

Tuesday 19 February 2019

Bipartisan support by the Coalition and Labor will help our resource sector dig deeper for Australia's secure future

The peak body for Australia's 8,000 geoscientists — the Australian Geoscience Council (AGC) — has strongly welcomed commitments from both the Coalition Government and Australian Labor Party to boost support for the exploration of 'next generation' hidden mineral deposits in Australia.

“While Australia is endowed with significant mineral resources and the resources sector contributes massively to our economy, the ‘easy to find’ minerals of past decades have largely been discovered and exploited” **AGC President, Dr Bill Shaw, said today.**

“There is now a need to explore much deeper underground for the nation's new ‘hidden’ mineral fields.”

“Bipartisan support is crucial to ensure we champion new exploration approaches, new technologies, extremely accurate data collection and modeling. Not surprisingly, this requires significant long-term investment and the AGC seeks joint bipartisan commitment that will bring renewed confidence.”

“If Australia is to benefit from the huge demand for the minerals supporting sustainable technologies — copper, cobalt, nickel, lithium, graphite and the rare earth metals needed for solar panels, electric vehicles and the batteries they need for storing renewable energy — significant investment will be required in new technologies and approaches to uncover ‘harder to find’ minerals.”

“The Australian Geoscience Council has been actively involved in the UNCOVER initiative and Decadal Plan for Geoscience — two initiatives of the Australian Academy of Science that have brought together government Geoscience agencies, industry, academia and research bodies in a unique collaboration to initiate and fast-track much-needed Geoscience research, data collection and new technologies to find and better exploit ‘hidden’ mineral deposits deep under the Earth's surface.”

“A *Resources 2030 Taskforce* established by the Coalition Government has also focused attention on the need to attract and encourage resource development investment, and many countries are watching how Australia takes this forward as they try to catch up with our initiatives. We also welcome the recent investment in the MinEx CRC and AuScope, which will mesh with and complement further initiatives.”

“It is clear that the world-leading vision of these cross-sector Geoscience collaborations has been noticed, with both the Coalition Government and the Australian Labor Party announcing they will significantly invest in long-term plans to boost and support minerals exploration in Australia.”

“The Australian Geoscience Council notes that the Coalition has just released a *National Resources Statement* outlining how it will attract investment, develop new resources and markets, and share the benefits of success with more regional communities.”

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“This will include supporting the development of new resource provinces through co-operation with state and territory jurisdictions; continuing to invest in advanced seismic and airborne electromagnetic surveys through the \$100 million *Exploring For The Future* program; and improving the consistency and scope of data across the resource sector.”

“Such programs use cutting-edge technology and are having a huge impact on new views of potential minerals and groundwater provinces. The Coalition has also announced priority status for funding applications related to critical minerals projects under the \$20 million Round 7 of the Cooperative Research Centres Project.”

“Similarly, we welcome the Australian Labor Party’s announcement of their *Future Mines and Jobs* plan that will kick-start the discovery of new mines across the country. It will also establish an Australian Future Mines Centre to co-ordinate exploration work and lead the scientific research and development necessary to explore under deep cover. The Centre will be funded through a \$23 million Australian Research Council Special Research Initiative, with input from the Australian Academy of Science and the sector. Labor will encourage industry co-funding as part of the Centre’s work, and will also invest \$2 million to provide 100 scholarships to arrest the decline in mining engineering degree commencements.”

“The Australian Geoscience Council strongly welcomes the significant focus of the major parties on supporting the resources sector to discover the next generation of ‘hidden’ mineral resources and increase Australia’s minerals and energy security. The markets and competitive profile around the globe are always changing, and they impact on Australia’s mineral resources and export opportunities, so there is no cause for complacency. We must have the knowledge to be able to plan and act strategically.”

“The years of easy exploration and extraction are largely over. The road ahead is going to require more innovation and substantial lead-times in discovering and developing the resources that Australia and the world needs. These must be found and extracted safely, cleanly and efficiently if we are to continue to support and maintain the community values that we expect in Australia.”

“Recognition by the major parties of these realities – and their understanding that the resources sector remains essential to Australia’s future prosperity, standard of living and resource security – is greatly welcomed in the lead-up to the next federal election and beyond.”

“We look forward to working with all politicians to help put their commitments into action.”

Available for interview:

- **Dr Bill Shaw**, AGC President, on 0438 010 851 (Perth, available from 6am WA time / 9am AEDT)
- A high resolution photo of Dr Shaw can be found here:
<http://www.agc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/pix-AGCC-Chair-Dr-Bill-Shaw.jpeg>

Further information:

- More information on UNCOVER can be found at www.uncoveraustralia.org.au
- The Decadal Plan can be found at <https://www.science.org.au/supporting-science/science-policy-and-sector-analysis/decadal-plans-science/australian-geoscience>
- The Resources 2030 Taskforce Report can be found at <https://www.industry.gov.au/data-and-publications/resources-2030-taskforce-report>