

# My first international conference: A review of the 2024 International Congress in Busan, South Korea

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I was fortunate enough to attend the International Geological Congress (IGC) in Busan, South Korea. The first IGC took place in Paris, France in 1878, and this year marks the 37<sup>th</sup> time that the IGC has been held. With the IGC only occurring 2-3 times every decade, it was an honour to present my PhD research at such a prestigious and long-standing event. My research has been supported by a long list of incredible people, from my supervisors Steven Micklethwaite, Karen Connors and Gregory Webb and the rest of the team at the Sustainable Minerals Institute, to Andrew Muir and the team Sipa Resources, without all of which my PhD research would not have been possible.

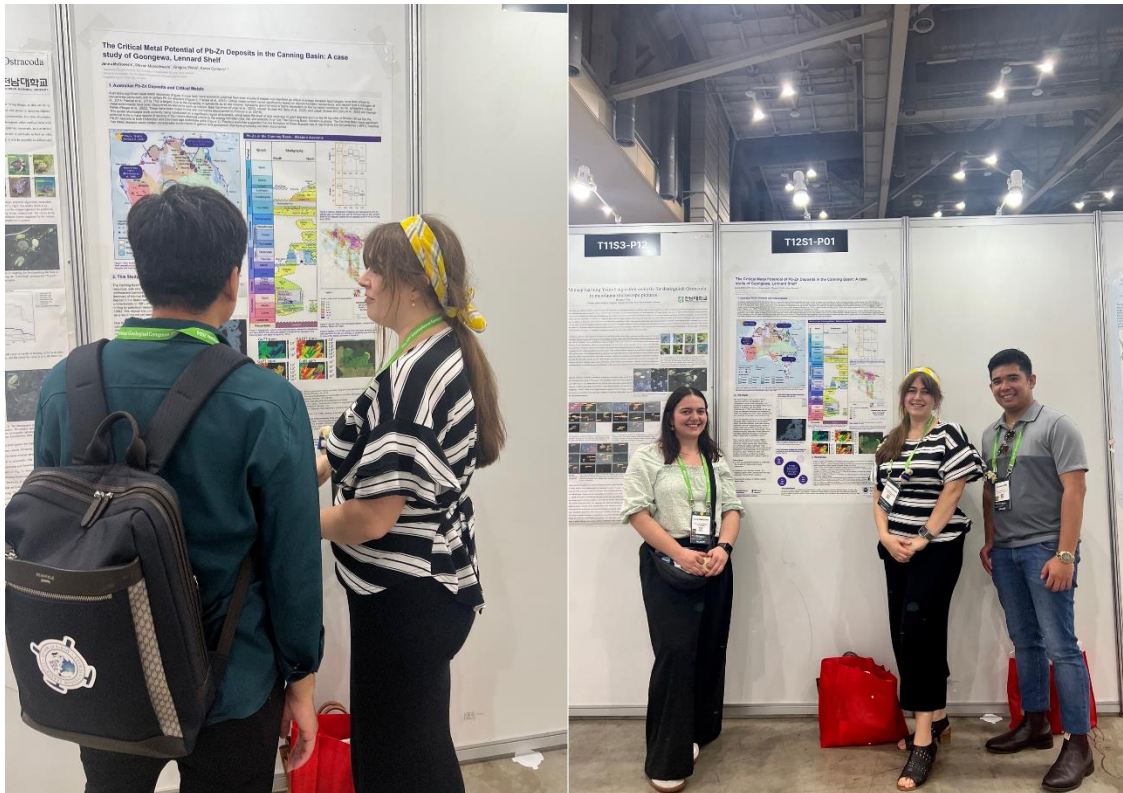
Before the IGC, I was given the opportunity to help with the Australasian bid for the 38th IGC. This involved consulting on webpage development, assisting at the IGC in Busan, and coordinating a team of early career geoscientists who helped with the social media strategy and on-the-ground engagement at the IGC. I was astounded by the amount of work and care that goes into creating a bid for such a significant international event. Using the official Melbourne IGC 2028 social media channels, I helped to create content and promoted the conference offering that the Australasian bid team had curated. The social media management, team building and networking experience that I gained from being involved in bidding for such a prestigious event has taught me a lot that I am sure will be incredibly useful to me over the course of my career.



1: At the Australasian 38th IGC bid booth in the Expo Hall. Pictured from left to right: Jenna McGovern, Cameron Cairns, Renzo Ocampo

I left Australia on the Saturday before the Congress, and on my journey had the pleasure of meeting several of the remarkable members of the Australasian bid team, as well as representatives from Geoscience Australia. A game of 'spot-the-geologist' ensued in the Hong Kong airport, as other geoscientists from around the world started to gather at the same gate as us, awaiting the connecting flight to Busan.

