

2017/2018 Annual Report of the Geotourism Standing Committee of the Geological Society of Australia (GSA)

THE GEOTOURISM STANDING COMMITTEE

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- Professor Ross Dowling OAM, Foundation Professor of Tourism, School of Business and Law, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia
- Mike Freeman (linkage with the AIG)
- A/Professor Bernie Joyce, Earth Sciences School, The University of Melbourne, Victoria
- Bruce Leaver, Chairman, Sapphire Coast Tourism, New South Wales
- Ian Lewis, Honorary Director, Kanawinka Volcanic Geotrails, Victoria/South Australia
- Professor Suzanne Miller, Queensland
- Dr Young Ng, Association for Geoconservation, Hong Kong
- Dr Ian Percival, NSW Geological Survey (representing the Geological Heritage Standing Committee)
- Dave Robson, Associate, Leisure Solutions[®], New South Wales
- Geoff Sharrock (linkage with The AusIMM)
- Michael Vicary, Mineral Resources Tasmania, Tasmania
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The Standing Committee met on four occasions during the year with working groups particularly active during this year in the areas of policy and advocacy, symposia and seminars, and geopark and geotrail development.

During the year, Kasia Gabrys resigned from the Committee as a result of her job relocation to Victoria from the Northern Territory. In addition, early in the year, Alan Briggs was appointed by the Governing Council to join the Standing Committee to represent Western Australia.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A continued uptake in awareness building of the opportunities offered through geotourism through the organisation of workshops at two conferences in Adelaide and Port Augusta, South Australia, and preparatory work in support of the AGCC 2018 event in Adelaide.
- Further support to proposed UNESCO Global Geopark development in two states with the engagement of the Standing Committee continuing to provide advice and facilitation.
- Linked to the Memorandum of Cooperation between the Geological Societies of Australia and China, execution in December 2017 in China of a historic Memorandum of Cooperation

embracing a 'sister park' arrangement signed between the Zhijindong Cave UNESCO Global Geopark and the Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve.

- The establishment of Geotourism Sub Committees in Tasmania and New South Wales.
- The emergence of proposed new geotrail projects in Queensland and Western Australia.
- Continuing discussions with government and the Geoscience Reference Group in regard to furthering the development of geotrails and geoparks in Australia.

GEPARK DEVELOPMENT IN AUSTRALIA

Discussions with the Chief Government Geologists Committee, now known as the Geoscience Reference Group (GWG)

During 2016, the Geotourism Standing Committee commenced a dialogue with the then Chief Government Geologists Committee), a grouping of Chief Executives representing all the state and territory geological surveys as well as Geoscience Australia. This dialogue was focused on explaining the principles of geotourism and delivery mechanisms such as UNESCO Global Geoparks and geotrails. In July 2017, GWG responded to the Standing Committee, noting the following operating trends in Australia relevant to geotourism development.

- The considerable interest in promoting geoheritage for public information and increased tourism revenue in regional Australia.
- The significant efforts by individual State/Territory Geological Surveys and Geoscience Australia in promoting geoheritage by publishing books, pamphlets, GIS-based apps, erecting explanatory signage etc describing sites and geotrails.
- Collaboration between State/Territory Geological Surveys, 'parks and wildlife' agencies, member-based geoscience organisations, tourism bodies, and local governments or regional authorities in their jurisdictions to increase awareness of geo-and mining heritage generally and geoheritage sites, geotrails and areas.
- Many geoheritage sites are contained within and protected by conservation reserves and some State/Territory Geological Surveys have established small geoheritage reserves to further protect important sites.

The GWG then advised the Geotourism Standing Committee of the following views.

1. While more collaboration between interested parties would accelerate development of geoheritage benefits, the lead should probably come from local governments, regional authorities, and tourism bodies who have the most to gain from increased tourism activity.
2. Although geoheritage is not core business for Geological Survey organisations, they are willing to assist with specialist knowledge and where possible, minor funding.
3. Support could be given to the establishment of UNESCO Global Geoparks within existing conservation reserves. Outside of this protection, isolated sites and groups of related sites linked by geotrails should be the focus of geoheritage efforts.

4. Consistent with the position communicated by the EPHC, the GWG does not support the creation of UNESCO Global Geoparks without Commonwealth and State/Territory Government agreement.

UNESCO Global Geoparks

Geotourism attractions are now being developed around the world primarily as a sustainable development tool to support the economic development of local and regional communities. A major vehicle for such development is through the concept of 'geoparks'. A geopark is a unified area with geological heritage of international significance and where that heritage is being used to promote the sustainable development of the local communities who live there.

Geoparks can evolve through a series of levels from 'pre-aspiring', 'aspiring', 'national', 'regional' (e.g. European or Asia-Pacific Regions) to 'global'. There are now hundreds of geoparks around the world. Support to individual geoparks is offered through the Global Geoparks Network Bureau which is currently representing 127 members from 35 countries. The original target of the Global Geoparks Network is establishing 500 geoparks around the world. The number is growing at a rate of about 10 new global geoparks per year.

