

## Nine E&P permits awarded off Western Australia

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**MELBOURNE, May 12** -- Australia has awarded nine new offshore leases, receiving a total of \$425 million (Aus.) in its most recent exploration acreage release. The permits cover a range of prospects, water depths, and play types. Five are in the Bonaparte basin, three in the Browse basin, and one in the Carnarvon basin.

France's Total SA won 22% of the acreage with a substantial \$94 million work program over 3 years plus \$6 million in secondary work commitments for newly awarded Browse basin permit WA-408-P off northwest Western Australia.

Total beat three other bidders to win WA-408-P. Its program guarantees 1,300 sq km of new 3D seismic work, three exploration wells, and geotechnical studies in the first 3 permit years. The secondary program consists of further geotechnical studies.

Chinese company Sinopec won NT/P76 in the Troubador Terrace area of the Bonaparte with a guaranteed initial work program of \$35.65 consisting of geotechnical studies, 500 km of 2D seismic reprocessing, 2,000 km of new 2D work, and 1,000 sq km of 3D. The company also bid \$38.5 million on a secondary work program comprising one well and geotechnical studies.

Apache and Total won Bonaparte Block AC/P42, with a \$18.9 million primary program and \$30.2 million secondary work, and AC/P43 with a \$32.95 million program and \$300,000 worth of secondary work.

Finder Exploration Pty. Ltd., Perth, won AC/P44 and AC/P45 with more modest bids.

Of the other two Browse permits, a partnership of Santos, Chevron, and Inpex won WA-410-P with a low \$760,000 bid for some 3D seismic and geotechnical studies followed by a secondary program of one well and geotechnical and marketing studies valued at \$30.5 million.

Santos, Inpex, and Beach Petroleum combined to win WA-411-P with an initial program worth \$1.46 million followed by a secondary program, including a \$30.5 million program of one well and geotechnical and marketing studies.

Carnarvon basin permit WA-409-P went to Australian juniors Cue Exploration and Gascorp Australia for an initial \$3 million program of seismic work and a secondary \$25.5 million program drilling one well and conducting geotechnical studies.