National Geotourism Strategy Preamble

The Australian Geoscience Council Inc (AGC) is the Peak Council of geoscientists in Australia. It represents nine major Australian geoscientific societies with a combined membership of over 8,000 geoscientists comprising industry, government, and academic professionals in the fields of geology, geophysics, geochemistry, mineral and petroleum exploration, environmental geoscience, hydrogeology, geomorphology, and geological hazards.

The AGC has set up a National Geotourism Strategy Reference Group (NGSRG) which includes representatives of other key active stakeholders (e.g., the Geotourism Standing Committee of the Geological Society of Australia, the GSA), and under the guidance of this reference group, other key stakeholder groups will be best placed to help deliver different parts of a National Geotourism Strategy.

This National Geotourism Strategy is being designed to support the orderly development of major geotourism projects and activities in line with overseas trends and domestic regional development imperatives. The AGC sees the articulation of a strategy with a staged and incremental approach as being essential to ultimately gain government endorsement at all levels. The development of a National Ecotourism Strategy in 1994 and subsequent state/territory-based initiatives is considered as a particularly useful precedent and guide. Of significance internationally is the development of geotourism in Australia that lags many countries' approach, notwithstanding the fact Australia has taken the initiatives in several areas in development of the concepts underpinning geotourism.

Geotourism adds considerable content value to traditional nature-based tourism (the primary motivator of travel to Australia) as well as cultural tourism, inclusive of Aboriginal tourism, thus completing the holistic embrace of 'A' (abiotic – landscape and geology) plus 'B' (biotic – flora and fauna) plus 'C' (culture) aspects. In essence, in Australia, geotourism has been defined as 'tourism which focuses on an area's geology and landscape as the basis for providing visitor engagement, learning and enjoyment'.

The pursuit of geotourism offers the potential for new industries and employment opportunities through the development of major projects within Australia. Also, very significantly from a strategic perspective, the AGC recognises that the development of geotourism may be one of the best ways to communicate the value of geoscience to the broader Australian community. The AGC considers that this improved profile for geoscience is likely to have a positive impact in other areas of strategic importance, most notably the need for continuing tertiary enrolments in geoscience, which is required to meet Australia's needs for highly qualified geoscience graduates and researchers into the future.

It is recognised that this objective can be achieved if the National Geotourism Strategy is structured to deliver and interpret for the traveller or visitor, quality natural heritage content, highlighting

geology and landscape. The recent intervention by the Geological Society of Australia, in compiling along these lines a submission to Parks Australia for the Draft Kakadu Tourism Plan 2020-2030, underscores the need for this level of work to be undertaken across Australia when opportunities exist to comment on future tourism strategies for Australia's large network of national parks.

The benefits of geotourism development in Australia are many.

Tourism Industry development benefits in the context of addressing the current COVID-19 pandemic can be realised through the holistic approach of geotourism which enhances the value of traditionally structured, nature-based tourism by generating new product development (i.e., including geology, landscape, flora and fauna, as well as cultural heritage attributes, both Aboriginal and post European settlement).

Employment benefits through the adoption of a strategy to support and promote geotourism include the following, all of which have the potential to significantly improve Aboriginal employment, and more broadly, regional employment.

- New domestic employment and consulting opportunities for natural/cultural heritage professionals – design of interpretation signage/boards, design of geotrails etc.
- Management roles in geoparks and mining parks, regional development, and local government agencies.
- Flow-on employment in tour operations and townships resulting from increased tourism visitation.
- Opportunities for pastoralists to develop 'farm stay' and 'station stay' tourism operations.

Societal benefits for local communities, particularly in rural and regional Australia, include the following.

- A mechanism for celebrating and raising awareness of mining heritage, past and present.
- An opportunity to enhance community engagement and build value into 'Social Licence' considerations.
- By celebrating geological heritage, and in connection with all other aspects of the area's natural and cultural heritage (and most significantly, Aboriginal heritage), geotourism enhances awareness and understanding of key issues facing society, such as using our Earth's resources sustainably.
- By raising awareness of the importance of the area's geological heritage in society today, geotourism gives local people a sense of pride, and strengthens their identification with their region.