STOP PRESS. As of 17th April, 2018, UNESCO has announced that a further 13 geological sites in Asia (China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, Japan, and South Korea), Europe, Africa and Canada have become UNESCO Global Geoparks, therefore increasing the global total to 140 within 38 countries. China has increased its total to 37 global sites.

Pre-Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark proposals are currently those projects in Australia undergoing assessment to obtain community and government support prior to any application being lodged with UNESCO.

The process of developing a Pre-Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark involves an 'on ground' assessment of the feasibility of any proposal brought forward by any grouping including government agencies. With compelling regional development imperatives in mind, two such proposals, the Etheridge region of Far North Queensland (some 40,000 square kilometres in area) embracing the entire Shire of Etheridge and the Warrumbungle region embracing three Local Government Areas - Warrumbungle, Gilgandra, and Coonamble located in Northwest NSW (some 27,000 square kilometres in area) have been subject to intensive assessment during 2017, following advice submitted to the Secretary General of the Australian National Commission of UNESCO advising that the 'pre-aspiring' nomination process had commenced. Progress achieved for these projects was reported to at the 5th Asia Pacific Global Geopark Network Symposium held in China in September 2017.

UNESCO Global Geoparks are 'single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2016). Even if an area has outstanding, world-famous geological heritage of outstanding universal value, UNESCO has determined that it cannot be a UNESCO Global Geopark unless the area also has a plan for the sustainable development of the people who live there. To succeed, a UNESCO Global Geopark nomination must have the support of local people.

By raising awareness of the importance of the area's geological heritage in history and society today, UNESCO Global Geoparks provides local people with a sense of pride in their region and strengthens their identification with the area. The creation of innovative local enterprises, new jobs and high quality training courses is stimulated as new sources of revenue are generated through geotourism, while the geological resources of the area are protected.

Of importance in the process is the realisation that 'while a UNESCO Global Geopark must demonstrate geological heritage of international significance, the purpose of a UNESCO Global Geopark is to explore, develop and celebrate the links between that geological heritage and all other aspects of the area's natural, cultural and intangible heritages.' In this context, the first task of the proponent is to address the issue of geological heritage of 'international significance'. In May 2017, the Governing Council of the GSA assigned the Geotourism Standing Committee the role of assessing the international geological merit of the current (and any future) pre-aspiring UNESCO global geopark proposals, based on the advice provided by the appointed geoscience/mining heritage reference groups, provided that any assessments are to be endorsed by the Governing Council before they are made external.

Etheridge Pre-Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark Proposal

For the Etheridge proposal, a highly knowledgeable Geoscience and Mineral Reference Group appointed by Etheridge Shire Council and chaired by Ian Withnall has undertaken a considerable amount of work in defining the international significance of this region located west of the Atherton Tablelands in Far North Queensland, identifying some 20 key geosites in addition to the existing tourism attractions of Undara and Cobbold Gorge and the Talaroo Hot Springs area managed by the Ewamian Aboriginal Corporation. In addition, the reference group has developed a sophisticated GIS map of the region with smartphone connectivity, as well as excellent geological content for the proposed Savannahlander rail geotrail. A heritage specialist has also generated a fascinating overview of the mining heritage of the region.

The assessment process included consultation with all key stakeholders (e.g. indigenous communities, national parks, tourism resorts) undertaking individual self- assessments; consultation with key State Government agencies; and community consultation including information bulletins,

The geological (and natural and cultural heritage) assessment proved the easy part of the process. A relatively short 12 month period allowed for the assessment and nomination completion process, a decision which proved to be far too short to gain full community support.

Whilst National Parks, indigenous groups, and residents of townships were very supportive, because they understand the economic benefits of tourism, agricultural and small scale mining groups as well as gemstone fossickers were not supportive, with a vigorous program implemented to dissuade Council from finalising the application. It was believed that the establishment of a Global Geopark upset the status quo. Issues raised were essentially fears of UNESCO control, more environmental regulation and increased levels of tourism. The labels of 'UNESCO', 'Geopark', 'Ecotourism' etc. raised a range of concerns and fears.

Moreover, landholders, essentially graziers with long-term pastoral leases, feared that the proposed UNESCO affiliation would result in further regulation and restrictions curbing current and future

activities and potentially leading to a World Heritage Listing. Many considered that the large area of the application across the whole Shire which included large land tracts which were considered unlikely to be of interest for tourism. The use of the term 'geopark' which was interpreted by many to imply some form of existing or potential environmental protection (aligned to an expanded national parks network) and would create some form of land tenure at odds to their existing and ongoing land uses. There were also fears that the UNESCO branding will generate a response by the State Government to impose an additional layer of environmental protection, even though UNESCO Global Geopark status does not imply restrictions on any economic activity within a UNESCO Global Geopark where that activity complies with indigenous, local, regional and/or national legislation. These fears were also shared by some elements of the mining industry involved in small scale mining operations.

Facing strong opposition, the proponent Etheridge Shire Council, decided not to proceed with the UNESCO Global Geopark application, and instead to establish a stakeholder Geotourism Advisory Committee chaired by the Mayor to advance geotourism using the natural and cultural assets that have so far been identified.

