

2018/2019 Annual Report of the Geotourism Standing Committee of the Geological Society of Australia (GSA), for Period Ending 31 March 2019

THE GEOTOURISM STANDING COMMITTEE

- Chair - Angus M Robinson[#], Managing Partner, Leisure Solutions[®], New South Wales (1 April 2018 to 19 November 2018)
- Mark Asendorf, Marmel Enterprises, Northern Territory
- Alan Briggs, PhD candidate, Murdoch University, Western Australia
- Bob Conroy, Administrator, Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust, New South Wales
- Professor Ross Dowling OAM, Honorary Professor of Tourism, School of Business & Law, Edith Cowan University, Western Australia
- Mike Freeman (linkage with the AIG), Western Australia
- A/Professor Bernie Joyce, Earth Sciences School, The University of Melbourne, Victoria
- Bruce Leaver AM, Chair, Greater Blue Mountains WHA Advisory Committee, NSW (1 April to 7 November 2018)
- Ian Lewis, Honorary Director, Kanawinka Volcanic Geotrails, Victoria/South Australia
- Dr Young Ng, Association for Geoconservation, Hong Kong
- Dr Ian Percival, representing the Geological Heritage Standing Committee (1 April 2018 to 14 December 2018)
- Dave Robson, Associate, Leisure Solutions[®], New South Wales
- Geoff Sharrock, linkage with The AusIMM (1 April 2018 to 13 November 2018)
- Michael Vicary, Mineral Resources Tasmania, Tasmania
- Monica Yeung, Gondwana Dreaming, ACT

Expert Spokesperson on Geotourism for the Australian Geoscience Council

The Geotourism Standing Committee (GSC) met formally by teleconference on three occasions during the year with members particularly active during this year in the areas of policy and advocacy, symposia and seminars, and geopark and geotrail development. An informal gathering of some members was also held at AGCC in October.

The GSC notes with much appreciation the outstanding service of retiring member, Bruce Leaver AM as a longstanding member of the GSA Geotourism interest groups dating back to 2011. The support and commitment of other retiring members, Dr Ian Percival and Geoff Sharrock, representing the interests of the Geological Heritage Standing Committee and The AusIMM respectively is also acknowledged with many thanks.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A continued uptake in awareness building of the opportunities offered through geotourism through the organisation of a geotourism session and workshop at the AGCC conference in Adelaide and various workshops at conferences held, in Perth WA, Mackay and Roma Qld, and Coonabarabran NSW.
- Continuing discussions with Geoscience Australia in regard to furthering the development of geotrails and geoparks in Australia through development of a proposed 'georegional' assessment process for formative geopark development (now being adopted in Western

Australia), but considered as a topic to be discussed as part of an AGC endorsed, draft National Geotourism Strategy.

- Ongoing work in briefing government agencies and other interested parties about geotourism, geotrails and geoparks, <https://bit.ly/2A3tTHR>
- Publication and launch of the Second Edition of the NSW Geotourism map.
- The proposed formal establishment of a Geotourism Sub Committee in Western Australia.
- The emergence of proposed new geotrail projects in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, Tasmania, and Norfolk Island.
- Agreement obtained from AJES for the GSC to coordinate a special GSA publication on geotourism.

GEPARK DEVELOPMENT IN AUSTRALIA

Discussions with Geoscience Australia

Since December 2017, discussions have been undertaken with Dr Adam Lewis (then Acting Chief Geoscientist) of Geoscience Australia (GA) with the objective of developing a new two stage process for considering geopark nominations based on a process successfully adopted in Japan; the first stage to involve an extensive assessment of areas (i.e. georegions) identified as being of geological significance. In June, the GSC sought approval of the Governing Council of the GSA to consider a process for firstly assessing and then seeking government and community support for the concept of UNESCO Global Geoparks establishment in Australia, within a proposed framework of a National Geotourism Strategy to be developed for consideration by the Australian and State/Territory Governments under the current COAG arrangements. In response, the then President of the GSA, Dr Caroline Tiddy, advised that the Executive Committee of the Governing Council had discussed this proposal and believes that Geoscience Australia (GA) should be taking the lead in organising the forum, given their idea of developing a National Geotourism Strategy. The President also advised that as a member-driven organisation, the GSA is not in a position to develop such a strategy. Instead, Dr Tiddy argued that the GSA role should be, through advice from the GSC, to provide information and advice towards the strategy.

