

## **PAPUA NEW GUINEA – SCIENCE REVEALS HIDDEN WEALTH**

Ian Longley  
General Manager Exploration, Oil Search Limited  
Level 27, 123 Pitt Street, Sydney, NSW 2000, Australia

PNG harbours great wealth in flora, fauna, mineral resources and its people, but these have long remained hidden by jungle-covered mountains, extensive lowland swamps and many outlying volcanic and earthquake-prone islands. New Guinea came to the attention of science in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the discovery of the bird of paradise, a great curiosity to Europeans. Expeditions into PNG in the 19<sup>th</sup> century became fiercely competitive amongst naturalists, expeditions which would lay the geological groundwork for huge copper-gold, and oil and gas discoveries in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Rickwood 1990). Oil Search, incorporated in PNG in 1929, has continued this spirit of discovery with extensive geologic and scientific surveys through its 80 year history, contributing to the PNG oil boom throughout the 1990's and to the upcoming LNG boom from 2014 into the 2030's. Geologic advances have been made in the dating of sequences, understanding of the development of mountain belts in 2D and (soon) 3D, and the prediction of fluid migration into traps. Engineering innovations have been profound, in heli-drilling, seismic acquisition and now in the construction of an LNG stream. But what of the future? Science in PNG will continue to move forward; the application of 3D seismic in the offshore will open new frontiers, and the recent granting of coal-bed-methane licences in the swampy lowlands will test our knowledge and our science. There is no doubt that scientific endeavor will bring to light yet more wealth in Papua New Guinea.