The strategy acknowledges the need to protect the scientific and cultural sensitivity of some geoheritage and geosites, and to ensure protection from geotourism where appropriate.

In summary, the over-riding socio-economic benefits of geotourism are measurable economic outcomes through enhancement of traditional nature-based tourism - additional visitors, direct and regional economic output, household income and wages, and local (including Aboriginal) employment.

This strategy will support the economic benefit by:

- Establishment of a higher level of central coordination in areas of product development, travel and hospitality services, and tourism promotion, with a view to improving the overall visitor experience, consistency of the branding, and ultimately leading to an increase in visitor numbers.
- Maximisation of sustainable development and management of 'over tourism'.
- Establishment of a framework for focus on the 10 UNESCO Topics including culture, education, climate change, geoconservation etc.
- Maximisation of community engagement.

Geotourism can be readily delivered through the development of both 'geotrails' and 'geoparks'.

Looking beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, discernible changes in visitor needs and behaviours are starting to emerge. e.g.,

- An increased interest in nature-based activities, evidenced anecdotally from observations in overseas geoparks.
- A shift from large group to small (family) group tours and free and independent travellers (FITs).
- A move to patronising tourist destinations 'close to home'.
- An increased usage and dependence on the internet for purchasing and information gathering purposes.
- A higher level of interest by governments to create employment opportunities and to support regional tourism.

The consideration of well-considered proposals underpinning a National Geotourism Strategy is timely and is likely to be well received by governments, the tourism industry, and regional communities across Australia.

Strategic Goals

Over the past two years, discussions have been undertaken with the Geoscience Working Group - GWG (Chief Government Geologists of the States/Territories and Geoscience Australia). The following seven key strategic goals underpinning the National Geotourism Strategy are based on the related range of topics previously raised with the GWG.

GOAL 1: DEVELOPMENT OF NEW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TO DELIVER AND INTERPRET FOR THE TRAVELLER OR VISITOR, QUALITY NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE CONTENT, HIGHLIGHTING PARTICULARLY GEOLOGY AND LANDSCAPE.

In developing a National Geotourism Strategy for Australia, the AGC has recognised that state-based geotourism maps, supplemented by publications, may well be eventually replaced by digital technologies (e.g., 3D visualisation, augmented reality, virtual reality, holograms, and live streaming using smartphones and drones) and GIS technologies as a cost-effective means of accessing and better communicating geological content for tourists throughout regional Australia.

There exists a major challenge to structure digital frameworks which capture and interpret key elements of natural and cultural heritage sourced from a wide range of directories, and which define the holistic nature of geotourism, having regard to the process of digital transformation which is impacting on all industries. The imperative driving this goal will be meeting consumer needs, particularly from international visitors, now increasingly accustomed to the use of digital devices to underpin all aspects of their tourism experience.

Moreover, it is recognised that these technologies provide a means of interpreting geosites (including sites of cultural significance) where measures need to be put in place to protect geological heritage or have regard to indigenous cultural sensitivities.

Several groups have formed in Australia to trial these technologies with a view of realising some commercial opportunities with geotourism in mind. In South Australia, the GSA has developed field guides for many areas of outstanding geological significance e.g. Hallett Cove, the Flinders Ranges and Victor Harbor amongst the set of 10 guides produced so far, https://www.gsa.org.au/Public/Publications/Field_Guides/

The Geological Survey of South Australia is likewise producing interactive, online Google Earth-based, Discovery Trails as virtual geotours https://discoverytrails.sarig.sa.gov.au/ while at the University of South Australia the Project LIVE (Learning though Immersive Virtual Environments) http://projectlive.org.au/ initiative is highlighting some significant outback areas with interactive virtual geotours, including drone and field video recording, 360 degree GigaPan panoramas and a range of other interpretive materials. The GSNSW has also being experimenting with augmented reality applications e.g., Newcastle Coastal Geotrail project.

These concepts were featured by various presentations to both the GlobalEco 2020 and the AESC 2021 conferences.