However, by the end of July 2018, GA had formed the view that it has no activity around a national geotourism strategy and had no intention of developing such a strategy at this time. Instead, it was suggested that any such strategy could be developed by the GSA under the GSC's terms of reference, because such a strategy would help to remove some of the confusion that exists around the 'why' of geoparks. As a means of progressing this matter, given conflicting views about how a national strategy could be developed, in a report to the GSA Governing Council meeting of 22nd August, it was suggested instead that of the available options to be discussed is that such a role could be initiated by the Government Geoscience Working Group (GWG) in association with the AGC.

During the course of the AGCC, this issue was canvassed in various conversations with the leadership of GA and AGC, as well as with Dr Chris Yeats, Immediate Past Chairman of the GWG. Given that AGC's Strategic Plan <http://www.agc.org.au/resources/agc-strategic-plan-2015-2020/> under the pillar of 'geoscience advocacy' actually identifies the pursuit of geotourism, the response of working towards the development of a national geotourism strategy was strongly supported by these leaders.

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. 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.

As of 17th April 2018, UNESCO has announced 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.

On 21st February 2019, the 4th open session of the International Geosciences and Geoparks Programme took place in Paris and determined that the new aspiring Geopark applications for the UNESCO Global Geoparks to be evaluated during 2019, are:

New applications:

1. Belitong, Indonesia
2. Bohol, Philippines
3. Cliffs of Fundy, Canada
4. Dak Nong, Vietnam
5. Discovery, Canada
6. Granada, Spain
7. Hantangang River, Republic of Korea
8. Kula-Salihli, Turkey (Extension)
9. Lauhanvuori-Haameenkangas, Finland
10. Maestrazgo, Spain
11. Majella, Italy
12. Waitaki Whitestone, New Zealand
13. Xiangxi, China
14. Zhangye, China

Extension Requests:

1. Dunhuang, China
2. Haute Provence, France
3. Troodos, Cyprus
4. Zinjindong Cave, China.

Pre-Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark proposals have been 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 and 2018, 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.

In response to a well-orchestrated campaign by graziers to stop the project, the proponent, Etheridge Shire Council, decided in 2017 not to proceed with a UNESCO application and instead has been exploring an alternative Geotourism Development Strategy for the Etheridge Scenic Area.

The Geoscience/ Mineral Heritage Reference Group (chaired by Ian Withnall) has been meeting throughout the year to discuss several project proposals for realisation of the Etheridge geotourism strategy that will explore the opportunity of developing a pilot geotrail project for participating graziers 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. <http://bit.ly/2BfAnC2>.

Warrumbungle Pre-Aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark

At its last meeting on 10th April 2018, after considering the views of the Geological Survey of NSW (GSNSW) facilitated by the Chair of the GSC, the project Steering Committee decided to abandon plans to nominate for a UNESCO Global Geopark, and instead, accept the offer of the GSNSW to assist in developing an alternative geotourism strategy for the region, that would include the development of a major volcanic province geotrail supported by a brochure, website and smart phone application.

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

The Chair of the GSC briefed Eurodobballa Shire Council on 5th June 2018 about the current situation relating to geotourism development, and the concept of looking first at a ‘Georegion’ assessment was well received. A general briefing document has been prepared for public dissemination <https://bit.ly/2A3tTHR>

Maintenance of Global Geopark Linkages

GSC members Alan Briggs and Dr Young Ng, accompanied by Professor Patrick James of the South Australian Geotourism Sub Committee, represented Australia at the **8th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks 2018** held at the Adamello-Brenta UNESCO Global Geopark, Trentino,

Italy in September; Dr Young delivering a presentation titled: 'When geoscientists meet painters; interpreting natural landscape in Danxiashan Global Geopark of China'.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE GEOTOURISM STANDING COMMITTEE DURING 2018/2019

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

Australian National Landscapes

Engagement with matters relating to the discontinued Australian National Landscape Programme has continued, with a particular focus this year through representation by GSC members on the Flinders Ranges World Heritage Expert Group.