An Alternative Geotourism Development Strategy for the Etheridge Scenic Area

Etheridge Shire Council is committed to developing tourism along with agriculture and mining as the three-fold basis of their forward regional development planning.

Council has now approved within the Shire of Etheridge, development of a major geotourism strategy which captures the aspirations of the pre-existing 'Unearth Etheridge' tourism strategy, providing additional natural and cultural heritage content; and through collaboration with other adjacent Local Government Authorities, establishment of strong geotrail linkages with geotourism attractions outside of the Shire, including Chillagoe and Herberton. This alternative is focusing on developing an expansive principal focus on key geotourism areas within the Shire of Etheridge but to create linkages with key attractions outside the Shire utilising dedicated geotrails.

<http://bit.ly/2BfAnC2>

The alternative strategy will explore the opportunity of developing a pilot geotrail project for a participating grazier family and assisting the Ewamian Aboriginal Corporation in developing the Talaroo Hot Springs site. In addition, Etheridge Shire Council has expressed interest in redevelopment of the TerrEstrial Visitor Centre with new displays, establishing interpretive signage at Copperfield Gorge at Einasleigh, and assessing the potential of establishing a Geological Time Walk at Georgetown.

The nominated 'Etheridge Scenic Area' will now be developed as a 'defacto geopark', but is now not subject to any assessment process through UNESCO.

Warrumbungle Pre-Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark

In New South Wales, the Warrumbungle proposal focuses on the Warrumbungle National Park which is already included on Australia's National Heritage List, a fact which in itself would seemingly pre-qualify the area as being of international geological significance.

This heritage listed Park extends over a rugged mountainous area of sandstone plateaux and ridges and many prominent trachyte spires, domes and bluffs. The 233 square kilometres of the Park are part of the Warrumbungle Mountains, an eroded volcano of about 13-17 million years in age. In addition to its monumental scenery, the Park contains a varied complex of important plant and animal communities. In July 2016, the Park was the first within Australia to be certified as a Dark Sky Park by the International Dark Sky Association.

The remainder of the Shire areas include pastoral areas as well as native bushland such as parts of the iconic Pilliga Forest. In this instance, however, there is concern within State Government that the establishment of any designation with some form of nominal 'park' status would result in land use conflicts with interests which are anti-development in nature. The Geological Survey of NSW would prefer that the geopark be contained only within the Warrumbungle National Park. It is quite evident that this issue will take some time to resolve even though there is strong support emerging from the State Government agency - Destination NSW that a creation of a UNESCO global geopark will substantially enhance tourism visitation to the region.

Regional Development Australia (RDA) Orana, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sidings Springs Observatory, and local indigenous communities have been identified by the project Steering Committee chaired by the Mayor of Warrumbungle Shire Council.

As the three Councils progress their application, they expect that other partners will choose to join in, including local and regional tourism organisations.

STOP PRESS: At its meeting of 10th April 2018, after considering the views of the Geological Survey of NSW (GSNSW), the project Steering Committee decided to abandon plans to nominate for a UNESCO Global Geopark and instead had noted the offer of the GSNSW to assist in developing an alternative geotourism strategy of the region.

Eurodobbala Shire Council Global Geopark Proposal, South Coast, New South Wales

The Standing Committee is currently providing comprehensive advice to this Local Government Authority about how to initiate an assessment of the 'georegional' attributes of their area, with the intention of determining whether or not a UNESCO Global Geopark nomination could be mounted.

Ongoing Discussions with Geoscience Australia - Defining a Geopark Assessment Process for Australia

The Geotourism Standing Committee has been conferring over the past 12 months with the office of the Acting Chief Scientist of Geoscience Australia with the intent of defining an agreed geopark assessment for Australia, having regard to the views of the GWG.

As a response to experiences learnt from the Etheridge project, it has been suggested in discussions with various stakeholders that Australia should adopt a nomenclature which removes reference to the word 'geopark' and focus instead on communicating the concept of a 'georegion' or 'geoprovince'. Discussions at the Asia Pacific Global Geopark Symposium (China, September 2017) were undertaken with geopark representatives from Japan who shared information about how geopark proposals are processed in their country. as a First Stage at a national level, and then move

forward in a Second Stage only as UNESCO Global Geopark proposals after they have been assessed by the 'Japanese Geopark Committee'. This Committee comprises representatives of the Japanese National Committee of UNESCO, a relevant national government agency and the Japanese Geoparks Network.

It is recognised that this approach, if applied to the Australian situation, offers the opportunity for proponents using the language of georegions (or the like) to explore various alternative options for geotourism development, including a strong focus on the establishment of geotrails between sites of geological merit as interpretive sites, including robust geoheritage sites, some of which may already have been established as geological 'monuments' or recognised in state or national geoheritage registers. It is recognised that some proposals may even emerge from within the areas previously identified by governments as Australian National Landscapes.