At the same time, it is also recognised that traditional interpretative information is still highly regarded by visitors. Accordingly, the AGC has welcomed the GWG support of both the expansion of

the NSW Geotourism map concept (highlighting just key landscapes and geosites) developed by Cartoscope Pty Ltd, and the expansions of various digital technologies, while noting that this cannot be binding on state/territory jurisdictions.

To date, a total of 250,000 copies of the NSW Geotourism map (for the two editions) have been printed and distributed via the NRMA and a cross-section of LGAs across NSW. With the support of Dr Young Ng (a key member of the AGC geotourism team), it is planned to develop a Mandarin translated version to be made available to Chinese, self-drive tourists, should Chinese tourism return to Australia. In addition, Cartoscope has decided to assign free of charge all the IP (copyright etc) of this map to the Geological Survey of NSW (GSNSW).

By adopting the NSW Geotourism Map as a model, this concept can be expanded to other states and territories. The further development of this initiative, which has already received 'support in principle' by the GWG (on the basis that it is up to individual jurisdictions to determine whether resources could be made to underwrite this concept), should aim at producing at least one geotourism map in both hard and digital format from one of the other state/territory jurisdictions within the next few years. Keeping in mind the overriding 'digital transformation' imperative, a Geotourism App for mobile phone has also been suggested as a national geotourism information platform. It has been proposed that the App could cover all states and territories through which these geotourism maps and information could become easily accessible to the public and tourists. To achieve this outcome, consultation with individual state/ territory Geological Surveys is essential as well as securing the support of and sponsorship by relevant RTOs and LTOs, motoring organisations and other stakeholders especially local communities and businesses. There is of course an opportunity to obtain sponsorship support from the individual members of the AGC.

An inaugural Australian Geotourism Survey (AGS) to be undertaken by the University of Tasmania (UTAS) is being designed as a comprehensive, Australia-wide research and market-based instrument, delivered online and through the nation's vast tourism operator and organisational network. Designed to be administered every three years, the AGS employs questions devised by geotourism researchers at UTAS, and questions invited from industry provider networks and peak bodies, to document changes in consumer preferences, knowledge, and capacity over time. The inaugural AGS is being structured to provide an understanding of how interested Australians view and/or otherwise understand the concepts of geotourism, their recognition and appreciation for 'geotouristic' experiences, and their elements of interest. The AGS will also survey preparedness of or enthusiasm for alternative modes of geotourism experiences - such as those delivered by augmented or virtual reality experiences.

Recommendation: A strategic response be developed to address both the digital and hard copy delivery of geotourism content through the establishment of working groups.

GOAL 2: 'TO DEFINE AN APPROVAL PATHWAY FOR MAJOR GEOTOURISM PROJECTS'

Following consultation with the GWG over the past 12 months, the AGC remains firmly of the view that the establishment of a national set of administrative procedures is necessary to provide for the orderly development of major geotourism projects such as geoparks, regional geotrails and geoparks, both state based and potential Aspiring UNESCO Global Geoparks.

The AGC is already actively engaged along with representatives of the GSA Geotourism Standing Committee as members of a working party initiated by a prominent North Shore (of Sydney) environmental interest community group in scoping out a proposed major geotourism project. This proposal aims to build on the existing recognised values of the area, its biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage (particularly Aboriginal), and highlight its foundation of nationally and internationally significant geology and geomorphology that has resulted in the development of these unique traits. The plan is to re-invigorate and highlight the area's importance with the unifying aspects of a 'GeoRegion' via the establishment of geosites and geotrails linking the various features and aspects of the area. Many of the sites identified in what is currently being described as the 'Ku-ring-Gai GeoRegion' possess values that have recently been identified as being not only of local and national significance, but also of international significance.

Subject to the success of gaining and maintaining stakeholder support for the establishment of geosites and geotrails within this area, there is the future possibility of proposing further heritage listings for the most significant of the geosites through local, state, and federal heritage legislation.

Once established and agreed by the various stakeholders an agreed area within the 'Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion', could be proposed for submission as an aspiring UNESCO Global Geopark. This would be highly beneficial in raising awareness of the area both nationally and internationally through geotourism.