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

Based on a meeting with Professor Anze Chen (the China Side signatory of the Memorandum of Cooperation agreement in September 2017, work during 2018 has focused on

- 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.
- Finalising CCTV filming of significant Australian landscapes.
- Facilitating discussions between Guizhou Province and the Cairns Regional Council to establish a bi-lateral regional relationship.
- Fostering dialogue between the Chair of the National Rock Garden and the Director of the Geological Museum of China in Beijing; it is understood that the Chinese Side has already started to formulate some ideas about how a bi-lateral collaboration might be undertaken.

In addition, considerable time was spent by the Chair of the GSC in organising for Dr Nguyen (Chief of the Department of Economic Geology - Mineral Materials for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Vietnam Institute of Geosciences and Mineral Resources) a tour to meet 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. However, this tour was cancelled to be rescheduled as part of a Prime Minister-led delegation at some future time.

2. Conferences/Symposia

GSC members represented key speakers at an International Workshop focused on the 'Business of Geotourism and Geoparks' held in Perth on the 14th May 2018. Whilst in Perth, the GSC Chair addressed members of the GSA Western Australian Division on the benefits of geotourism.

In late September, geoscientists were amongst a large grouping of natural heritage specialists who met in Coonabarabran to attend the 2018 Linnean Society of NSW 'Natural History Field

Symposium', with the theme of 'Volcanoes of northwest New South Wales: exploring relationships among geology, flora, fauna and fire'. This event was splendidly organised by one of its Councillors, Dr Ian Percival, who also serves as a member of the GSC as a representative of the Geological Heritage Standing Committee. One of the speakers at the Symposium, Simone Meakin, Manager, Publications & Outreach of the Geological Survey of NSW discussed the topic, 'Geotales and Geotrails: Collaborative geotourism initiatives and implications for the Warrumbungles Region'. Simone was able to point out that the development of the Port Macquarie Coastal Geotrail was inspired by the Linnean Society of New South Wales Field Symposium on 'Geotourism, Geodiversity and Geoheritage in Australia' that was convened in Port Macquarie in September 2010, involving initially geologists of both the Geological Survey of NSW and the Geological Society of Australia.

The AGCC 2018 event in Adelaide in October delivered several activities to whet the appetite of geoscientist delegates. The pre-conference workshop co-convened by Professor Ross Dowling OAM and the Chair included supporting presentations by South Australian Geotourism Sub Committee representatives, Ian D Lewis and Professor Patrick James, with additional contributions from Bronwyn Witham and Lauren Swann. Topics discussed included geotrail development, mining heritage, developments in Canada, and the rationale for seeking support for the establishment of a national geotourism strategy. Delegates were also delighted to receive an impromptu presentation from renowned geoscience communicator, Professor Iain Stewart, who was attending AGCC as one of the invited keynote speakers.

On the second day of the conference, GSA President Caroline Tiddy conceived and organised a full day plenary session that included a series of contributions based on the theme of 'Big Issues and Ideas'. This included in the 'geoscience education and new modes of communication' segment, a keynote presentation by Professor Ross Dowling OAM on interpreting geology for non-specialists through geotourism.

Geotourism was revisited again on the following day through two well attended sessions, featuring firstly a most informative keynote address about the development of geoparks and geotourism based on the experience in Malaysia and the Asia Pacific Region delivered by Professor Emeritus Dr Ibrahim Komoo, the Senior Vice President of the Global Geopark Network and formerly President of the Geological Society of Malaysia.

Dr Ron Boyd from Newcastle University provided an overview of the recently completed Port Macquarie Coastal Geotrail in NSW. Presentations from GSC members Ross Dowling ('essential elements of geotourism interpretation'), Alan Briggs ('findings from a study of aboriginal cultural association with geosites and geotourism in the Gunduwa Conservation Region of WA'), Ian D Lewis ('developing geotrails for a large continent'), Ken Moule ('geotourism and the digital age') and the GSC Chair ('opportunities for geotourism development in Australia'), were supported by Patrick James ('virtual reality making outback and armchair geotourism real in SA'), Bronwyn Witham ('what do non-geologists think of geotourism'), and Lauren Swann ('discovering geological stories in every postcode through online, self-guided field trips').

The GSC Chair convened geotourism sessions at **SEGRA 2018** held in Mackay, Queensland over the period 22-24 October. Presentations embraced the following topics.

- Engaging with the Greater China Region: Case Studies from Taiwan and China.
- Self-drive and Geotourism: Outback Queensland Tourism.
- A New Approval Process for Major Geotourism Projects Under Review.
- Growing Our Regions Using Place-Based Approach to Workshop Development.