Should a geopark proposal be favoured and has gained both community and State/Territory Government support without the direct linkage with UNESCO, it can then be considered on application as a potentially international project, subject to vetting by an agreed assessing body, then the project could be labelled an Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark. Should a project not be considered (by the community, governments or by the assessing body) as suitable as an Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark, it would simply retain the title of a 'Georegion' (or the like).

It should be noted that whilst in Western Australia, work is in progress to establish a geoparks representative body (known as Geoparks WA Inc and with the principal object of 'supporting and promoting the development of Geoparks, Geotourism and Geotrails with a focus in Western Australia'); there is currently no national body in place which performs a similar function. To date, the Geotourism Standing Committee has avoided taking a leading role within the GSA relating to promoting geoparks because of sensitivities relating to potential impact on exploration and mining. However, it is argued that this sensitivity might be removed if the proposed assessment process was established in which the geological surveys were represented in this process, thus enabling the Standing Committee to take on a more proactive geopark leadership role.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE GEOTOURISM STANDING COMMITTEE DURING 2017/2018

1. Continuing Engagement with the Australian National Landscapes Programme and Chinese UNESCO Global Geoparks

Australian National Landscapes

Engagement with the Australian National Landscape Programme has continued.

A number of the Geotourism Standing Committee's members have been actively involved in and have championed the Australian National Landscapes (ANL) Programme because of the opportunity to promote geotourism concepts. The Programme was the first time the tourism sector, nature conservation managers and tourism advocacy organisations had worked closely together to present Australia's top nature tourism experiences. The Programme facilitated coordinated tourism planning and management and provided a focus for international marketing. The Programme was delivered bottom up, with coordinating bodies for each ANL made up of land managers, regional tourism bodies and local government. The system is 'blind'

to land tenure boundaries and in that sense, resembles the geopark structure. Three of the ANLs straddle state borders, demonstrating a unique level of cooperative management.

The Australian National Landscapes Programme included the following regions: Australian Alps (New South Wales/Victoria), Australia's Green Cauldron (New South Wales/SE Queensland border region), Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics area (Queensland), Australia's Red Centre and Australia's Timeless North (Northern Territory), Australia's Coastal Wilderness (New South Wales/Victoria), the Flinders Ranges and Kangaroo Island (South Australia), the Great Ocean Road (Victoria), the Greater Blue Mountains and Sydney Harbour (New South Wales), the Kimberley, Ningaloo-Shark Bay and Great South West Edge (Western Australia), and Tasmania's Island Heritage.

Unfortunately in 2014, the two key participating Australian Government agencies advised that they had stepped back from a central coordination role, and would instead encourage local steering committees and the tourism industry to further advance this concept. However, in 2017 the peak tourism industry lobby group (Tourism and Transport Forum) has released a white paper extolling the virtues of the ANL programme, a move that can only assist in promoting the development of geotourism. The Standing Committee has made written representations to this lobbying group with the expectation that the Committee will be engaged in planned workshops to discuss the future development of these Landscape areas for nature-based tourism. In April 2017, the Geotourism Standing Committee arranged for a geotourism feature on the *Kimberleys* National Landscape to be published in the GEOExPro magazine for petroleum geologists around the world <https://www.geoexpro.com/articles/2017/05/a-wonderful-wild-wilderness>

Other Standing Committee members are directly involved in the former Australian National Landscapes Program. Professor Ross Dowling is the Chair of the Steering Committee for the *Great South West Edge* National Landscape in WA (in which the 2016 SEGRA conference was held in October 2016), and Bruce Leaver plays a key role in the tourism management of *Australia's Coastal Wilderness* Landscape in NSW/Victoria.

Dr Young Ng has been working to promote the Australian National Landscapes as sites to be considered for inclusion in a proposed CCTV documentary filming program now to be undertaken in Australia later in 2018.

Collaboration with the Geological Society of China and Engagement with the China Region

The China connection continues to play a significant role in the work of the Geotourism Standing Committee. On 9th December 2017, a historic Memorandum of Cooperation embracing a 'sister park' arrangement was signed between the Zhijiangdong Cave UNESCO Global Geopark and the Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve. The Reserve's Administrator, Bob Conroy, also a member of the GSA Geotourism Standing Committee, executed this agreement during his visit to the spectacular karst landscape in Guizhou Province in south-west China. Mr Conroy has advised that his organisation looks forward to sharing information and management practices, receiving delegations and greater numbers of visitors from China and negotiating possible staff exchanges. Representing the Standing Committee, Bob Conroy and Dr Young Ng also attended the National Meeting of Tourism Earth Science and Geopark Research Sub Committee of the Geological Society of China.

In September 2017, the Chairman of the Geotourism Standing Committee visited China and Taiwan to address to the 5th Asia-Pacific Global Geopark Network Symposium, Zhijindong Cave Global Geopark, Guizhou Province, China, to tour geological attractions of Guizhou Province and meet with government officials, and to deliver a keynote address to the 2017 Taiwan International Geopark Conference in Taipei. Dr Young Ng also attended the China elements of this engagement.