The 'Ku-ring-gai Georegion' embraces the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park and the Northern Beaches coastline. This is a complex project needing extensive consultation with local Aboriginal and other community groups, State Government agencies and three LGAs. To date a comprehensive and most impressive natural heritage document has been prepared and submitted to the GSNSW for review – the GSNSW has advised that it has no objections to the project. Should it be ultimately approved for nomination by the State and Australian Governments and approved by UNESCO, NSW will be in the position of adding to its destination attraction listing a UNESCO Global Geopark to complement the Blue Mountains WHA and Australia's first national park, the National heritage listed Royal National Park – together these three outstanding landscapes showcase for the world, Sydney's unique natural and cultural heritage. As global cities, Sydney would join Hong Kong as being located adjacent to UNESCO Global Geoparks.

In Western Australia, the Mid West Development Commission, in partnership with seven regional Councils, is in the process of establishing a major 'GeoRegion' (the 'Murchison GeoRegion') which was launched in September 2020. It is hoped that the 'GeoRegion' would now form the basis of WA's first Aspiring Geopark with the aim of applying for recognition as a UNESCO Global Geopark subject to the approval of the West Australian Government. A website and app have been created supplemented by a Trail Booklet under the banner of 'Discover Ancient Lands, Brilliant Skies'. The booklet describes 21 geological sites along a 'GeoRegion' trail which highlights the abiotic, biotic, and cultural features to encourage visitors to find a deeper understanding of and connection with

the land they are travelling through. These geological sites will be added to with others focussing on biotic or cultural attractions, particularly those exhibiting significant Aboriginal characteristics. This project is currently being supported by Geoparks WA.

It is recognised that as these two projects develop, various issues may well emerge which may require resolution through identified government approval and community consultation processes. Compliance with the relevant legislation of both the Australian and State/Territories is considered essential.

Regarding land usage and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage, it is noted that this is covered under the jurisdiction of both the States/Territory governments and Australian Government. It is considered that there may also be Australian Government legislations (or Acts) that impact on geotourism project development. Of relevance is the Australian Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999 which is the legislation that determines the steps for having a site listed as a National Heritage site. This listing is also required as a step for World Heritage listing. It is yet to be determined if this Act may be relevant in considering whether the Australian Government is prepared to endorse any UNESCO Global Geopark proposal on the basis that the site is afforded the best possible protection, but to date, the Australian Government has not signalled that this is an area where intervention is required. Other Australian Government legislation that may possibly need to be considered includes the Protection of the Cultural Heritage Act and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act and the Native Title Act, all of which is confirmation of the urgent need to clarify and clearly define the approval processes required for major geotourism project development in Australia.

Recommendation: The AGC considers that both the Ku-ring-gai and Murchison 'GeoRegion' projects represents ideal pilot studies from which a national set of administrative procedures for geoparks and regional geotrails can be developed.

GOAL 3: 'TO ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK FOR CREATING HIGH QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE GEOTRAILS'

Active geotrails proposals are continuing to be 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 and the Newcastle Coastal Geotrails), the Newcastle Coastal, Warrumbungles, Central Darling River, the Muawintji National Park, and the 'Wonder of Gondwana' geotrails across the Outback/Central West region – all under development), South Australia (various projects including the Brachina Gorge Geotrail),Victoria (Kanawinka/Great Ocean Road area), and Norfolk Island.

In the Northern Territory, there 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. In addition, the Red Centre Way (formative Red Centre Geotrail) is under reconstruction with government funding. 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. A Darwin City Geotrail has also been completed recently.

Queensland's 'Dig The Tropic' https://www.digthetropic.com.au/ is an operating example of a formative geotrail. 'Dig The Tropic' is a themed journey linking the wonders of the Southern Great Barrier Reef with Queensland's Outback including the Central Highlands. Following the Tropic of Capricorn, visitors can experience a living museum through sites such as the Stone House Museum, Age of Dinosaurs Museum, Lark Quarry, Carnarvon Gorge, the Sapphire Gemfields, Capricorn Caves, and the Great Barrier Reef.

