

Australian Explorers Are Making A Strong Show In New Zealand

With a mixture of experienced campaigners and comparative newcomers to the New Zealand oil and gas scene, the ever growing involvement of Australian based independents is increasingly making their presence felt across the Tasman.

Of most recent importance, PEP 38483 (Block E of the deep water Taranaki bidding round) was granted in December 2003 to a consortium led by majority stake holder AWE NZ Pty Ltd, New Zealand Oil & Gas Ltd and Pan Pacific Petroleum NL. This follows last summer's Tui oil discovery (with at least 20 m of gross pay) in the adjacent PEP 38460, where

AWE, Sydney based NZOG and Pan Pacific are partners with operator Transworld and Mitsui.

Further south, in Canterbury, AWE and Perth based Tap Oil were last year awarded PEP 38259 (offshore). This permit contains the Galleon-1 discovery, which test flowed 2300 bopd and 10 MMscf/d in 1985 but was at the time abandoned as sub-economic. Times have changed.

Further south off the tip of the South Island, in the waters of the Great South Basin, Magellan Petroleum is currently reprocessing data on its PEP 38222 permit area while Bounty Oil and Gas, with Hardman Resources and other

partners, investigate prospects in PEP 38215. Both of these permit areas contain wells drilled over 20 years ago in campaigns by Hunt International Petroleum. The potential of big finds has fired recent interest in the deep south.

Bounty's managing director, Tom Fontaine, says it has lifted its probable recoverable reserve estimate for its main prospect, Tora, to 1.4 Tcf, with additional possible reserves totalling 2.4 Tcf.

Success by Australian explorers has been largely applauded; the New Zealand oil and gas scene welcomes the continued presence of these companies. ■