South Wales	6.0	9.2	—	n.p.	n.p.	—	9.5	n.p.	n.p.	0.7	26.1	
Victoria	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	—	n.p.	n.p.	—	n.p.	n.p.	13.4	
Queensland	13.4	15.1	—	n.p.	n.p.	1.3	9.9	n.p.	n.p.	1.5	41.7	
South Australia	n.p.	6.5	n.p.	—	—	n.p.	—	n.p.	0.5	0.5	11.4	
Western Australia	31.4	109.6	6.3	n.p.	n.p.	1.4	n.p.	n.p.	9.5	1.7	162.3	
Tasmania	2.9	n.p.	—	—	n.p.	—	—	—	—	—	3.8	
Northern Territory	4.6	13.7	—	—	—	2.3	—	—	n.p.	n.p.	23.4	
Australia	62.7	163.9	6.3	2.9	0.1	6.2	21.3	0.3	13.1	5.3	282.0	
AUSTRALIA												
<b>1994-95</b>	201.0	554.5	12.1	5.8	1.1	7.8	38.0	0.9	48.4	23.5	893.3	
<b>1995-96</b>	251.8	547.1	14.1	9.3	0.6	7.2	52.6	0.7	52.9	23.8	960.2	
<b>1996-97</b>	206.8	728.2	25.8	13.9	0.7	13.0	70.5	0.9	59.3	29.4	1 148.5	
<b>1996</b>												
March qtr	64.7	123.3	3.6	2.0	n.p.	n.p.	10.8	—	8.4	4.4	219.0	
June qtr	85.8	147.4	4.5	3.6	n.p.	n.p.	17.1	0.1	17.3	7.8	284.9	
September qtr	53.2	165.5	6.1	3.3	0.2	3.8	15.4	0.5	15.6	10.5	274.2	
December qtr	52.1	186.8	3.8	3.7	—	1.9	16.9	0.1	16.4	9.9	291.6	
<b>1997</b>												
March qtr	41.8	150.1	6.6	3.4	—	2.2	15.7	0.1	11.7	4.0	235.6	
June qtr	59.7	225.9	9.3	3.5	0.4	5.1	22.5	0.2	15.6	5.0	347.2	
September qtr	57.6	196.7	4.0	3.2	—	4.9	19.1	n.p.	12.4	n.p.	301.8	
December qtr	62.7	163.9	6.3	2.9	0.1	6.2	21.3	0.3	13.1	5.3	282.0	

## 5

## PETROLEUM EXPLORATION EXPENDITURE

Period	ONSHORE.....			OFFSHORE.....			TOTAL EXPENDITURE.....		
	<i>Drilling</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>Drilling</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>On production leases</i>	<i>On all other areas</i>	<i>Total</i>
	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
<b>1994-95</b>	88.2	82.6	170.8	377.3	134.4	511.7	105.0	577.3	682.5
<b>1995-96</b>	95.5	79.4	174.8	367.1	183.2	550.3	78.8	646.5	725.1
<b>1996-97</b>	179.6	72.3	251.9	412.0	189.1	601.1	137.7	715.3	853.0
<b>1996</b>									
March qtr	13.6	14.5	28.1	68.1	51.6	119.7	18.9	128.9	147.8
June qtr	22.3	20.1	42.4	74.7	54.8	129.5	22.6	149.3	171.9
September qtr	38.9	22.3	61.2	120.4	25.4	145.8	34.8	172.2	207.0
December qtr	63.9	16.4	80.3	121.1	52.3	173.3	54.6	199.0	253.6
<b>1997</b>									
March qtr	22.3	8.4	30.7	96.3	50.2	146.5	17.2	160.1	177.3
June qtr	54.5	25.2	79.7	74.2	61.2	135.4	31.1	184.0	215.1
September qtr	38.4	15.2	53.6	64.3	26.2	90.6	10.8	133.4	144.2
December qtr	48.0	15.6	63.6	90.1	84.8	174.9	8.2	230.3	238.5

## 6

## PETROLEUM EXPLORATION BY REGION

<i>Period</i>	<i>New South Wales</i>	<i>Victoria</i>	<i>Queensland</i>	<i>South Australia</i>	<i>Western Australia</i>	<i>Tasmania</i>	<i>Northern Territory/ Ashmore and Cartier Islands</i>	<i>Zone of Cooperation Area A(b)</i>	<i>Total</i>
	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
<b>1994-95</b>	n.p.	n.p.	82.7	46.7	345.6	n.p.	55.9	89.4	682.5
<b>1995-96</b>	n.p.	n.p.	106.5	55.1	319.0	n.p.	96.3	89.2	725.1
<b>1996-97</b>	n.p.	45.8	134.5	n.p.	444.1	n.p.	41.6	n.p.	853.0
<b>1996</b>									
March qtr	n.p.	n.p.	16.7	9.6	74.6	—	17.4	18.2	147.8
June qtr	n.p.	n.p.	22.5	13.4	80.3	—	16.0	29.4	171.9
September qtr	n.p.	n.p.	36.4	22.7	131.5	—	2.5	7.4	207.0
December qtr	n.p.	n.p.	40.6	n.p.	132.6	n.p.	n.p.	n.p.	253.6
<b>1997</b>									
March qtr	n.p.	n.p.	12.5	n.p.	78.5	—	n.p.	30.1	177.3
June qtr	n.p.	6.7	45.0	n.p.	101.5	n.p.	15.8	35.0	215.1
September qtr	n.p.	6.0	46.4	n.p.	46.8	n.p.	7.4	n.p.	144.2
December qtr	n.p.	8.3	29.0	n.p.	106.9	n.p.	28.0	45.7	238.5

(a) Includes expenditure on Western Australian leases in the Zone of Cooperation Area B.