The tour of this incredibly rich karst formation geological province of Guizhou was arranged by the National Commission on Tourism Earth Science and Geopark of the Geological Society of China and hosted by the Bureau of Geology and Mineral Exploration and Development of Guizhou Province. The visit was led by Professor Anze Chen and Ms Yanjun Yang, the Executive Deputy Secretary General of the National Commission of Tourism Earth Science and Geopark of the Geological Society of China. The tour comprised visits to a number of significant Karst geosites and fossil museums/research centres within the Xingyi and Guanling National Geoparks.

The visit also included detailed discussions with senior governing officials of the City of Xingyi about geopark development, and separately with executive members of the Bureau of Geology and Mineral Exploration and Development of Guizhou Province about potential areas of collaboration between Australia and China. Two areas of interest emerged during the meeting. Firstly, a collaborative proposal predicated on the following assumptions and approach designed to attract a geotourism-primed Chinese market to consider travel to Far North Queensland Region (including Etheridge Shire). Secondly, interest expressed by the Bureau in a collaboration with the University of Tasmania's 3D Visualisation project.

In a meeting with Professor Anze Chen (the China Side signatory of the Memorandum of Cooperation agreement, various matters were discussed. These included the following opportunities.

- * A proposed collaboration between the Zhijindong Cave and Jenolan Caves to be held in Guizhou Province in early December, and whilst in the Province.
- * A proposed collaboration between the Keichousaurus Conservation Museum of Xingyi National Geopark and the South Australian Museum/SA Government in regard to conservation and display of the Ediacaran Fossil assemblages in the Flinders Ranges.
- * Building on the visit of the Mayor of Warrumbungle in 2016 to Fangshan Global Geopark, arrangements to be made by Warrumbungle Shire to invite a delegation from Yandangshan Global Geopark to visit the Warrumbungle National Park.
- * Building on discussions with USYD in 2016, proposed visit by the Chinese University of Geoscience to discuss with USYD a bilateral program of curricula plans with field visit components.
- * Finalise CCTV filming of significant Australian landscapes (including Far NQ and Etheridge) for late 2018.
- * Invitation to Chinese Geotourism delegation to attend the AGC Convention in Adelaide.
- * Tourism Earth Science Curricula Promotion at AUGEN 2018 (to be included in the AGCC 2018 event).

Following the visit to China, the Standing Committee Chair travelled to Taiwan to deliver a keynote address to the 2017 International Geopark Conference in Taiwan; the topic selected was 'the development and community engagement issues associated with the two Australian Pre-Aspiring UNESCO Global Geoparks'. At this conference, he met delegates from a range of other countries (i.e. Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, India, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan, UK, Germany, Poland and New Zealand) – all engaged in the promotion of geopark development. In particular, considerable time was spent conferring with the Chief of the Department of Economic Geology - Mineral Materials for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Vietnam Institute of Geosciences and Mineral Resources. Dr Nguyen is driving Vietnam's Global Geopark development program and intends to visit Australia next year on an exploratory basis to exchange knowledge and experience on the regulatory operating environment for exploration and mining in Australia, in comparison with Vietnamese regulations. Interest was also expressed in promoting cooperation between his agency and Geoscience Australia and Geological Surveys on geological research, especially in the areas of hidden deep mineral resource exploration, and the development of geopark networks in Vietnam and Australia.

Contact in North Asia was also made with researchers in China, Japan and South Korea who expressed some interest in collaborating with Australian researchers in the area of 3D visualisation <http://www.ausgeol.org/> to be used for geosite identification in geotourism, as well as for potential applications in geological hazard mapping in geologically unstable areas of Asia where this need is a core area of interest for government agencies.

2. Conferences/Symposia – Current and Forward Years

2017-2018

South Australia provided two opportunities in 2017 to promote the benefits of geotourism to regional development. With the Australian Geoscience Convention being held in Adelaide in October 2018, a real opportunity has now been created to build momentum for geotourism development.

On 27th November, speaking at the opening of the recent Global Eco conference in Adelaide, the South Australian Minister for Sustainability, Environment & Conservation, the Hon Ian Hunter MLC commented on the potential of geotourism development for South Australia, "Geotourism is (also) an emerging market that South Australia is especially well placed to cater for, with megafauna fossils at the World Heritage Naracoorte Caves, evidence of the world's earliest animals in the Flinders Ranges, and stunning geological formations in parks like the Gawler Ranges, Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges, and the ice-age gem of Hallett Cove right on Adelaide's doorstep."

Geotourism workshops featured at both the Global Eco conference and the SEGRA 2017 conference held at Port Augusta in late October, with the latter event attended by the Hon Geoff Brock MP, Minister for Regional Development and Minister for Local Government. Following a representation to the Minister at this conference, he subsequently advised that the information documentation made available at the conference, and describing the major industrial corridor through the Upper Spencer Gulf Region, was developed as a tool to highlight infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing, mining and other industries in an area of economic growth, and to provide a focus for investment opportunity. He agreed that the focus on nature, landscape, heritage and culture as key focal points for tourism development, implies a geotourism approach.

