



National Science Week, 16-24 August 2008

Geological Society of Australia media release  
Monday 18 August 2008

Launch at 12:30pm, Monday 18 August 2008, ACT Legislative Assembly

## Canberra...under the ocean? Yes, it once was, new Guide shows.

It's hard to believe it during the ongoing drought, but Canberra and the ACT region (including the Brindabellas) were once submerged well under the ocean, and there are ancient deepwater marine fossils—around 450 million years old—still visible in Canberra and the ACT region to prove it.

This is just one of the fascinating facts brought to light in *A Geological Guide to Canberra Region and Namadji National Park*, being launched today in Canberra.

Two years in the making, **the guide, an accompanying map and interactive CD** have been produced by the Geological Society of Australia (ACT Division) with funding assistance from the Geological Society of Australia (GSA) and the ACT Government, and additional assistance from Geoscience Australia and the National Parks Association of the ACT.

“Ancient, deepwater marine fossils around 450 million years old are still located in abundance around Canberra to this very day, including at Glenloch Interchange, under The Canberra Centre and under the John Gorton Building just to name a few sites” said Dr Doug Finlayson, the compiler of the guide, a committee member of the Geological Society of Australia's ACT Division, and a Canberra-based seismologist.

“In fact, the Canberra region is internationally renowned for its ancient marine fossils, including some so complete that you can trace the nerve endings and blood supply of the fish which formed them—fish which, interestingly, had external skeletons!

“Canberra and south-eastern Australia is also a ‘granite mecca’ for geoscientists around the world, given the detailed information these ancient rocks can tell us about the geological formation and erosion of the Earth over many millions of years.

“This is the first time such a guide has been produced on the unique geological landscape of Canberra and the ACT region, particularly from an historical perspective—and by historical, we mean up to 450 million years ago.

“The guide, map and interactive CD are intended to be a detailed and user-friendly educational and information tool for students, teachers, bushwalkers, birdwatchers, tourists, engineers and the many others who appreciate and trek around the ACT's unique landscape.

“Visitors to Canberra often view the beautiful scenery from the top of Black Mountain or Mount Ainslie—the Brindabella skyline and surrounding scenery can be truly breathtaking. Now visitors to our region and Canberrans alike will have a guide they can refer to in understanding how these often stunning

landscapes formed over millions of years, first as sediment on the ocean floor, then as an uplifted volcano-strewn landscape, and finally to their present-day shape after millions of years of erosion.

“This guide on the geological history of Canberra and the ACT region complements other guidebooks that have been produced on local trees, plants, fauna, flora and birds.

“Included with the guide are a series of suggested excursions to geological landmarks in the Canberra region and Namadji National Park. The interactive CD contains a Geographic Information System (GIS) version of the map, enabling users to click on the map and add in places of interest to them.

“There are many interesting facts about the geological history of Canberra and the ACT region highlighted in this guide. For example, throughout geological history, Canberra has experienced both tropical and polar climates.

“Canberra’s landscape was also part of a chain of active volcanoes about 420 million years ago and since then there has been as much as 5 kilometres of erosion of the Earth’s crust in this region as well as along the eastern Australian highlands.

“The process of erosion continues to work away at the Brindabellas and the wider ACT region, so that in the millions of years to come our region will again be much different visually to what it is today.

“Meanwhile, Canberra (and the whole Australian Continent) continue to move north-northeast at around 7cm a year.

“If there’s one message we want people to take from this guide, it’s that geology is critical in our lives—it determines where we live, our local climate and weather, and what we can grow and produce. In short, geology matters!”

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**What:** *A Geological Guide to Canberra Region and Namadji National Park*—the guide, an accompanying map and interactive CD—will be launched today by Mick Gentleman MLA along with David Gibson (Vice President of the GSA’s ACT Division) and Dr James Johnson (Chief of Division, Onshore Energy and Minerals Division, Geoscience Australia).

**When:** Monday 18 August 2008 at 12:30pm (during National Science Week) at the ACT Legislative Assembly, Civic.

**The products:**

- ***A Geological guide to Canberra region and Namadji National Park***, a 140 page handbook and excursion CD that highlights the evolution of the Canberra-Queanbeyan region landscape and geological features within that landscape. The region extends to Wee Jasper, Lake George, Bungendore, Captains Flat, Michelago, Jerangle, Bredbo, Tantangara Dam, Gudgenby, Blue Waterholes and Brindabella. The accompanying CD provides the locations and notes on 28 sites of geological interest and 7 geological excursions.
- ***Geological map of the Australian Capital Territory*** provides a compilation of the simplified geology of the ACT at 1:100,000 scale. The map is illustrated with the location and information on sites of geological interest.
- ***Geographic information system (GIS) compact disc*** for use by teachers and the public on home/school computers to view the geological map information using GIS. This CD contains all the data on the geological map and additional satellite and topographic map data and images. It also contains GIS software to display the detailed geological information on a home PC.

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**Media are very welcome to attend the launch.  
Interviews are available with Dr Doug Finlayson.  
Media contact: Patrick Daley (Patrick Daley Public Relations) on 0408 004 890.**