On 2nd November, in Roma, at the Qld Outback Queensland Tourism Association Awards and Symposium, the Chair delivered a presentation on 'Geotourism Developments in Australia'.

All presentations delivered at the above-mentioned events, at which geotourism was promoted, are available for download from <https://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/geotourism-industry-groups/>

In August 2019, SEGRA will be held at Barooga in the NSW Riverina and arrangements are being made by the GSC for the Geotourism Spotlight Session to be coordinated by the GSNSW with a focus on 'public geoscience' outreach, of which geotourism is a key component.

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

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

In the opening address to the Global Eco conference in Adelaide in November 2017, the then South Australian Minister of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, the Hon Ian Hunter MLC stated:

"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."

Since that time the State Government changed hands from Labor to Liberal, but the incoming Minister has reaffirmed the Government's enthusiasm and commitment towards these aims, broadly and in support of the Department's efforts in this area.

Preparations are being made for the celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the amazing Pleistocene megafauna fossils in the Naracoorte Caves, which were also the subject of a State Heritage registration to include many caves and features which surround the two specified World Heritage sites. This promotes the area more widely and protects its broader cave and scientific assets. It has been said by cave managers and karst environmentalists that geotourism itself has been a fundamental aspect of show caves for well over a century! In conjunction with the 50th, the Australian Cave and Karst Management Association is planning a special three-day intensive geo-appreciation course for Naracoorte and interstate Cave Guides to raise the appreciation of the geological setting of these features, and even more importantly to 'translate' the geo- and palaeo-science to the public, enhancing the values of geotourism.

The proposed serial listing of six important geosites in the central and northern Flinders Ranges is proceeding apace with the strong support of the South Australian Government. A series of 'Experts' meetings have been held to prepare a substantial Technical Report focusing on several proposed World Heritage themes – the ancient pre-life continents, the dawn of life in early oceans, the Ediacaran Period identified by eminent geologist Dr Reg Sprigg AO, and now an geological epoch in its own right, the explosion of life after several "Snowball Earth" ice ages and possibly aided by the massive Acraman Meteor impact in the Cambrian, and textbook geological features dramatically

exposed all through the ranges, exemplified by Wilpena Pound, the Arkaroola ranges complex (documented originally by Sir Douglas Mawson) and the 40 kilometre Brachina Gorge Geotrail, excellently signposted by the South Australian Geological Survey and the GSA working together.

Hallett Cove is now the subject of a grand proposal to develop a serial –site urban National Park involving several other riverside reserves, historical sites, opening the Happy Valley Reservoir to the public and Hallett Cove itself and its neighbouring Merino Coastal Park, all to be collectively known as the Glenthorne National Park. This is a combination of geosites with cultural and natural components, involving many local communities in an approach which mirrors the aspirations and objectives of UNESCO Geoparks found overseas.

The encouragement to develop geotrails to link such multiple sites is commencing within the South Australian Geotourism Subcommittee, with private examples constructed by the Nature Conservation and the Nature Foundation at Hiltaba in the Gawler Ranges and at Witchelina beyond the northern Flinders Range. Similar concepts are being scoped to link the six northern Flinders Ranges proposed World Heritage sites. Smaller but significant Geotrail ideas are being developed to enhance the newly-opened Kangaroo Island Walking Trail (western end of the island) and volcanic and karst sites around the Mount Gambier volcanic complex, where upgrading of interpretive geosigns for the visiting public has just been completed by the local City Council.

During the year, National Geographic filmed part of a nature documentary on the Blue Lake and volcanic craters of Mount Gambier and the clearwater sinkholes of this extensive karst. The BBC programme ‘Coast’ with Neil Oliver filmed the natural landscapes and spectacular coastal geology of western Eyre Peninsula and the Nullarbor Plains and Cliffs. Both events involved strong input from the South Australian Geotourism subcommittee representation. International attention on South Australia’s outstanding Geosites has been very welcome.

The South Australian Geotourism, Geoheritage and Field Guide Subcommittees have some overlapping memberships and the foci of each subcommittee contribute to ideas and concepts of the others, enhancing the broad field of Geotourism in South Australia going forward.