There are also a wide range of smaller, dedicated journeys along walking tracks, old rail easements etc. being deemed suitable for development as geotrails in NSW, Tasmania, Qld, WA, and SA. It is therefore believed that new sustainable geotrail development (at local, regional, and national levels) be pursued by opening dialogue with existing walking, biking and rail trail interest groups and operators, will highlight the availability of quality geoscience and other natural/cultural heritage content.

It was clear from comments received from GWG members that geotrail development was an opportunity that could readily be pursued by individual geological surveys in collaboration with university/museum interest groups as well as state/territory divisions and branches of the interested professional societies, particularly the GSA and AIG. In this regard, the 'rocks and landscapes' publication series of the Queensland Division of the GSA are effectively geotrails, although not recognised by that name. The Geological Survey of WA has also committed to a similar publication series, all of which suggests that similar published material could be adapted and promoted through a central national strategy.

In Western Australia, the Geological Survey of WA (GSWA) has recently established a working group to map out a state-wide strategy of geotrail development and it is anticipated that the outcomes and related administrative procedures required to implement geotrails can feed into the National Geotourism Strategy.

Recommendation: With the guidance of the NGSRG, the Geotourism Standing Committee of the GSA in consultation with the GSNSW, GSWA, GSTAS (and possibly the GSSA), and with other interested AGC member societies, establish working groups to determine how best a national geotrail strategy should evolve.

GOAL 4: 'TO ESTABLISH A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR GEOHERITAGE LISTINGS SUITABLE FOR GEOTOURISM'

AGC recognises that geoheritage listings are a key consideration when formulating major geotourism projects, an issue which it is understood to be of interest to the Government Geoscience Information Committee, particularly given that some sites need to be protected from public access because of the risk of vandalism to outcrops containing type geological features (e.g., fossils, minerals, and stratigraphic, soil or geomorphic locations).

The AGC has already recognised that each jurisdiction has adopted a different listing methodology (e.g., whilst Tasmania has a detailed database, and in Victoria, the geoheritage listing function seems to be managed by the GSA). In the 1970s and 1980s, GSA facilitated identification and description of geoheritage sites across Australia. A geoheritage assessment toolkit has been developed by the GSA to document the type and significance of geoheritage values. The GSA has already identified an opportunity to develop a customised geotourism assessment toolkit to ensure geotourism is appropriate for geoheritage and other sites (e.g., protection of sensitive sites, WHS, land access), and to identify opportunities to link to other features (e.g., biotic, cultural) and infrastructure.

A GSA-led national approach would help geotourists discover geoheritage and geotourism products in a single location on and through the GSA website (e.g., websites, mobile apps, operators, and hard copy publications). The approach would facilitate the provision of existing information, development of coordinated geotourism projects across Australia, and deliver geotourism to regional Australia.

A GSA-led national approach would help geotourists discover geoheritage in its various manifestations including landforms in a single location on and through the GSA website (e.g., websites, mobile apps, operators, and hard copy publications). The approach would facilitate the provision of existing information, development of coordinated geotourism projects across Australia, and deliver geotourism to regional Australia.

Recommendation: The Geotourism and Geological Heritage Standing Committees of the GSA confer with State/Territory Geological Surveys and other groups as relevant to develop a national framework.

GOAL 5: TO DEVELOP GEOTOURISM IN REGIONAL MINING COMMUNITIES WITH POTENTIAL GEOHERITAGE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES.

This goal focuses on geotourism opportunities in regional areas which occur outside parks and reserves, but which may contain interesting features and narratives including geological, biological, and cultural elements. Goal 5 is designed to develop geotourism in areas with regional communities (especially past and present mining communities) not covered by significant conservation legislative protections, but which are still worthy of recognition and promotion. It unites a cross-section of representatives from mining groups, Aboriginal heritage and tourism groups, conservation, tourism, and academia to explore tourism potential in places containing geodiversity that:

