



**Australian Earth Sciences Convention
Media release – Tuesday 22 July 2008**

Fossil fuels will dominate the world's energy mix for "at least the next 20 years": expert

There are very large amounts of remaining oil, gas and coal left in the world and, in the absence of concerted government initiatives, it may take many years before alternative energy sources such as wind and solar become a significant part of the world's energy mix, delegates at the Australian Earth Sciences Convention in Perth will hear today.

"There are many misconceptions within both the geological community and the public at large relating to the controls on Australia's energy mix and how it will change in the coming decades" says Dr Peter McCabe, a theme leader with CSIRO's Petroleum Resources Division, who will deliver a keynote address, *Australia's Energy Future*, at the four-day mega-conference today.

"We hear a lot about the growth of renewable energy sources – and it is true that some renewable sources such as bio-fuels and wind have attained ten-fold production increases throughout the past ten years.

"However, global energy demand is increasing at such a rate that, if we ignore hydro-electricity, renewable energy – as a proportion of total energy supply – may well remain at less than 2 per cent of the total market for many years to come.

"Fortunately Australia has abundant coal and natural gas resources. Our oil production has declined in recent years but there are many unexplored or under-explored basins offshore that may hold large amounts of oil. Because exploration in these areas is difficult, new technologies and innovative scientific approaches will be needed to reduce exploration costs."

Dr McCabe suggests that concerns about global climate change may be best addressed in the short-term by energy conservation, by increasing fuel efficiency, and by subsurface storage of the carbon dioxide that results from burning fossil fuels.

Australia's Energy Future is a topic which frames Australia's economic, environmental and geopolitical outlook. While 86% of the world's energy supply is derived from fossil fuels (oil, coal and gas), in Australia this figure is closer to 95%.

Dr Peter McCabe has spent over 30 years in industry, academia and government pursuing research related to fossil fuels. He is internationally recognised as an expert in petroleum geology, sedimentology and stratigraphy. Prior to joining CSIRO in 2007, Dr McCabe worked for several organisations including the U.S. Geological Survey, Exxon Production Research Co., the Alberta Research Council and the University of Nebraska.

Dr McCabe is also currently President of the American Geological Institute (AGI) and a Past-President of the Society for Sedimentary Geology (SEPM). He is the 2007-08 AAPG Distinguished Lecturer for the Asia Pacific Region.

The **Australian Earth Sciences Convention** is Australia's premier geosciences conference and a major conference on the international geosciences calendar. It is hosted by the Geological Society of Australia and the Australian Institute of Geoscientists.

Effectively several major conferences wrapped into one, the Convention boasts five key streams – Resources – foundation for our future ■ Geoscience in the service of society ■ The evolution of life and the solar system ■ Earth's environments – past, present and future ■ The dynamic Earth – from crust to core.

What: 2008 Australian Earth Sciences Convention
When: Sunday 20 - Thursday 24 July 2008
Where: Perth Convention & Exhibition Centre, Perth

Dr Peter McCabe will deliver a plenary address to the Convention at 9am (Perth time) today (Tuesday). He will be available for interviews from 4am Perth time (6am eastern) until his address, and then after his address and for the rest of the Convention.

Find the **full program** for the Australian Earth Sciences Convention at www.iceaustralia.com/aesc2008. Media can access **suggested speaker and topic lists** (organised into subject headings and state-specific headings), as well as other background material, [on the Media page of the website](#) (abstracts are available from Patrick Daley). **Media highlights for Day 2 (Tuesday)** of the Convention can also be found on the website.

Please phone Patrick Daley (Patrick Daley PR) on 0408 004 890 if you are interested in attending or sourcing stories from this conference. Media planning to attend the conference should contact Patrick Daley to register their likely attendance and discuss any technical requirements.