

Newsletter of the Australian Geoscience Council Inc
Update on activities within working groups
of the National Geotourism Strategy

Newsletter 23-03, dated 9 June 2023

PURPOSE

To provide intermittent periodic updates of activities and achievements of the National Geotourism Strategy (NGS) Working Groups and links to useful items. Please note that working group issues and people commonly overlap between groups. The following categorisations may relate to more than one group. The most recent quarterly meeting of the NGS Steering Committee was held on 5th June.

CURRENT STATUS

Working Group 1 relates to the development of new digital technologies to highlight and interpret natural and cultural heritage for geotourism.

Under the leadership of Mark Williams, WG1 met again in March and has continued to develop a Technology User Persona Report to identify and analyse the specific technologies that are relevant and beneficial for different user groups. This is based on the six geotrail personas from international geotourists to students and educators. By mapping technologies to personas, WG1 believes that it can better understand the needs, preferences, and behaviours of different user groups and align the appropriate technologies to enhance that users geotourism experience.

At its meeting the Steering Committee approved the name of the portal as the **Australian Geotourism Discovery Portal** after having viewed a beta version of the portal.

Working Group 2 has the goal of defining an approval pathway for major geotourism projects.

- Following the recent determination by the GWG (Chief Government Geologists of Government Geological Surveys) that GeoRegions establishment in Australia has been approved, the Working Group has agreed to prepare a document setting out guidelines for the establishment and administration of GeoRegions, to be submitted to the GWG in August.
- The Working Group has been advised that the Geological Survey of NSW has approved the adoption of the name, Glen Innes Highlands GeoRegion, as submitted to enable further development of geotrails.

Working Group 3 has the goal of establishing a framework for creating high quality, sustainable geotrails.

Chair David Robson has reported on the substantial input of State/Territory representatives into the development of the digital platform with information about some 100 geotrails to be loaded.

Working Group 4 has the task of establishing national criteria for geoheritage listings suitable for geotourism.

A draft copy of the WG report has been completed by Chair Jason Bradbury and is scheduled to be approved by the Steering Committee shortly.

Working Group 5 is developing geotourism in regional mining communities with potential geoheritage and cultural heritage sites.

The Steering Committee has been briefed by the Chair, Dr Melinda McHenry about various engagements and meetings with the organisers of the **Victorian Goldfields WHA mine sites bid**.

Key points included repositioning of the project to relate to the 'Victorian Goldfields' (which could be extended to include the NE Victorian goldfield areas) which embraces 17% of the State of Victoria, a population base of some 500,000 people, and some seven Aboriginal community groups. Also, relationship to the ICOMOS Burra Charter on Cultural Landscapes and the selection of defined UNESCO WHA criteria relevant to the selection of the Universal Outstanding Value to underpin the submission to be finalised by 2024 (an accelerated timetable). The masterplan (being undertaken by Consultants) is to be completed by 30 June 2023 with time available after that milestone to take on board detailed submission relating to a range of issues including mining heritage and included. The organisers indicated interest in the NGS Digital Platform, the application of geotourism practices across the region, and the NGS experience in engagement with Aboriginal Communities.

The AusIMM has agreed to coordinate (through their secretarial services based in Brisbane), the engagement of the three Communities of Interest (Heritage Committee, Geoscience and Social & Environment societies) to support the work of WG5.

The Working Group is considering a proposed geotourism project for West Coast Tasmania based on a draft project proposal proforma.

Given that the NSWGS had approved the concept of a GeoRegion to apply to the Glen Innes Highlands project, it is now possible for the Working Group to review how the members could recommend to the Glen Innes Severn Council how the mining heritage content could best be utilised for the geotourism destination management plan.

The WG 5 working group also plans to provide support to the Glen Innes GeoRegion project and to interface with the Qld Government funded Enviromets (Qld) organisation <https://enviromets.net.au/>. EnviroMETS (Qld) Limited has been established to find innovative ESG solutions and sustainable ways to make mining impacted land valuable to its future custodians. Their mission recognises the diverse range of challenges that can be overcome by adopting a collaborative approach to technical innovation, fresh thinking about repurposed land use and new land remediation methods. Geotourism is being seen as one potential solution.

Working Group 6 is working on strengthening Australia's international geoscience standing through geotourism excellence.

Chair Dr Young Ng has reported that a MOU between the Australian Geoscience Council (AGC) and Indonesian Geoparks Network (IGN) was signed on 25th May 2023 by AGC's chair, Dr Kevin Cassidy and IGN's chairman, Mohamad Farid Zaini. The IGN has a total of 10 UNESCO Global Geoparks and 9 national geoparks as its members. Apart from strengthening the friendship with Australia's biggest and closest neighbor Indonesia, the MOU initiated tremendous opportunities of cooperation, exchange and learning especially in the areas of geotourism development, conservation management and scientific research for long term benefits of both countries. The Zoom meeting was attended by over 30 participants including key AGC steering committee members, IGN committee members, Indonesian and Thailand geopark managers and directors, director of Chinese Geoparks Network, representatives of Chinese geoparks, geopark and geoconservation associations. Both parties have agreed to implement it with a yearly work plan.

Working Group 7 is developing and enhancing 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.

At a recent meeting, chair of WG7, Simone Meakin reported that the contents of a booklet compiled by Pat James and Heidi Allen had been assessed, with a further consultation to take place at AESC 2023, and with the objective of arranging publication with the generous support of the Geological Survey of WA.

Other news items

Report on NGS awareness building

- LinkedIn – The *Australian Geotourism Development* discussion group has 791 registered members to date.
- The comprehensive version of the [AGC Information Bulletin](#) has been updated.
- In addition, an updated version of the document explaining geotourism has been prepared with the title, '[In Australia, how do we advance geotourism, georegions, and geoparks through the National Geotourism Strategy?](#)' This document includes a Q&A section relating to geopark development.
- Geoscience Australia invited the NGS Coordinator to deliver a Public Talk on geotourism in Australia, held on 22nd March 2023 <https://youtu.be/xSZYTvBq05o>
- The Coordinator is scheduled to deliver presentations to the Goldfields Environmental Management Group in Kalgoorlie (mid-June), to the SEGRA Summit in late July, and hopefully to the Australian Regional Tourism Annual Conference in Newcastle in October.