Geotourism has also been reviewed as part of the preparation of the World Heritage nomination for the Flinders Ranges, initiated at the first 'Experts Workshop' held in August 2016. The subsequent Preliminary Statement of Values Report that was prepared is now being subject to geoscience peer review in a follow-up workshop scheduled for February 2018. Information about this project was also presented at SEGRA 2017 by Justin Holmes of the South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.

In October, the Geotourism Standing Committee co-hosted a **Geotourism Workshop at the Sustainable Economic Regional Australia (SEGRA 2017) conference** in Port Augusta, South Australia. The following presentations were featured.

- Marketing Australia's 'Scenic Areas' – Angus M Robinson
- Tourism of Tomorrow: Digital Transformation: Market Insights – Angus M Robinson
- Digital Tourism Development – Longreach Regional Tourism – Kevin Liepins
- Geoheritage, Geotourism and a South Australian Songline – Ian D Lewis
- Benefits of RV Tourism – Richard Barwick
- Flinders Ranges World Heritage Poster – Justin Holmes

The **Geotourism Workshop forming part of the Global Eco Conference of Ecotourism Australia** was held in Adelaide in November, 2017 with the following presentations.

Geotourism, Ecotourism and Regional Development – Challenges and Opportunities – Angus M Robinson

- Chinese Geotourism and Geoparks: selected cases: Dr Young Ng
- Economic Impact of Geotourism and Geoparks in China: Dr Young Ng
- Geoheritage, Geotours, Geotrails and a South Australian Songline – Ian D Lewis and Angus M Robinson
- Driving Rural Recovery with Geotourism in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia – Alan Briggs
- A Beehive Balancing Act for Ecotourism in the Bungle Bungles – Dennis Williamson
- Time travelling in South Australia: developing opportunities for regional fossil tourism and education – Dr Liz Reed, Dr Helen Macdonald, Professor Sandy Steacy
- Bathe the World: creating global connections through natural hot springs – Charles Davidson

2018 – 2019

The Standing Committee will be working with the Geotourism Forum of Ecotourism Australia in co-convening geotourism sessions at **SEGRA 2018** to be held in Mackay, Queensland over the period 22-24 October and at **Global Eco 2018** in Townsville, Queensland over the period 26-28 November.

The Australian Geoscience Council has invited the Standing Committee to convene a Geotourism session at the AGC Convention (**AGCC 2018**) scheduled for 14-18 October, 2018. The Geotourism and Geoheritage Sub-theme will explore the interplay between geology and contemporary societal activity such as tourism, nature conservation and stewardship of our natural and industrial heritage. It will consider the impact that digital transformation is having on the ability to understand and visualise our planet. In this way, the sub-theme will explore the past, present and future relationships between people and the rocks beneath their feet.

Also a Geotourism Preconference Workshop will explain the philosophy of geotourism, economic outcomes, issues of regions, economic benefits versus environment protection. The workshop will also show participants how to develop a 'geotourism story' around interpretation on the holistic nature of geotourism, geotrails and geoparks based on outstanding landscapes and geology, incorporating both biodiversity and cultural characteristics (both post-European settlement and indigenous), as well as maximising the value of incorporating mining heritage (both past and present). Issues relating to seeking government approval and community engagement will also be covered. Insights about the impact of digital transformation including development of smartphone applications, website and visitor centre enhancements will also be shared.

The Standing Committee has been working closely with Dr Ian Percival of the **Linnean Society of NSW** for a planned natural heritage symposia (25-26 September, 2018) to be in Coonabarabran, NSW to focus on any aspect of the **natural history of the Warrumbungle National Park, Mount Kaputar National Park, and related areas of Miocene-age volcanic activity in Northwest NSW**, specifically on (1) regional geology and geophysics, (2) palaeontology, (3) geomorphology and soils, (4) floral and faunal species (particularly native plants and animals), their distribution and ecology, and (5) the effects on the biota of the recent fires in 2013 and the subsequent recovery of plant and animal communities. Talks on the geoheritage and biodiversity significance of the volcanic features, and the geotourism potential of the region, are also expected.

Geotourism Standing Committee members represent key speakers at an **International Workshop focused on the business of geotourism and geoparks** to be held in Perth, Western Australia on the 14th May 2018. Whilst in Perth, the Standing Committee Chair is scheduled to address the Western Australian Division on the benefits of geotourism.

A number of Standing Committee members are scheduled to represent Australia at the **8th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks 2018** to be held at the Adamello- Brenta UNESCO Global Geopark, Trentino, Italy in September.

3. Achievements of the State/Territory Based Geotourism Sub Committees

South Australian Geotourism Sub-Committee - Ian D Lewis, Chair

The SA Geotourism Subcommittee met several times during 2017, usually on Level 7, 101 Grenfell St near the Geological Survey of South Australia and we acknowledge the generous permission given for use of those rooms. Our able Chairperson for the year, retiring at the end of 2017, was Associate Professor Graziella Caprarelli and we thank her for her enthusiastic leadership.

Committee members share a common interest across geotourism, geoheritage, field guides and maps, with several members belonging to other like-minded GSA subcommittees. Meetings examined brochures and maps of geotrails, promotional initiatives for geotourism and excellent Geopark literature from Europe (provided by Professor Pat James from several overseas trips).