Monday saw the start of the congress, and this was when I presented my poster on the critical metal potential of the Lennard Shelf, Canning Basin, Western Australia. This research is a part of my PhD project and highlighted geochemical results from the Goongewa Deposit in the Lennard Shelf. After the end of the conference schedule for the day, I adventured out around Haeundae with a colleague from the Sustainable Minerals Institute. We explored the beach and night markets; trying delicious foods and walking around the main streets filled with busy restaurants and karaoke bars.



2: Day 1 involved presenting my poster on the critical metal potential of the Lennard Shelf, Canning Basin, Western Australia (left: presenting to other congress attendees; right: familiar faces stopping by - catching up with Dana Imbrogno and Renzo Ocampo)

On Day 2, I attended a session on geochemical applications of Rare Earth Elements (REEs) in low-temperature environments. I was able to ask questions, meet people focused on low-temperature geochemical cycling, and make valuable connections with researchers from across the globe. I explored the Expo Hall, checked out cutting-edge technology (and fun mascots and games) at the Kigam booth, and connected with representatives from research labs and geoscience societies from around the world. I also met the teams coordinating the Canada and Glasgow bids for the 38th IGC – a formidable competition for the Australasian bid team.

That day, I also attended fascinating talks on medical geology, where researchers discussed the impacts of minerals and elements on human health. For example, elements like fluorine and selenium are essential in trace amounts but toxic in excess. Other talks included topics such as automatic landslide detection, dolomitisation textures, diagenesis, and mineral systems analysis for exploration geology.



3: Day 2 involved a chance to check out the expo hall and listen to a range of talks on all aspects of geology. Pictured at the Kigam booth.

Day 3 was busy with a range of brilliant poster sessions, including a particularly great session focusing on carbonate diagenesis and associated mineral deposits. Hearing about and seeing the great geochemical and petrographic work being done on various deposit types from all around the world gave me a fresh set of eyes with which to approach my research. I then attended more geoscience education oral presentation sessions. In the evening, I attended the Australasian bid reception, featuring an appearance by the Australian Ambassador to South Korea, Jeffrey Robinson, and a performance by didgeridoo player Sean Candy, who captivated the audience.



4: The Australian Ambassador's reception for the Australasian 38th IGC bid. Ambassador Jeff Robinson (in the picture on the left) and members of the Australian Embassy joined us for an evening of incredible music by Sean Candy (in the picture on the right), food, and networking with congress attendees.

On Day 4, I joined the Australasian bid team for lunch after the announcement of Canada's successful bid for the 38th IGC. Despite the outcome, the event fostered great camaraderie and allowed us to reflect on our efforts. The Australasian bid theme of "Geoscience for everyone everywhere" was a truly inspirational representation of what the future of geosciences ought to work towards. I look forward to seeing the time and effort put into the bid used to create other incredible geoscience conference offerings over the next few years and I hope that I am fortunate enough to experience the 38<sup>th</sup> IGC in Calgary in 2028.



*5: A performance involving incredible artists from all three IGC 2028 bids included traditional Canadian dance, bagpipes, and didgeridoo. One of the wonderful experiences from the conference was seeing three incredible IGC 2028 bids come together to celebrate geoscience being made accessible and fun for all.*

In the afternoon, I attended more geoscience education sessions and was fortunate to receive a ticket to Korea Night, thanks to the generosity of Marina Costelloe from Geoscience Australia. The event was a vibrant celebration of Korean culture, with incredible performances, food, and networking opportunities. The Taekwondo performance was a particularly memorable part of the night, providing a spectacular display of strength, endurance and rhythm. The night ended with everyone being invited to dance on stage together.



6: Korea Night included a Taekwondo performance (pictured), traditional dancing and a K-Pop show.

As things wound down for the end of the conference on Friday (Day 5), I spent a large part of the day ensuring that we had the contact details for those that we had connected with throughout the conference. Attending IGC was not only a great opportunity to network with world-leading scientists in areas like those that my PhD draws on, but also allowed me to meet a global cohort of like-minded young geoscientists. The opportunity to attend IGC in 2024 allowed me to gain contacts and workshop ideas for future global collaborations for members of AIG's Next Gen Geo's, for which me and fellow AGC travel grant winner Renzo Ocampo are co-chairs.



7: Jenna McGovern and Renzo Ocampo receiving Early Career Scientist shirts from representatives of the Geological Society of America (GSA).

This was my first time attending a conference abroad. It was an incredible experience and has left me with a long list of professional contacts, and a whole new set of ideas to apply to my research and was a memorable trip to a spectacular country. The team who organised the 37th IGC did an amazing job – the food and entertainment in and around the conference were fantastic, and the energy throughout the event was infectious. I left Busan inspired and excited for the future of geoscience, and incredibly grateful to the AGC for supporting me in attending such a fantastic event.



8: Attending the 37th IGC gave me a chance to explore part of a new country: top image shows Busan from the top of the Shinsegae Department store – the largest department store in the world; and meet fellow early-career geoscientists from around the world: lower picture shows a group of ECGs from America, Canada and Australia at the Night markets after a day of great talks and networking.



9: The 37th IGC in Busan, South Korea - photo taken between sessions at BEXCO