(b) Refer to Explanatory Notes paragraph 14.

# EXPLANATORY NOTES

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## INTRODUCTION

**1** This publication contains annual and quarterly statistics of private sector exploration for minerals (other than oil shale) and petroleum in Australia.

## SOURCE

**2** Data are collected and compiled from exploration censuses conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

## SCOPE AND COVERAGE

**3** All exploration activity is included, regardless of the main activity of the explorer. Details of exploration are collected from all private enterprises known to be engaged in exploration, in Australia (including Australian waters) and incurring expenditure of more than \$20,000 per year.

## SEASONAL ADJUSTMENT

**4** Seasonal adjustment is a means of removing the estimated effects of normal seasonal variation from the series so that the effects of other influences can be more clearly recognised.

**5** Seasonal adjustment does not remove from the series the effect of irregular or non-seasonal influences. Particular care should be taken in interpreting quarterly movements in the adjusted figures in this publication.

**6** Irregular influences that are highly volatile can make it difficult to interpret the series even after adjustment for seasonal variation.

**7** Seasonal factors are reviewed and revised annually to take account of each additional year's original data. The nature of the seasonal adjustment process is such that the magnitude of some revisions resulting from the re-analysis may be quite significant, especially for data for more recent quarters. For this reason, additional care should be exercised when interpreting movements in seasonally adjusted data for recent quarters.

## TREND ESTIMATES

**8** The trend estimates are derived by applying a 7-term Henderson moving average to the seasonally adjusted series. The 7-term Henderson average (like all Henderson averages) is symmetric but, as the end of a time series is approached, asymmetric forms of the average are applied. Unlike the weights of the standard 7-term Henderson moving average, the weights employed here have been tailored to suit particular characteristics of the individual series. While the asymmetric weights enable trend estimates for recent quarters to be produced, it does result in revisions to the estimates for the most recent three quarters as additional observations become available. There may also be revisions because of changes in the original data and as a result of the re-estimation of the seasonal factors. For further information, see *Information Paper: A Guide to Interpreting Time Series — Monitoring Trends, an Overview* (Cat. no. 1348.0) or contact the Assistant Director, Time Series Analysis on Canberra (02) 6252 6345.

CLASSIFICATIONS

- 9** The following categories are used:
- Production lease/Other, where a production lease is an area on which production or development is actually taking place.
  - Onshore/Offshore, where offshore includes all operations in a marine area under the *Petroleum (Submerged Lands) Act 1967* or under any Acts administered by State and Territory Governments.
  - Drilling/Other, where *drilling expenditure* includes cost of access (roads, vessel hire, etc.) to the drilling site and site preparation etc., and *other expenditure* includes costs of surveys, report writing, map preparation and all other activities attributable to exploration.

DEFINITIONS

- 10** Minerals: In the broad sense these comprise metallic minerals, construction materials, gemstones, other non-metallic minerals and petroleum (oil or gas).
- 11** Exploration: This includes the search for new ore occurrences or undiscovered oil or gas, and/or appraisal intended to delineate or greatly extend the limits of known deposits of minerals or oil or gas reservoirs by geological, geophysical, geochemical, drilling or other methods. This includes construction of shafts and adits primarily for exploration purposes but excludes activity of a developmental or production nature. Exploration for water is excluded.
- 12** Exploration expenditure: This covers all expenditure on exploration activity in Australia. It includes expenditure on aerial surveys (including Landsat photographs), general surveys, report writing, map preparation and other activities indirectly attributable to exploration. Cash bids for offshore petroleum exploration permits are also included.
- 13** Expected expenditure: This refers to expected expenditure on exploration as reported by private enterprise explorers who were included in the previous census. Events such as new discoveries, unexpected weather conditions, government policy changes and unforeseen changes in economic conditions may cause actual expenditures to differ from those previously expected. The differences between actual and expected expenditure can be seen in table 1.
- 14** Zone of Cooperation (ZOC): Is an agreement between Australia and the Republic of Indonesia on an area between the Indonesian Province of East Timor and Northern Australia. The ZOC is divided into three areas: A, B and C. Area A is controlled by a joint authority and all petroleum operations in this area are carried out through production sharing contracts. Area B is controlled by Australian authorities but the Republic of Indonesia must be notified of any changes to tenements in the area and be paid 10% of gross Resource Rent Tax collected by Australia from corporations producing petroleum. Area C is controlled by the Republic of Indonesia but Australia must be notified of any changes to tenements in the area and be paid 10% of Contractors Income Tax collected by the Republic of Indonesia from corporations producing petroleum.
- 15** Ashmore and Cartier Islands: Tenements in the Ashmore and Cartier Islands are administered by the Northern Territory Department of Mines and Energy. Therefore all petroleum exploration expenditure in this area has been included with Northern Territory data.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

**16** Users may also wish to refer to the following priced publications which are available on request:

*Australian Business Expectations* (Cat. no. 5250.0)

*Australian Mining Industry* (Cat. no. 8414.0)

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**19** Where figures have been rounded, discrepancies may occur between the sums of the component items and their totals.

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