The 'nature tourism' movement has been developing in various parts of Australia, including South Australia, for several years and together with 'ecotourism', both approaches are now recognising the important 'framework' role of geotourism and its contribution to understanding and increased awareness of landscape values. This is a positive development that has the potential to increase the value of the work of our GSA members in several of our subcommittees.

Geotourism also boosted its profile through presentations from our subcommittee to two conferences in South Australia last year - the SEGRA (Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia) conference in Port Augusta (an annual regional development conference moving between States) and the GlobalEco Conference in Adelaide in November. At both events, dedicated geotourism seminars were held, covering such topics as development initiatives for the Flinders Ranges, geotourism progress and perspectives in other States, fossil tourism, developments from overseas (particularly China) , and one fascinating presentation from Victoria about 'Hot Spring' Geotourism based around travelling to spa sites in Australia and elsewhere. This indicates the wide range of interests in the field of geotourism.

During the year, the Fitzgerald Bay Stranded Shingle Ridge just north of Whyalla in Upper Spencer Gulf was listed on the State Heritage list as part of a strategy to increase the some 150 'natural' heritage sites to balance the some 2000 'built' heritage sites. Many thanks to Associate Professor Vic Gostin for his assistance to the Chair in preparing and refining this submission.

At the GSSA Discovery Day in December, Dr Carmen Krapf unveiled her new on-line Geotrail of Gawler Range rock samples - Discovery Trails: The Rocks of the southern margin of the Gawler Range Province – from basement to cover - December 2017 - Carmen B E Krapf and Christie Gerrard. This discovery trail features rock samples that were collected during the Mineral Systems Drilling Program (MSDP) along the southern margin of the Gawler Ranges spanning from the basement to the Gawler Range Volcanic Province through to its cover. The trail can be viewed at: <https://discoverytrails.sarig.sa.gov.au/story/3> Congratulations are extended to Carmen and Christie for this initiative.

Tasmanian Geotourism Sub Committee - Michael Vicary, Chair

The Tasmanian Geotourism Sub Committee was established in April 2017 and currently has about 12 members. The major project has focused on the continued development of the West Coast Geotrail in collaboration with Mineral Resources Tasmania and the West Coast Council. Two additional interpretive signs have been produced for the Lake Burbury and Trial Harbour Geosites. Other activities include:

- A GSA monthly meeting focusing on issues faced by Geotourism in Tasmania
- A presentation by Keith Corbett for the GSA/AUSIMM Geoscience conference in Strahan.
- Assisted in the development of and testing of the Australian Geology Travel Maps android application.
- Ongoing discussions about the production of a Tasmanian Geotourism map/application.
- Discussions with Dale Williams about the development of a Geotrail on Flinders Island.
- Discussions with the Glebe Hill Landcare Group about potential geological signage in a reserve near Hobart.
- Conducted an excursion highlighting aspects of the local geology as part of the Lost Rocks Art and Literature Exhibition at the Rosny Farm.
- Conducted an excursion to Mount Wellington for Scotch Oakburn School students.
- Local promotion through several Gem and Mineral Fairs.

New South Wales Geotourism Sub Committee - Dr Boyd B Dent, Chair

In February 2018 the NSW Division formed the Geotourism Sub-Committee with Boyd Dent as inaugural Convenor; and at the same time appointed him to the NSW Divisional Committee.

On initial analysis, the role at the NSW level is initially to focus on the concepts of geotrails, linkages to geotourism sites and encouragement for the development of these. Internationally recognised geoparks is an issue more appropriately handled at the Standing Committee level, until hands-on local involvement is required. Attracting funding to support various activities, teasing-out existing documentation of relevance and putting it together will be an early endeavour. Opening up lines of communication to communities (including Local Government) and organisations to assist in geotourism activities will follow.

What has become immediately apparent is the close relationship in many instances between geoheritage sites and values and associated geotourism opportunities. These cannot be ignored at the ground – operational level: one informs the other. It is intended to closely build on this. The effect can be seen readily in the big-picture Geotourism Map; e.g. is The Three Sisters – a geological erosion remnant – a tourism lookout – an iconic component of a National Heritage Site – a cultural feature – or just a bunch of slightly tilted sedimentary rocks (that happen to be at the head of Sydney’s largest drinking water catchment)?

The development of the second edition of the NSW Geotourism Map in conjunction with Cartoscope, is being ably managed by Standing Committee member Dave Robson, and is a high priority matter. A budget allocation from NSW Division is being sought to assist with this project, with the substantial sponsorship of the Australian Geoscience Council for Edition 2 being acknowledged with much appreciation. Other significant \$5,000 contributions have been gratefully received from the Sydney Mineral Exploration Discussion Group (SMEDG) and the AIG.

The year is expected to develop along the following path/time allocation: 3 months – familiarisation; 4-9 months resource development with a view to (i) a Sydney ‘old area’ geotrails concept; (ii) a paper for AGCC 2018 in Adelaide; (iii) possible notes for Mackay SEGRA; (iv) engagement with the Hunter Valley Branch; (v) the Geotourism Map and existing known endeavours as they emerge e.g. Eurobodalla, Port Macquarie and Warrumbungles.

