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## Joint media statement by:

Geological Society of Australia  
Australian Institute of Geoscientists  
Australian Geoscience Council  
Earth Science Western Australia  
Petroleum Exploration Society of Australia

Australian Society of Exploration Geophysicists  
Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy  
International Association of Hydrogeologists  
Teacher Earth Science Education Programme

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## Welcome major focus on Earth and Environmental Science in new national curriculum for Australian schools

The inclusion of Earth and Environmental Science as a major study stream for Australian high schools in the new National Science Curriculum is strongly welcomed, and will ensure this critical area of science for the 21st century now gets the classroom focus it deserves.

The National Science Curriculum covers all school years from Kindergarten to Year 12 and is expected to be implemented—along with other national curricula covering English, Mathematics and History—from 2011.

The development of the new curriculum by the National Curriculum Board provided a ‘make or break’ opportunity for Earth and Environmental Science to finally be given dedicated teaching time in Australian senior school classrooms alongside the traditional sciences of biology, chemistry and physics.

Such was our concern to ensure that Earth and Environmental Science was included as a major subject in the new National Science Curriculum, each of our organisations tabled submissions with the National Curriculum Board on the issue.

We argued that—given its critical role in combating the environmental, energy and economic crises increasingly being faced by Australia and the world—Earth and Environmental Science should receive the same significant focus in Australian senior school classrooms as biology, chemistry and physics.

Consequently, the National Curriculum Board’s decision to make Earth and Environmental Science a major study stream alongside Physics, Chemistry and Biology for Years 11 and 12—and to keep Earth Science as a major study stream alongside Biology, Physics and Chemistry for Years 7 to 10—is very pleasing.

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The importance of providing future generations of Australians with a rounded education in Earth and Environmental Science cannot be underestimated.

The discipline is already at the centre of global efforts to develop cost-effective responses to huge challenges like climate change, drought and water contamination, salinity and other environmental degradation, geo-hazards like tsunamis and earthquakes, the need for clean and reliable baseload energy, threats to food security, the contamination of productive land and the impact of urban development on land health.

Earth and Environmental Science also generates much of the wealth that Australia enjoys (for example, it contributes about 10% of Australia's GDP through exports from related sectors like the minerals and petroleum industries), as well as holding the key to a sustainable future and underpinning much of the knowledge base of other sciences and allied fields such as agriculture, climate science, ecology, engineering and even medicine.

Given the critical and growing role that Earth and Environmental Science is now playing at a global level, and will continue to play well into the future, the National Curriculum Board's decision to make this discipline a major focus of study in high school science classrooms makes a lot of sense and is strongly welcomed.

We now look forward to working closely with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (the new body overseeing development of the national curricula for Australian schools) to provide advice and feedback on specific content for the Earth and Environmental Science stream of the new National Science Curriculum as that content is developed.

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**Representatives of the organisations listed are available for comment.**

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