1. Has been exposed or modified by human activities (especially mining & quarrying).

2. Has significant *additional* value to people, through cultural history, recreational use, or educational opportunity.

This goal recognises that there are a range of landscapes in regional Australia that contain either Aboriginal and/or European settlement value, which do not fit into more 'traditional' narratives of geotourism in unmodified or protected areas. Mining landscapes, both past and present, possess important educational values and offer interesting aesthetics and experiences that could be of considerable interest to tourists. Geotourism opportunities could also arise from the consequences

of mine closure, most of it currently oriented to environmental remediation (make safe, stable, and non-polluting), which has educational value, and highlights system support values associated with remediation. There is scope to include the preservation of mining heritage in situ (e.g., gossans and other examples of economic geological significance), built (e.g., buildings, workings, and equipment), and non-built (e.g., mining and personnel records), with the geotourism or geoheritage potential being accepted as the rationale for conserving these assets as important cultural heritage assets for new product development.

Aboriginal cultural elements and landscapes cut across widely accepted, post-settlement landforms and landmarks, and have values specific to various groups and individuals. Therefore, there is potential to incorporate and/or communicate (with permission or via collaboration) creation stories and narratives of landscapes and features through geotourism. In this context, there is an opportunity to see a greater emphasis put on the connection across geotourism, geoheritage and the cultural heritage of Aboriginal people and the potential for future collaborations. Implicit in this approach is the need to protect and preserve the cultural heritage of Aboriginal people, and in particular a recognition of the potential need to adhere to legislation designed to protect the environment, biodiversity, and cultural heritage of Australia.

Even though other types of heritage protections exist for old buildings and post-European built heritage, there is an overlap between these elements and geotourism. Built environments with geoscientific values (e.g., old building stones, quarries, ceremonial landforms) could incorporate geotourism narratives or be included into geotouristic experiences.

The Goal 5 working group has produced a reference document which identifies a set of unifying terminology to describe the various elements and activities that could be included in geotourism experiences, the agencies and stakeholders required to collaborate to achieve the initiatives in this strategy, and examples of Australian and International geotourism activities that are like what is desired to be achieved through this goal. Mining heritage, for example, has been already recognised at both international and national level in heritage protection and is worth conserving and presenting as a significant contribution to regional economic development and adaptive re-use of landscape in other countries.

An example of developing/emerging experiences that illustrate this goal includes a proposed ‘national mining park’ considered for the Hunter Valley, celebrating the significant role that mining has played for Australia’s development, first undertaken by Aboriginal people (on a small scale) prior to European arrival, and then by ‘pioneers’ in the 1790s, commencing near Nobbys Head in Newcastle. This iconic ‘park’ could embrace the region including mining and mining purposes lands from the Port of Newcastle and the Lower Hunter, to Cessnock and through to the Upper Hunter, and be nurtured within a regional, collaborative, multi-land use strategy that will provide for specified development within rehabilitated mined areas, with geotourism as one of the key drivers.

Other future opportunities that could be investigated by members of the Goal 5 working group include: Murchison Region (WA), historic Burra, Blinman, and the Copper Triangle (SA), Kalgoorlie-Boulder (WA), Mt Isa and the Central Highlands (Queensland), Lightning Ridge, Cobar, Broken Hill, and the Hunter Valley (NSW), Madame Berry Deep Lead Landscape at Creswick and Beechworth (Victoria), Queenstown and Derby (Tasmania), and Pine Creek Region and Tennant Creek (NT). A number of these areas could be selected to explore the geotourism opportunities regarding their consequential and beneficial impact on local mining communities, as well as the potential of

incorporation into more comprehensive packaged, tourism industry products; not forgetting also the significance of several ancient sites, potentially older than 40,000 years, of the Wilgie Mia Aboriginal Ochre mine in the Weld Range (Western Australia) and the Koonalda Cave Aboriginal Flint mine in the Nullabor (South Australia).

The goal seeks to identify geotourism opportunities that bring together cross sections of the community, representation from a range of stakeholder groups, and incorporate the 'ABC' of Australian geotourism. Given that geological surveys have limited human resources as well as having other priorities, it is proposed that the Heritage Committee and the Social and Environment Society of The AusIMM take a significant role in advancing the aspirations of Goal 5, as it relates to the opportunity for engagement by mining industry professionals.

