**The critical importance of site characterization data for IODP scientific drilling proposals**

**A consensus statement from the June 2017 Australasian IODP Planning Workshop**

The 97 scientists gathered at the 2017 Australasian IODP Workshop in Sydney, tasked with planning scientific ocean drilling expeditions in the Eastern Indian, Southern, and Southwest Pacific Oceans, emphasise the critical importance of geoscientific site characterisation data to the future success of IODP and its successors. Site characterisation data, most importantly seismic reflection data, are essential for the identification and ultimately safe drilling of suitable primary and alternate drill sites in every full drilling proposal submitted to the IODP Science Support Office, and subsequently carefully considered by the program’s Science Evaluation Panel (SEP), Environmental Protection and Safety Panel (EPSP), and the three Facility Boards.

Without this type of information, the scientific exploration of the deep subseafloor and our understanding of its role in tectonic, climatic, oceanographic, biological, and geochemical processes in the Earth System cannot advance. Providing suitably capable vessels for that purpose is essential for the advancement of scientific ocean drilling as it addresses ever-evolving global scientific questions, particularly in under-explored parts of the world ocean like the Australasian region.

Accordingly, we emphasize that blue water research vessels with the necessary seismic reflection systems should continue to be available to researchers in all IODP member countries on reasonable fiscal conditions, and with suitable advance (national and international) planning mechanisms.

*Submitted by Professor Neville Exon (ANZIC Program Scientist) on behalf of the workshop participants (Neville.Exon@anu.edu.au).*