

Launch of the National Geotourism Strategy – Explanatory Notes

The Australian Geoscience Council Inc is the peak body representing geoscientists in Australia. The Council is implementing a National Geotourism Strategy to support greater development of major geotourism projects in Australia. This is in line with programs in other countries and regional development imperatives across Australia. The Strategy calls for a staged and incremental approach that is intended to ultimately gain endorsement at all levels of government.

Geotourism is booming internationally, and it is an imperative that iconic Australian tourism destinations and products, particularly in regional and outback regions, can be transformed to meet both the needs of domestic and global travellers seeking superior travel experiences.

Tourism in general can be significantly enhanced through the addition of geotourism options. This will serve to enhance the existing traditional nature-based tourism by generating new products that further integrate our unique geology, landscape, flora and fauna, cultural heritage (including Aboriginal) and mining history.

The National Ecotourism Strategy released in 1994 and subsequent state or territory-based initiatives provides a useful precedent and guide. The development of geotourism in Australia, however, lags behind many other countries despite the identification of several GeoRegions and establishment of some geotrails that assist geotourism.



The Granites, Murchison GeoRegion, Western Australia. Photo: Jarrad Seng



Conjoint Associate Professor Ron Boyd, the University of Newcastle at the launch of the Port Macquarie Coastal Geotrail in May 2018, New South Wales. Photo: Ivan Sajko, Port News.

The pursuit of geotourism offers the potential for new industries and employment opportunities in the tourism sector. The AGC believes the development of geotourism will also increase awareness of Australia's amazing geology and the value of geoscience to the broader 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 increased tertiary enrolments in geoscience necessary to meet Australia's future needs for highly qualified geoscience graduates and researchers.

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.

With guidance from a specialist reference group and input from several working groups, the Australian Geoscience Council's National Geotourism Strategy has set seven strategic goals:

1. **Assessment and promotion of new digital technologies to highlight and interpret natural and cultural heritage, highlighting geology and landscape.**
Working Group Chair: Mark Williams, mark.williams@utas.edu.au
2. **Define an approval pathway for major geotourism projects.**
Working Group Chair and Strategy Coordinator: Angus M Robinson, 0418 488 340
angus@leisuresolutions.com.au
3. **Establish a framework for creating high quality, sustainable geotrails.**
Working Group Chair: David Robson, robodavidf@gmail.com
4. **Establish national criteria for geoheritage listings suitable for geotourism.**
Working Group Chair: Jason Bradbury, Jason.Bradbury@dpiw.tas.gov.au
5. **Develop geotourism in regional mining communities with potential geoheritage and cultural heritage sites.**
Working Group Chair: Dr Melinda McHenry, melinda.mchenry@utas.edu.au
6. **Strengthen Australia's international geoscience standing through geotourism excellence.**
Working Group Chair: Dr Young Ng, oz.geotourism@gmail.com
7. **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.**

Working Group Chair: Simone Meakin, simone.meakin@gmail.com