



# CEO opening statement

## Budget Estimates - May/June 2018

- I am Dr James Johnson, CEO of Geoscience Australia. While I have appeared before this committee as acting CEO in my previous capacity as Chief of our Resources Division, this is the first time I am appearing since taking on the role of CEO in May 2017. I would like to take this opportunity to update the committee on my priorities for Geoscience Australia's future success.
- My focus is to build on what has made us the trusted public geoscience organisation that we are today, while embracing more innovative ways of working. To be a national leader in science excellence we will be strategic in identifying where to direct our efforts and resources, and then focus on recruiting, training, and strengthening our collaboration across these areas.
- As a public sector science advisor we are responsive to the needs of government. For example, we had a key role in the search for the missing aircraft MH370; we are major scientific partners in the Geological and Bioregional Assessments program nationally, we have contributed to the initial process for identifying an appropriate site for a National Radioactive Waste Management Facility, and are now developing collaborative projects with the United States Geological Survey regarding critical and strategic minerals. We have also been providing ongoing scientific and technical advice to Government on a range of energy issues to inform this policy area.
- To be a dynamic organisation that is able to address these kinds of complex challenges I am committed to fostering an organisational culture that promotes innovation, and an inclusive work environment that meets the needs of a modern workforce.
- One of the key ways we are innovating is in the development and use of modern data platforms to tackle the challenges associated with 'big data'. With our vast data holdings we have a responsibility to maximise the potential of this data. To do this we are leading the way with the Government's Open Data initiative; making our data accessible to a wide range of users..

- A priority project which demonstrates how we are maximising our data potential is *Digital Earth Australia*. This is a world-first platform to analyse over 30 years of Earth observation data, providing ongoing, near real-time access to an incredible range of new spatial information products for government and industry use. Digital Earth Australia will provide new opportunities for the Digital economy and improve the efficiency of government and industry investments in land management across the country.
- Another priority for Geoscience Australia is high-accuracy positioning. This year's budget saw the funding of two linked programs, *Better GPS for Regional Australia* and *Better GPS for Australian Industry*. Our goal, through these programs, is to achieve 10 centimetre or better accuracy across all of Australia and its marine jurisdiction, even on your mobile phone. The enhanced accuracy and integrity of data available will benefit sectors of Australian industry from aviation through to precision agriculture and will create a wide range of export opportunities for local businesses.
- The third program I will highlight is *Exploring for the Future*. You may be aware that Geoscience Australia was allocated \$100.5 million in the 2016-17 Budget to work across Northern Australia and deliver an integrated assessment of the region's minerals, energy and groundwater resources. This program will ultimately promote Australia as an attractive destination for investors and help drive economic development in the north. The first geological data sets have been released, including new information that improves our understanding of the resource potential of the South Nicholson Basin, a frontier region spanning the Northern Territory and Queensland border, and which has generated private sector interest. Geoscience Australia will release further data sets in 2018, and has a detailed work program of activities mapped out to the end of the program in June 2020. This new integrated knowledge of our resources in Northern Australia will de-risk investments by the energy, mineral and agriculture sectors.
- In summary, I can assure you that Geoscience Australia is well positioned to continue to provide expert advice to government, and that we are striving to embrace new and innovative ways to enhance our value to government, and to all Australians.
- I am pleased to address you today as CEO and look forward to working with the committee in future. My colleagues and I are now happy to take questions.