

Geotourism standing committee on the move!

Established in 2011, the Geotourism Sub Committee of the Standing Committee for Geological Heritage was changed on 18 November 2014 by the GSA Governing Council to become the Geotourism Standing Committee. The Committee comprises the GSA members listed in <http://gsa.org.au/heritage/Geotourism.html>.

The new Standing Committee has been formed at a time of growing international support for geoparks as a way to conserve and promote geoheritage, an issue that is currently being reviewed by Australian governments. In fact, it is understood that an emerging global geoparks initiative aims to establish a network of places of geological importance around the world to help improve their management and promote regional economic development. Through membership of a global network, national geological heritage initiatives can benefit through a global network of exchange and cooperation. A global network is perceived internationally as a promotional brand for conserving geoheritage and promoting sustainable tourism development.

Geotourism continues to attract interest from within the geological profession and from a range of government agencies. Last July at the AESC 2014, a full day Geotourism Symposium was organised in conjunction with the GSA's Earth Sciences History Group. In its 2014 submission to the Australian Government's Draft Australian Heritage Strategy, the AusIMM cited geotourism and geoparks as opportunities for recognition in the strategy.

In October 2014, the Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA) Conference held in Alice Springs included a geotourism workshop, which represented the first opportunity to raise awareness about geotourism to delegates who were focusing on regional development throughout Australia. Being located within one of Australia's first designated national landscapes — the Red Centre National Landscape — enabled an experienced panel of keynote speakers to explain how geotourism can improve visitor engagement, learning and enjoyment.

In November 2014, at the IUCN World Parks Congress in Sydney, geotourism was presented in an e-poster and the then-Subcommittee Chair participated in a workshop segment of the program.

In 2015, the new Standing Committee plans to work closely with the Geotourism Forum of Ecotourism Australia (the peak nature-based tourism industry association) to encourage the development of geotourism initiatives into each of Australia's 16 major national landscapes, as well as participating in the Asia-Pacific Global Eco Conference at Rottnest Island, Western Australia, in November. In addition, the convening of SEGRA 2015 in Bathurst in October will include a further geotourism workshop with the opportunity to promote the geological highlights of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area and Jenolan Caves as well as engage with mining heritage interests in the Central West of NSW.

The Standing Committee is also keen to help organise the AESC 2016 conference tours in South Australia.

GSA members interested in finding out more about the activities of the Standing Committee are invited to join the LinkedIn Discussion Group—Australian Geotourism Development.

ANGUS M ROBINSON

Chair

Geotourism Standing Committee

angus@leisuresolutions.com.au



Large-scale cross-beds in lower Mereenie Sandstone, Kings Canyon, Australia's Red Centre National Landscape. Image courtesy Chris Edgoose.