Tasmanian Geotourism Sub Committee - Michael Vicary, Chair

The Tasmanian Geotourism Sub Committee was established in April 2017 and currently has some 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:

- Development 10 interpretation panels for the Furneaux Islands Geotrail.
- Contributed to an interpretation Panel for the Glebe Hill Landcare Group.
- Provided geological descriptions and photos for the Cradle Coast geosite webpage
- Ongoing discussions about the production of a Tasmanian Geotourism map/application.
- Local promotion through several Gem and Mineral Fairs.

New South Wales Geotourism Sub Committee

Since May 2018, the Chair of the NSW Geotourism Sub-Committee has been vacant as a result of the resignation of inaugural Chair Dr Boyd Dent.

In his absence 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 organised an additional display at the Blue Mountains Botanical Gardens at Mt Tomah in the 2018 program.

Other State/Territory Based Activities

New South Wales Geotourism Map

A highlight of the AGCC was the launch by Dr Chris Yeats, Executive Director of the Geological Survey of NSW of the second edition of the NSW Geotourism Map. The publication of this map by Cartoscope Pty Ltd was made possible by the generous major sponsorship by the NRMA, the AGC, the NSW Government (through the auspices of the Geological Survey), the Australian Institute of Geoscientists, the Sydney Mineral Exploration Discussion Group (SMEDG), and McElroy Bryan and Associates. Other sponsors included the Geological Society of Australia, the Geological Society of Australia (NSW Division), Leisure Solutions®, National Parks and Wildlife Service of NSW, Careys Cave, Age & Fishes Museum, as well as 12 local government organisations.

120,000 copies of this map are being distributed throughout visitor information centres, schools and the NRMA. The long-standing efforts of GSC member David Robson in ensuring the success of this project is acknowledged with much appreciation. The additional support of the AGC in distributing copies of the map at AGCC has been most helpful in raising awareness of this initiative amongst attending geoscientists.

Queensland

A geotourism workshop at SEGRA 2018 in MacKay in late October and the Outback Queensland Tourism Association Conference in Roma has focused on self-drive geotrail development in Western Queensland and with a small grouping of technology specialists (under the guidance of GSC member Ken Moule) agreeing to work together to review an opportunity for developing an integrated digital platform (utilising smartphone, 3D visualisation and augmented reality technologies) for enhanced geotrail and visitor interpretation centre interpretation.

Western Australia

There has been continuous activity in Western Australia (WA) with the incorporation of Geoparks WA and interaction with the GSA WA branch in discussions about establishing a GSA Geotourism Subcommittee.

A submission has been made to the GSA Western Australia Division to formally establish a Geotourism Subcommittee. This will be followed up later this year.

Geoparks WA

It should be noted that work is continuing to 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. Members of Geoparks WA also include members of the proposed WA Geotourism Sub Committee.

The Murchison Development Commission and seven shire councils in WA have publicly announced that they are now supporting the concept of a 'Georegion' assessment with an initial focus on major geotrail development.

It is noted that the Western Australian 'State Planning Strategy 2050' seeks to promote Rottnest Island as a geopark. Rottnest Island has engaged Geoparks WA to develop a submission to its board in 2019.

Geoparks WA has been working with several local government authorities in pre-aspiring geoparks in assisting with processes and establishing profiles across the State. The Murchison and Wheatbelt regions continue to develop as 'georegions' with a focus initially on establishing geotrails. In the northern Perth metropolitan region discussions are under way in consideration of a geopark focusing on the karst topography around Yanchep.

<https://www.slideshare.net/leisuresolutions/geoparks-initiatives-in-western-australia-alan-briggs>
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It is noted that in May, Geoparks WA and FACET co-hosted an international workshop on the 'Business of Geotourism and Geoparks'. Later in the year, a Geoparks WA workshop showcased the connections people and communities have with the landscape. International, regional and local speakers presented their connections and views. The workshop was designed to establish a way forward for Geoparks in Western Australia.

Victoria

Whilst a Geotourism Sub Committee is yet to be established in Victoria, Associate Professor Bernie Joyce has continued 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.

