



Australian Government

# Minister for Resources and Energy Minister for Tourism



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The Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP

21 Apr 2008

## UN CONFIRMS AUSTRALIA'S RIGHTS OVER EXTRA 2.5 MILLION SQUARE KILOMETRES OF SEABED

Minister for Resources and Energy Martin Ferguson today welcomed findings from the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf in New York confirming Australia's jurisdiction over an additional 2.5 million square kilometres of seabed.

The Commission's findings confirm the location of the outer limit of Australia's continental shelf in nine distinct marine regions and Australia's entitlement to large areas of shelf beyond 200 nautical miles.

The decision means Australia now has jurisdiction over an extra 2.5 million square kilometres of continental shelf, which is almost five times the size of France, seven times the size of Germany and almost 10 times the size of New Zealand. It gives Australia the rights to what exists on and under the seabed, including:

- Oil resources;
- Gas resources; and
- Biological resources, such micro-organisms, which could be used in medicines.

"This is a major boost to Australia's offshore resource potential and also to our ability to preserve the marine environment on the seabed," Minister for Resources and Energy Martin Ferguson said.

"It demonstrates that Australia's effective engagement in law of the sea matters delivers results. In many respects Australia has also led the way for other countries looking to confirm their continental shelf boundaries through the Commission. The Government will move quickly to proclaim the outer limits of the Australian continental shelf into law on the basis of the recommendations of the Commission."

"The recommendations are further proof of the substantial benefits Australia has derived from ratification of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea by the previous Labor Government. It's also a strong indication of the real and practical benefits of engaging constructively with the United Nations and its agencies."

The Minister praised the contribution of Government officials from Geoscience Australia, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Attorney-General's Department in preparing Australia's detailed submission to the Commission.

"This is the culmination of over fifteen years of cutting edge work by a range of Government agencies and I would like to record the Government's recognition of their contribution to this important outcome," said Mr Ferguson.

Media Contact: Tracey Winters (Canberra) 0439 991 730

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