

Opening of the GA SHRIMP – Ministerial Media Release

April 1, 2008

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<http://minister.ret.gov.au/TheHonMartinFergusonMP/Pages/NOJOBTOOBIGFORTHISCLEVERSHRIMP.aspx>

“The Hon Martin Ferguson AM MP
Minister for Resources and Energy, Minister for Tourism
01 Apr 2008

NO JOB TOO BIG FOR THIS CLEVER SHRIMP

The Minister for Resources, Energy and Tourism, the Hon Martin Ferguson, today opened the new Sensitive High Resolution Ion Microprobe Laboratory (SHRIMP) at Geoscience Australia.

SHRIMP will significantly increase the amount of high quality data about the age of Australian rocks for resource exploration companies, government geoscience agencies and researchers.

SHRIMP is six metres long, weighs 12 tonnes and has the ability to analyse trace elements *inside* individual minerals smaller than a grain of sand. This will provide an important stream of geological data for the Australian mining community – data that will encourage exploration investment and support the Australian economy.

“Australia is developing a sophisticated understanding of how the timing of geological events millions or even billions of years ago have produced the mineral and energy resources we depend on today,” Minister Ferguson said.

“SHRIMP will allow Geoscience Australia to be more directly involved in this research, which is particularly important as we need to look deeper into the crust to locate new world-class mineral deposits in Australia.

“To attract exploration investment, Australia needs to provide the best quality geoscience. Information about when rocks were formed, and when other geological events occurred are essential parts of the modern geological framework needed by companies to guide their exploration. Data from the new ion microprobe will increase our understanding of the geological potential of onshore Australia, providing valuable support for Geoscience Australia’s activities under the Onshore Energy Security Program.”

SHRIMP is an Australian success story. A product of 20 years design and research at the Australian National University (ANU), the complex instruments are built by Australian Scientific Instruments (ASI) and are operating at the ANU and Curtin University in Western Australia, and have been exported to laboratories in Canada, Japan, the United States and China.

The Geoscience Australia instrument also marks a unique 15-year agreement between government and private enterprise. Under the agreement, ASI will have the opportunity to test new hardware and software, and conduct customer demonstrations while Geoscience Australia broadens its scientific applications and scope with the SHRIMP.

“It is especially pleasing that Australian technology and know-how is behind this major tool which will increase Geoscience Australia’s efforts to provide pre-competitive data to the mining industry and vital scientific information for researchers investigating the geological history of Australia,” Minister Ferguson said.

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Minister Ferguson (centre) shown examining a sample of rock from which the zircons being analysed by the GA SHRIMP IIe were taken. The Secretary of the Department, Dr Peter Bloxall is on his left, and GA SHRIMP Scientist Dr Keith Sircomb is on the right.