4. Geotrail Developments

Inspired by the feasibility studies for the Living Earth project undertaken in Tasmania in 2013, the GSC decided to promote the concept of geotrails at the SEGRA 2015 conference at Bathurst, NSW. The presentation <https://www.slideshare.net/leisuresolutions/segra2015-geotourism-angusmrobinson> offered a new definition for geotrails modelled on the GSA definition of geotourism and illustrated how the Red Centre Way in the Northern Territory could also be developed as a major geotrail. A presentation by GC Member Ian D Lewis introduced the concept of the discontinued Kanawinka Global Geopark being developed instead as a series of linked geotrails as well as illustrating the way in which Canada has developed the concept on a national basis.

The GSC was able to provide early advice about geotrail concepts to the developers of the Port Macquarie Coastal Geotrail that was finally launched in May 2018.

With input from the GSC, active geotrails proposals are continuing to be being implemented or considered by various government agencies and/or university groups in Western Australia

(Murchison, Geraldton , and John Forrest and Meckering Geotrails), Tasmania (West Coast Living Earth GeoTrail, Furneaux Islands Geotrail), Queensland (Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, Dig the Tropics, Boulder Opal), New South Wales (Port Macquarie – now completed), South Australia (various projects), Victoria (Kanawinka/Great Ocean Road area), and Norfolk Island.

In the Northern Territory, GSC member Mark Asendorf has reported that two well defined trans-continental ‘road adventures’ exist as self-drive geotours. These are

- The Explorers Way Extending from Port Augusta to Darwin, and
- The Savannah Way which passes East-West from Cairns to Broome through the Gulf Country, Katherine Region, Victoria River District and the Kimberleys.

Mark has advised that a third - the Red Centre Way - is under reconstruction with government funding pledged to seal the Plenty Hwy as identified in the Northern Territory 10 Year Infrastructure Plan. He has also suggested that a fourth major geotrail is the largely unsealed, ‘Gold Rush Way’ linking the historic Arltunga and Halls Creek (WA) gold fields via the Tamani region – a known and active gold producing area.

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 387 members and continues to grow at a rate of some 12% 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. The February 2019 issue of GeoExPro featured geotourism (through a university alumni tour undertaken in September 2018) to the magnificent Flinders Ranges, pps. 52-55

https://assets.geoexpro.com/uploads/f9bbd806-dd06-4a10-923d-886281853915/GEO_ExPro_Favourite_Geoscience_Magazine_Oil_Gas_2019_v16_i1.pdf

Following discussions with Dr Anita Andrew, the GSC has formally agreed to take on responsibility for developing a geotourism themed AJES volume within a 2020 time-frame under the leadership of GSC member, Dr Young Ng, who is an accomplished author and co-editor of international geotourism publications.

6. Geotourism Standing Committee Linkages

Dr Ian Percival has provided most helpful linkages with the Geological Heritage Standing Committee over the past 12 months.

Mike Freeman and AusIMM PP Geoff Sharrock have also provided effective linkages with the Australian Institute of Geoscientists and The AusIMM respectively, with the Chair reporting regularly on geotourism industry progress to the Heritage Committee of The AusIMM.

PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF THE GEOTOURISM AND GEOLOGICAL HERITAGE STANDING COMMITTEES

In August, the Governing Council advised the GSC of Council's draft Geoheritage and Geotourism Strategy and sought comments from individual Committee members.

Through arrangements agreed to between the then GSA President Dr Caroline Tiddy and Dr Ian Percival (the latter representing the Geological Heritage Committee), the following discussion points were conveyed to the President to be reported on at the special meeting to be held at AGCC on 15th October 2018 and at the GSA AGM on 14th October 2018.

1. The GSC fully supports the views of the Geological Heritage Committee in rejecting a proposed amalgamation of the two Committees.
2. The GSC is of the view that existing geoscience focused government agencies are best placed to develop a national geoheritage data base having regard to the existence of best practice templates in states such as Tasmania.
3. The GSC is deeply concerned about the total lack of consultation by the Governing Council with the Geotourism and Geological Heritage Standing Committees in developing the draft strategy documentation. In short the documentation totally ignores the current broad scope of activities of the Geotourism Standing Committee as reported in detail in the attached 2018 annual report and takes no account of the work being undertaken over the past 18 months with Geoscience Australia in developing a proposed national geotourism strategy that is intended to address the issue of georegion identification and subsequent geotrail and potential geopark development (refer attached report to the Governing Council at its meeting of 22nd August). The GSC is concerned that the geotrail only strategy being proposed by the Governing Council is too restrictive and not flexible enough to take account of a varied range of geotourism activities across Australia e.g. with proposed geopark development being assessed by the WA Government.
4. The GSC does not support the restructuring option that would involve a Governing Councillor performing the 'executive management' role of directing geotourism and geological heritage activities.
5. The GSC is concerned that the proposed strategy represents a radical departure from what was originally approved in the Governing Council approved Terms of Reference, to the extent that responsibilities now envisaged are far too narrow in scope and do not aspire to the original vision of fully nurturing geotourism development in Australia. In this context, the GSC notes that the 'Background' to the GSA Geoheritage and Geotrail Strategy documentation appears to totally ignore these approved terms of reference and responsibilities and fails to explain satisfactorily why these