Recommendation: Establish working groups with appropriate communities of The AusIMM, AIG and any other interested professionals and societies within the AGC to implement this goal, having regard to identifying the potential for collaboration with all identified community stakeholders, especially Aboriginal groups, and community development boards as appropriate.

Working groups to identify prospective geotourism opportunities relevant to this goal and interact with stakeholders and community members to achieve a set of coherent 'geotourism in regional communities' terms of reference.

Goal 5 strategists to work closely with other theme leaders, especially goals 4 and 6.

GOAL 6: 'TO STRENGTHEN AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL GEOSCIENCE STANDING THROUGH GEOTOURISM EXCELLENCE'

Using geotourism to strengthen Australia's international geoscience standing and enhance its influence for the long- term benefits of Australian geoscientists through the establishment of sister park, sister museum/rock garden, sister geological and mining heritage sites relationships, particularly with China and countries in the Asia-Pacific region (specifically China, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, PNG and South Pacific nations etc) , has been identified as a hitherto unrealised opportunity. This imperative is also relevant for countries that enjoy 'Gondwana age' geological relationships with Australia, specifically New Zealand, and nations within South America, Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, and the Arabian Peninsula.

Whilst recognising the medium to long term potential of this opportunity, AGC has noted during individual consultations that GWG members did not see this as a particularly high priority but were cognisant of the existence of the GSA led Australia/China relationship, particularly about a proposed relationship between the National Rock Garden in Canberra and the Geological Museum of China in Beijing. Moreover, it was noted that Geoscience Australia has appreciated that needs could quickly change based on Australian Government geo-political considerations.

As a result of interest being shown by members of the Geoscience Society of The AusIMM, AGC has now been introduced to the Indonesian Association of Geologists (IAGI) which has a MOU in place with The AusIMM. The IAGI has a competency standard for geotourism guides that are recognized by the Indonesian Government and have trained a lot of geotourism guides. Indonesia currently has

five UNESCO Global Geoparks as well as 'tens' of national geoparks plus hundreds of geoheritage listed sites that have fostered the development of geotourism. One of their main programs is 'Satu Pengda Satu Geowisata' or 'One IAGI Branch One Geotourism' which means that they strongly encourage each of their 27 branches to develop geotourism in their regions. One of the branches is 'IAGI Perth', that is now preparing a virtual discussion on the geotourism program.

Recommendation: Establish a working group led by the AGC.

GOAL 7: 'TO DEVELOP AND ENHANCE THE GEOSCIENCE INTERPRETATION AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF EVERYONE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE PRESENTATION OF GEOSITES, ENABLING THE PROVISION OF ACCURATE AND THEMATIC INFORMATION IN AN ACCESSIBLE MANNER.

This goal has two main objectives:

- To improve the interpretation skills of geoscientists working at the frontline of geotourism.
- To improve the geoscientific accuracy of information prepared by interpretation specialists who may not have any geoscience background.

It has also been suggested that this goal could be extended to develop some more generic mechanisms, skills and tools around how individual sites and people can enhance their own interpretation. Moreover, this also links to the wider tourism marketing context, particularly the emergence of 'transformational tourism' that is becoming central to many destinations' messaging. This focuses on how visitors can have life-changing awareness or behaviour changing moments particularly through interpretation. Making sites and experiences important and personally relevant to people is at the centre of this.

It is noted that Savannah Guides is currently working with Tourism Queensland on how this drives their new brand, and how tourism operators can be mentored to embrace more meaningful experiences, often through interpretation.

Also noted are the many key messages that individual geosites must convey, from heritage to conservation, geological wonder to economic benefit, so driving those themes requires some interpretive planning beyond just accuracy.

Given the 'cross the board' nature of this issue, AGC will be discussing this imperative as it relates to geoscientists in the first instance within its current 'Geoscience Education' strategic pillar.

Recommendation: Establish a working group comprising representatives of experienced tour guides and content interpretation specialists to develop training packages and programmes for interpretation and communications skills development, with professional development accreditation, for geoscientists and other natural and cultural heritage professionals.