

21 October 2014

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## CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING AND SELECTING AREAS FOR GEOPARK CONSIDERATION

### Preamble

The following recommended criteria and process for selecting areas for Geopark consideration is based on procedures adopted by the Global Network of National Geoparks.

#### 1. Size and setting

A Geopark is an area with clearly defined boundaries and a large enough area for it to serve local economic and cultural development (particularly through nature-based tourism such as ecotourism and geotourism). Each Geopark should display though a range of sites of international, regional and/or national importance, a region's geological history, and the events and processes that formed it. In this context, a Geo Trail can also be developed to link geologically significant sites and to create an educational journey for people to follow.

A Geopark is a geographical area where geological heritage sites are part of a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development. The Geopark should take into account the whole geographical setting of the region, and should not solely include sites of geological significance. The synergy between geodiversity, biodiversity and culture, in addition to both tangible and non-tangible heritage are such that non- geological themes must be highlighted as an integral part of each Geopark, especially when their importance in relation to landscape and geology can be demonstrated to the visitors.

#### 2. Management and local involvement

A prerequisite to any Geopark proposal being approved is the establishment of an effective management system and programme of implementation. The presence of impressive and internationally significant geological outcrops alone is not sufficient to be a Geopark. Where appropriate, the geological and non-geological features inside the Geopark area must be accessible to visitors, linked to one another and safeguarded though a clear responsible management body or partnership that has demonstrable local support.

As is the case for Australia's designated National Landscapes, the establishment of a Geopark should be based on strong community support and local involvement, developed though a "bottom-up" process. It should demonstrate strong support from local and regional political and community leaders, including in relation to the provision of necessary financial resources. A Geopark must involve engagement with state/territory environmental planning agencies, national parks organisations (where protected areas are to be included), land conservations organisations, (e.g. Landcare, The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative, Wet Tropics Management Authority etc.), impacted or nearby National Landscape areas (where applicable), local government and regional development authorities, indigenous land management organisations, commercial interests, and both research and educational organisations, in the design and running of the Geopark and its regional economic and cultural development plan and activities.



Furthermore, Geopark applicants should seek co-operation with and endorsement of respective state/territory based Geological Surveys and Geoscience Australia, tourism bodies (i.e. LTOs, RTOs and STOs), tourism associations (e.g. Ecotourism Australia), local and regional communities, universities and vocational training organisations, research bodies, and museums as well as private interest groups such as professional societies (e.g. Australian Geoscience Council, Geological Society of Australia, Australian Speleological Federation, Australian Cave & Karst Management Association etc.) and rock and mineral collector clubs, and to broaden the composition of the start-up team in charge of the Geopark project. These groups should be representative of the scientific, cultural, conservation and socio-economic communities of the area. A wide local consultation process must involve local communities to facilitate local acceptance for the planned Geopark.

### 3. Economic development

One of the main strategic objectives of a Geopark is to stimulate economic activity within the framework of sustainable development. Often, aspects of a region's cultural (e.g. mining) heritage are linked to the geological heritage. Respectful of the environment, the establishment of a Geopark should stimulate, for example, the creation of innovative local enterprises, small businesses and to initiate high quality training courses and new jobs by generating new sources of revenue.

### 4. Education

A Geopark must provide and organise support, tools, and activities to communicate geoscientific knowledge and environmental and cultural concepts to the public (e.g. through museums, interpretive and educational centres, trails, guided tours, popular literature and maps, and modern communication media). It also allows and fosters scientific research and cooperation with universities, a wide discipline of scientists and the local populace. Among the instruments available for the transfer of information are events such as excursions for school classes and teachers, seminars, and scientific lectures for the environmentally and culturally interested public and for residents who enjoy introducing their landscape to visitors.

Within the educational concept, museums, 'discovery centres', interpretive centres and other innovative new digital tools (e.g. Geo Treat) must be developed to promote the principles of geological heritage conservation and the necessity of its safeguarding and protecting. The museums and centres also serve for developing different educational programmes for visitors and local communities.

### 5. Protection and conservation

A Geopark is not specifically a new category of protected area or landscape and can be quite different from what is designated as a National Park or World Heritage Area, and the branding of an area as a Geopark does not necessarily affect the legal status of the land, nor should it limit or restrict agriculture, mineral exploration or mining. For legal protection for certain geosites within the Geopark, however, the authorities responsible for the Geopark must ensure its protection in accordance with local traditions and legislative obligations.

A Geopark explores and demonstrates methods and best practise in conserving geological heritage. Geopark must respect state/territory and national laws relating to the protection of geological heritage. Geopark managers should ensure that tour operators operating within Geoparks are eco-certified or otherwise accredited to protect geoheritage.



## Self-Evaluation Process for Geopark Selection

It is recommended that any applicant seeking approval for a Geopark, must complete the following self-evaluation process

[http://www.globalgeopark.org/UploadFiles/2012\\_5\\_8/Geoparks\\_Self\\_Evaluation\\_Form2013.doc](http://www.globalgeopark.org/UploadFiles/2012_5_8/Geoparks_Self_Evaluation_Form2013.doc)

## Review of Applications for Geopark Establishment

It is also recommended that any application for Geopark establishment accompanied by a completed self-evaluation document be submitted to the nominated State/Territory Environmental Planning Agency which will seek, in the first instance, comments from a Geopark Reference Panel established with the assistance of the Australian Geoscience Council <http://www.agc.org.au> and Ecotourism Australia Ltd [www.ecotourism.org.au](http://www.ecotourism.org.au)