radical changes need to be implemented so soon after 'strategic settings' were established only some 3-4 years ago.

6. The GSC stands ready to work cooperatively with the Geological Heritage Standing Committee, the Governing Council and other key stakeholders in devising and implementing an achievable strategy that best addresses identified issues and challenges relating to both geotourism, and in a manner that takes account of the needs and capabilities of the GSA's volunteer membership.

On 11th October, the President again wrote directly to GSC members thanking those that had responded for very useful feedback and advised that the main points would be collated in preparation for the geotourism-geoheritage discussion to be held on Monday 15th October at the AGCC.

However, this discussion in the format proposed did not take place at the October 15 meeting, and was replaced instead by a 'Geotourism Workshop', using the De Bono Six Thinking hats approach to consider the statement, inter alia, 'the GSA could focus on geotrail development and geoheritage/geotourism assessment, facilitated by a new standing committee structure'. It should be noted that apart from the GSC Chair, the only other members of the GSC available to participate in this workshop were Professor Ross Dowling and Alan Briggs.

At the meeting of the GSC held on 13th November, the GSA President, in the capacity as Working Group Chair, made the following points in relation to the Council's draft Geoheritage and Geotourism Strategy.

- Referenced meeting with the GSC Chair on 17th September where a commitment was made to report to the meeting.
- The notes from the Meeting of 15th October at AGCC had been circulated and comments were welcome.
- A new Governing Council, new Executive Committee and new President had been elected with the new Council members to be briefed at a meeting at the end of November.
- It was intended to have a broader discussion through a teleconference meeting of both the Geotourism and Geoheritage Committees sometime in February. Under her leadership, this work would be coordinated by the existing working group (including President Joanne Parr, Phil Gilmore and Sue Fletcher).
- In the interim, there has been no drastic changes to the existing arrangements and certainly there is no intention at this stage to merge the two Standing Committees, and all other options need to be explored.
- The current review of GSA operations will also include Specialist Groups.
- Ian Lewis' interest in looking at geotrail coordination had been noted as has the recent GSNSW geotrail developments in NSW with Councillor Phil Gilmore on this working group.
- There was a need to review geotrail development in other states.

Subsequent to this GSC meeting and given the above-mentioned discussions with the AGC relating to the development of a national geotourism strategy, the Chair of the GSC was appointed AGC's

Co-ordinator of the process for developing a draft National Geotourism Strategy, under the umbrella of the AGC Advocacy Sub-committee, and therefore resigned as Chair on 19th November.

It is currently understood that the current GSA President is organising an open meeting of both Standing Committees on 26th March to consider an updated Council strategy document that has taken account of the feedback from both Committees.

Angus M Robinson FAusIMM (CP)

Former Chair, GSC and currently, Coordinator, National Geotourism Strategy for the Australian Geotourism Council

20th March, 2019

Attendance at Geotourism Standing Committee Meetings:

Member	1st May 2018	7th August 2018	13th November 2018
Angus M Robinson	√	√	√
Mark Asendorf	√		√
Alan Briggs	√	√	√
Bob Conroy	√		√
Ross Dowling	√	√	√
Michael Freeman	√		√
Bernie Joyce			
Bruce Leaver	√		
Ian D Lewis			
Ken Moule		√	√
Young Ng			√
Ian Percival		√	√
David Robson		√	√
Geoff Sharrock			
Michael Vicary	√	√	√
Monica Yeung	√	√	√

In addition, GSC members attending various AGCC activities in October 2018 included Alan Briggs, Ross Dowling, Ian D Lewis, Ian Percival and Angus M Robinson.