



Geological Society of Australia (Victoria Division)
Media alert
Thursday 18 September 2008

MEDIA ALERT

Tropical Australia – once an icy wasteland? International experts to talk extreme climate change at groundbreaking symposium

Selwyn Symposium 2008 and free public lecture Thursday 25 September, University of Melbourne

Leading scientists from Australia and overseas will meet in Melbourne on Thursday 25 September to discuss an extreme period of climate change that occurred on Earth millions of years ago, and what it can tell us about the longer-term climate cycles that Earth may experience in the future.

Approximately 750-550 million years ago – many millions of years before dinosaurs roamed the Earth – one of the most extraordinary climatic periods of Earth's history occurred. During this time, the Earth was alternately subjected to the most severe glacial conditions ('Snowball Earth events') the planet has ever witnessed (with ice present in equatorial latitudes), and then to similarly widespread tropical greenhouse conditions.

During the 'Snowball Earth' events, any parts of Australia and the world that weren't at that time submerged under the ocean would most probably have been barren, icy wastelands – including destinations that are today considered to be tropical getaways.

The extreme climates of this period, together with the sudden and widespread appearance of very early, multi-cellular, primitive lifeforms in a window of tropical climate between the period's two major ice age events make this one of the most important and enigmatic episodes in Earth's history.

This prestigious annual symposium will bring together leading researchers – including the internationally renowned Professor Paul Hoffman from Harvard University – to examine the causes and effects of these extreme climatic events and the evolution of early life, and the longer-term perspectives this period offers on the current debate on climate change.

**Selwyn Symposium and Lecture 2008
(see details following)**

Media request and information:

- media assistance in informing the public of the Symposium, and particularly the free public lecture, would be greatly appreciated
- both events are free to the media

Geological Society of Australia (Victoria Division) Selwyn Symposium 2008

Neoproterozoic extreme climates and the origin of early life

Thursday 25 September 2008, 9am (registration from 8am)

Fritz-Loewe Theatre, McCoy Building, Earth Sciences, University of Melbourne, cnr Elgin & Swanston Streets

Further information at www.vic.gsa.org.au. Bookings essential.

Geological Society of Australia (Victoria Division) Selwyn Lecture 2008 - free public lecture

The greenhouse effect, sea-level change, continental drift and the discovery of the glacial theory of Pleistocene ice ages

Professor Paul Hoffman, Harvard University

Thursday 25 September 2008, 6:30pm

Copland Theatre, University of Melbourne

* Includes presentation of the Geological Society of Australia (Victoria Division) Selwyn Medal 2008 *

Further information at www.vic.gsa.org.au. RSVPs essential to guarantee a seat.

Media interviews: now available with the Symposium organiser, Associate Professor Stephen Gallagher, and some symposium speakers.

Media contact: Patrick Daley (Patrick Daley Public Relations) on 0408 004 890.