Some guiding thoughts have been developed for this early period:

1. Empowering local geoscientists (regional-, site-, city- based) to be informal ambassadors for geotourism. When they talk to, or participate in activities with, friends, family, neighbours, colleagues, professional or community groups. As and when a situation arises, a knowledgeable geoscientist could for instance say ... “have you seen/visited “ in non-threatening conversations, and then proceed to mention or more deeply discuss a geological phenomenon.
2. Development of sprouted seeds, saplings and low-hanging fruit. There’s a need to not let slip away initiatives to-hand, because they are most likely to have the potential to be fulfilled. For this reason existing endeavours will initially receive proportionally more support than new ones.
3. Spreading the word with existing tools. An initiative to be researched and hopefully trialled is to make contact with conference and tour organisers of different disciplines

and interests. If we are able to cheaply add-in geotourism reference material in travel and out-of-conference ideas packs, this might bring some benefit and reinforcement.

4. Sydney's 'old area' geotrail. How many visitors (let alone 'locals') recognise the rich maritime and geological history of Australia's first settlement as they wander the various parts of Sydney? GSA previously developed ideas leading to the "Rocks Walk", so part of the concept is not new. It is considered that there is much to build on in geotourism terms from Haymarket to Potts Point around the shoreline and over the ridges. It is proposed to develop reworked entity materials of all kinds and craft "Sydney Geo-Site" (for want of another term at present) – trails and walks to inform and educate. Aspects may be further developed by professionally hosted tours etc.

Dave Robson, in association with Dr Kelsie Dadd, has been facilitating a collaborative venture being directed by Centennial Parklands (and involving the three major botanical gardens in Sydney) aimed at developing a Sydney Basin Geotrail. So far Dr Dadd has convened an annual interpretative display (as part of the National Science Week program) at the Mt Annan Botanical Gardens and Centennial Parklands, and has scheduled an additional display at the Blue Mountains Botanical Gardens at Mt Tomah in the 2018 program.

Victoria

Whilst a Sub Committee is yet to be established in Victoria, Associate Professor Bernie Joyce has commenced discussions with colleagues with this concept in mind. Bernie has kept the Standing Committee informed of land use conflict developments impacting on significant geosites at Harman's Valley and Warrnambool in Western Victoria and Mt Macedon, just west of Melbourne.

Other States

It is also hoped that as a result of continuing discussions held with representatives of the West Australia Division and the AIG, a higher level of focus will be directed at assisting in promoting geotourism development in both Western Australia and Queensland. The establishment by the AIG of the John Forrest National Park Geotrail in Western Australia being ably championed by Standing Committee Member, Mike Freeman is acknowledged as a significant achievement.

4. Geotrail Proposals

With input from the Geotourism Standing Committee, active proposals are continuing to be being implemented or considered by various government agencies and/or university groups in Western Australia (Murchison, Geraldton), Tasmania (West Coast Living Earth GeoTrail), Queensland (Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, Dig the Tropics, Boulder Opal), New South Wales (Port Macquarie), South Australia (various projects), Victoria (Kanawinka/Great Ocean Road area), and Western Australia (John Forrest Geotrail).

5. Publicity and Promotion

As a result of inspired support from the GSA Governing Council, a key feature of the GSA's new web site is the continuing development of a new 'public' portal focusing on geotourism

<http://bit.ly/2irGlem>

Membership of the LinkedIn Discussion group '**Australian Geotourism Development**' now totals 342 members and continues to grow at a rate of some 20% per annum.

A repository for the posting of geotourism industry information is also available at

<http://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/index.php/geotourism-industry-groups/>

Regular articles promoting geotourism continue to appear in the publications of the GSA (i.e. The Australian Geologist), the AIG and The AusIMM, whenever the opportunity arises.

Two ABC Radio interviews were conducted during the year – one interview focusing on an announcement by the Eurobodalla Shire Council about interest in investigating the nomination of a UNESCO Global Geopark, and the other interview in relationship to interest in the Georgetown Inlier geological history and geotourism generally in Far North Queensland.

Angus M Robinson FAusIMM (CP)

Chair, Geotourism Standing Committee and Designated Spokesperson on Geotourism for the Australian Geotourism Council

1st May, 2018

Attendance at Standing Committee Meetings:

Member	9th May 2017	8th August 2017	14th November 2017	6th February 2018
Angus M Robinson	√	√	√	√
Alan Briggs		√	√	√
Bob Conroy	√		√	√
Ross Dowling	√		√	√
Michael Freeman	√	√	√	
Kasia Gabrys	√			
Bernie Joyce		√	√	
Bruce Leaver	√	√	√	√
Ian D Lewis	√	√	√	
Suzanne Miller	√			
Young Ng			√	
Ian Percival	√	√	√	
David Robson		√	√	
Geoffrey Sharrock	√	√	√	
Michael Vicary	√		√	√
Monica Yeung	√	√	√	√