



**Geological Society of Australia (Queensland Division)  
Australian Institute of Geoscientists (Queensland Branch)**

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**Media release**

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## **3.5 billion year old fossil—and marine fossils from a time when central Queensland was under the ocean—to lure visitors in Earth Science recruitment drive at EKKA**

One of the oldest known fossils on Earth—a 3.5 billion year old stromatolite fossil from the Pilbara region of Western Australia—will take centre stage in an innovative display by Queensland's Earth Science sector at this year's EKKA...a display that aims to recruit more students into Earth Science as an exciting career choice and show Queenslanders why Earth Science is crucial to their everyday life.

The display—which proved to be an enormous hit with EKKA visitors last year—will also feature:

- **the fossil vertebrae of a 140 million year old marine reptile** from the time of the dinosaurs (this fossil was found in central Queensland, which was submerged under the ocean at that time in Earth's history)
- **numerous other marine fossils ranging from 200 to 500 million years old** and found near Mount Isa, Nebo and other parts of Queensland
- **the femur bone of Australia's largest extinct marsupial, *Diprotodon***, found near Toowoomba
- **200 million year old plant fossils** from the coal measures around Ipswich.

The display will be located within the National Science Week pavilion, which attracted an estimated 50,000 visitors during EKKA in 2008.

The Queensland Divisions of the Geological Society of Australia (GSA) and Australian Institute of Geoscientists (AIG) have again teamed up to put on the display, following the success of last year's display in getting numerous students interested in Earth Science as a potential field of study at university.

Fossils for the display have been generously provided from the private collections of GSA and AIG members as well as the Geological Survey of Queensland (GSQ). Some of the fossils and mineral specimens were collected by Chief Government Geologists from GSQ as early as the 1920s and have not been accessible to the public until now.

"With the world recently celebrating the 40th anniversary of the landing on the Moon, and the amazing discovery of three 98 million year old dinosaur fossils near Winton in rural Queensland, Earth Science has been firmly in the media spotlight lately so we expect a huge turnout to our interactive display at EKKA" GSA's Queensland Division Chair, Dr Gregg Webb, said.

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“Apart from giving EKKA visitors first-hand access to great fossils, rocks, ancient bones and other items—some of which normally can’t be viewed by the general public—we will also have industry professionals and students on-site who will share their passion for Earth Science, drive home how important Earth Science is in everyone’s lives, and discuss the wide range of fascinating career paths that Earth Science provides.

“In Queensland alone, Earth Scientists play critical roles in the burgeoning energy and minerals sector (which is still operating at full steam despite the current economic downturn); in environmental management work such as monitoring the impact of climate change on the Great Barrier Reef, determining the best place to store toxic waste without it impacting on water supply, and developing carbon sequestration options; and in natural hazard management like monitoring Queensland’s landslide, earthquake and tsunami risk.

“And of course, Earth Scientists are also at the centre of research into Earth’s evolution, a field which involves exciting things like discovering dinosaurs and ancient volcanoes. Given Queensland is the southern hemisphere’s most recent equivalent of Jurassic Park when it comes to finding ancient dinosaurs, the Sunshine State is the place to be if you are seeking a career as an Earth Scientist in this field.

“Importantly, Earth Scientists are also playing a huge role in comparing present day climate change with that which has occurred over many billions of years. This type of comparison provides a critical insight into how Earth’s climate system works, allowing us to judge how extreme or otherwise current climate change is.”

Chairman of AIG’s Queensland Branch, Mark Berry, said: “One of the biggest challenges for the Earth Science sector in Queensland and across Australia has been getting the message out to bright young high school and university students that Earth Science can provide an extremely diverse and rewarding career path. It is also important to showcase to the general public how important Earth Science is to our way of life and Australia’s prosperity—our display at EKKA provides us with a great opportunity to do just that.”

This view was echoed by Friedrich von Gnielinski, co-ordinator of the Earth Science display at EKKA: “Our display last year drew significant interest from all ages of people, including children who were keen to touch the diverse collection of rocks and minerals we had on show through to high school students who were starting to think about future career paths, and even university students who were already studying in other fields but were interested in finding out more about Earth Science as a potential career move.

“We also had a lot of farmers from right across Queensland visit our display who were genuinely interested in the types of rocks and minerals that were on their farms, and even whether their farm could be the next dinosaur fossil mecca!

“Again in 2009, we hope our display at EKKA will provide us with the opportunity to discuss Earth Science careers with many Queensland students. We will have a great group of Earth Scientists from government, industry, universities and the private sector on-hand at our display to share their experiences and answer questions about the sector and what it can offer.

“One thing is certain—Earth Scientists remain in high demand in Queensland, across Australia and indeed across the world, as the shortage of university graduates with Earth Science degrees continues to bite industry hard.”

In a first, the Geological Society of Australia’s Queensland Division will also use People’s Day at this year’s EKKA to present its annual awards to students from Queensland’s secondary schools and three of Queensland’s universities (QUT, UQ and JCU) who have performed strongly in Earth Sciences. The awards presentation will be held following the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation’s *Talking Scientists* event, to be held in the Science Pavilion Stand Theatre between 2pm and 4pm on Wednesday 12 August 2009.

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**Dr Gregg Webb, Mark Berry and Friedrich von Gnielinski are available for interview.**

**Photos can be taken of the above representatives with the ancient fossils, extinct marsupial’s femur bone and rock collection at the EKKA Earth Science display.**

**Further details of the high school and university student award-winners can be supplied on request.**

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