

First Geothermal Permit Issued In Queensland

The Queensland government has issued its first exploration permit for geothermal energy.

Mines and Energy Minister Geoff Wilson said NSW company Granite Power Ltd has been granted a permit called Nagoorin, near Gladstone, to carry out the preliminary work needed to begin using the emerging energy source.

Ten areas across the state were released to tender, however, no applications were received for the Peekadoo area leaving nine sites earmarked for exploration.

Two other companies, Kuth Exploration Pty Ltd and Clean Energy Australasia Pty Ltd, are in the final stages of having exploration permits assessed.

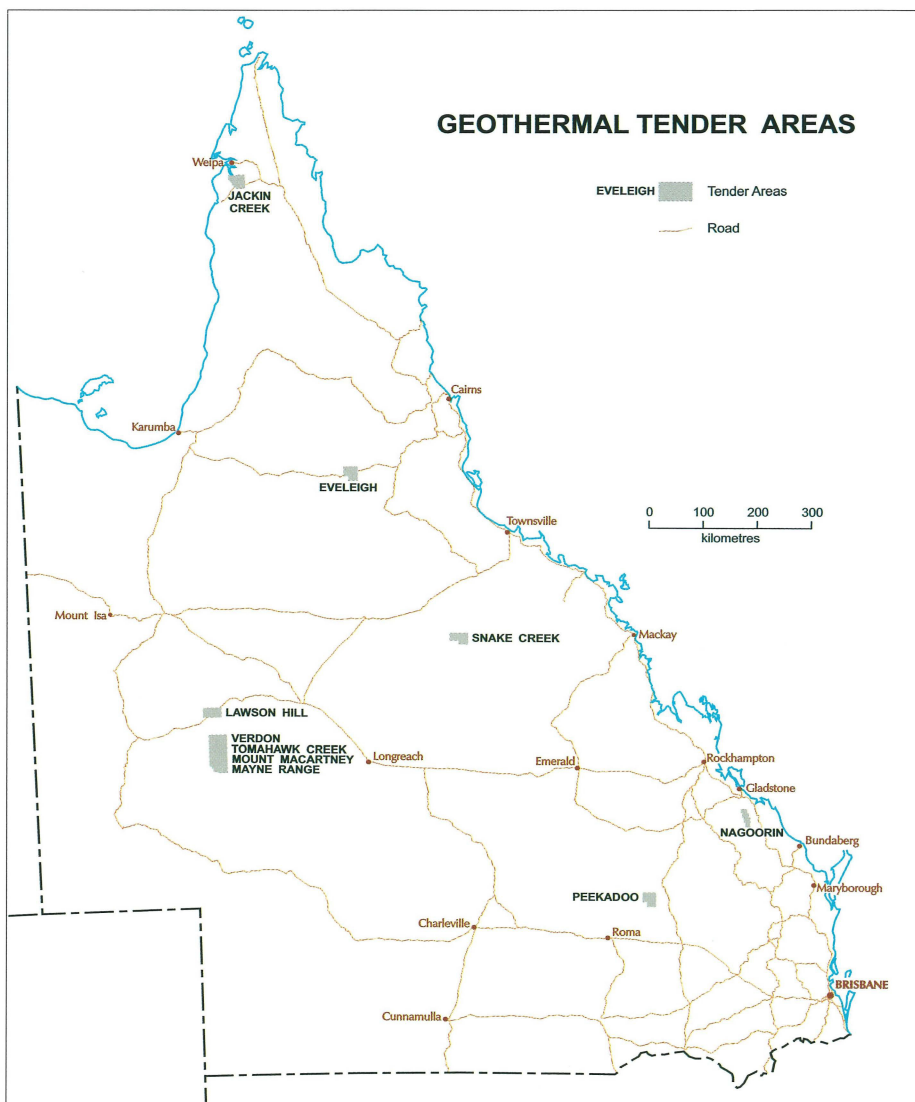
Preferred tenderers for the third round of geothermal permit tenders will be announced shortly.

“The granting of this exploration permit is a significant milestone in the development of geothermal energy industry in Queensland”, Wilson said.

However, the minister said there is uncertainty among explorers about the application of the Commonwealth Native Title Act to geothermal exploration.

“There has been some question as to whether the definition of ‘mining’ in the Commonwealth Act includes geothermal exploration”, he said.

Queensland Premier Anna Bligh has raised the issue with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to get a national solution to this problem.



Map of Queensland geothermal acreage

“Queensland was the first state to pass a Geothermal Exploration Act and we’re working on a new Geothermal Act to provide for world’s best practice in geothermal energy production.

“Planning is underway for coastal geothermal exploration near major population and industry centres and we’ve also invested \$15 million in the Geothermal Centre of Excellence. ■