

WA Geothermal Push Gathers Steam

The drafting of legislation to provide a clear legal framework for companies to pursue large scale geothermal energy projects in Western Australia is in its final stages and is expected to be introduced to Parliament sometime during the first half of 2007.

The move follows a call last November by Western Australian Premier, Alan Carpenter, for expressions of interest from companies wanting to explore for and harness power from granite rock deposits up to 300° C.

A spokesman from the Department of Industry and Resources could not specify when the legislation will be introduced but said Resources Minister, Francis Logan, is "very keen to get it into Parliament". It would amend WA's Petroleum Act 67 for the accommodation of geothermal resource, exploration and production after approval to draft the amended bill was given in December 2006.

Drafting of a bill to amend WA's Petroleum Act 67 for the accommodation of geothermal resource, exploration and production was approved in December 2006. The spokesman said the department has received expressions of interest (EoI) from companies seeking geothermal opportunities and these have been recorded, and each of the proponents will be notified once the formal EoI is made public.

"Once this legislation is passed through Parliament, the department will be able to

release acreage and receive competitive bids for that acreage", the spokesman said. "The formal EoI is more for the purpose of collecting data from companies who would be potentially interested in acquiring acreage once the release process occurs."

Announcing the initiative in November, Carpenter said there were early indications that isolated hot rock deposits existed near Moora, Eneabba and Bunbury and larger areas from Carnarvon to Exmouth and around Geraldton, Broome and Derby.

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"Clean geothermal energy could help WA maintain its competitive energy edge in a carbon constrained future", Carpenter said. "WA is well placed to lead the world in clean energy production. We have abundant wind, wave and solar resources, but we also have hot rock potential relatively close to population centres."

"WA is highly advanced in developing mineral and energy resources; we have the investment climate, the businesses and the skills to apply to the development of geothermal energy." ■