



Newsletter of the Australian Geoscience Council

Update on activities within working groups of Geotourism Australia

Newsletter 25-03, dated 12 September 2025

PURPOSE

To provide intermittent periodic updates of activities and achievements of the Geotourism Australia 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 Geotourism Australia Steering Committee was held on 11th September 2025.

CURRENT STATUS

Australian Geotourism Discovery Portal (AGDP)

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

In reporting to the recent Steering Committee meeting, Working Group Chair Mark Williams advised that in support of the AGDP data curation - four UTAS Masters students have been working on aspects of data curation for the AGDP as part of their professional placements for a six-week period. Under the supervision of Dr Stephen White, these students have been compiling, cleaning, and standardising datasets relevant to the AGDP, with a particular focus on WA, NT, and SA datasets.

Investigations are still proceeding to determine how best Phase two of this project could be funded as well as working through the potential arrangements for hosting the completed portal through the support of government agencies. **Members of WG 3 (Geotrails) and WG 4 (Geoheritage)** continue to play a key role in supporting this initiative.

Mark Williams is aware that the Working Group has not met in the last quarter. He believes that there needs to be some more strategic thinking about the direction of WG1, now that the AGDP prototype is essentially completed. This could include exploring emerging technologies such as VR, AR, and AI in geotourism, but appropriate funding would need to be sourced to enable this work. Marg Beal has also provided a recent update that the SA Geotrails App is now available in both the iOS Apple Store and the Android Google Play Store in “content review” beta mode <https://bit.ly/45Mg2Wy>

Approval Pathways for GeoRegion and Geopark Development

Working Group 2, chaired by Angus M Robinson (Coordinator), has the goal of defining an approval pathway for major geotourism projects.

1. The Working Group last formally met on 14th March 2025 and has been waiting upon the GWG to approve a document aimed at detailing administrative procedures for potential geopark development within the two states (WA and NSW) in which GeoRegions have been approved. The Chair of the GWG has recently advised that the document is now under close examination by GWG members and it is expected that a decision about its acceptance will be advised shortly.
2. On a related matter, the Executive Director of the GSWA has recently agreed to submit for approval a notice to be placed on their website which recommends the establishment of GeoRegions as a first step in advancing any geopark proposals.
3. Progress of Murchison, Ku-ring-gai, and Glen Innes Highlands GeoRegions.

Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion (KGR)

Highlights including the following:

- In recent months, the KGR Geotrail Development Group has obtained both Ku-ring-gai Council funding of \$5k and State Government matching funding of \$20k for new signage for several sites within the GeoRegion. Whilst the Sydney Minerals Exploration Discussion Group (SMEDG) is still able to support a major sponsorship to the combined value of \$15k for the creation of a virtual geotrail, using video footage posted on the new KGR website, which interprets the stratigraphy of the geology of the Sydney Basin extending from Palm Beach to North Head, it has not been possible to gain support from the Northern Beaches Council for sponsorship by the Australian Institute of Geoscientists (AIG) for the provision of additional signage at Long Reef. Discussions with the AIG are continuing and this might include the opportunity for funding signage at the Hornsby diatrema geosite.
- Discussions have continued with the NSW Department of Education’s field school at Bobbin Head. The Gibberagong outdoor school operates focussing upon providing outdoor learning for students at schools in Sydney’s northern suburbs. The school caters for students from Kindergarten to Year 12, principally with activities and visits confined

to one day. Recently, through the auspices of the KGR Steering Committee, representatives of the TESEP (Teachers Earth Science Education Program) – a program partly funded by AGC and members societies, have been formally introduced to the Gibberagong Field Centre and it is anticipated that collaborative activities will ensue.

- FOKE (Friends of Ku-ring-gai Environment) and IATG (Institute of Australian Tour Guides) have recently agreed to establish an agreed training and accreditation pathway specifically for tour guides operating in the KGR. Guides will be accredited by IATG after completing the agreed training and being professional and financial members of IATG.
- In support of the KGR, Geotourism Australia has lodged a comprehensive submission in support of Hornsby Shire Council's Draft Destination Management Plan. <https://bit.ly/3V0npDz>

Murchison GeoRegion

- In August, at the invitation of the Mid West Development Commission (MWDC), Geotourism Australia has provided detailed information about how the implementation of the National Geotourism Strategy can relate to enhancing the Digital Economy Strategy of the Murchison GeoRegion through a focus on digital society and capability (access to digital technologies and skills), digital infrastructure (enabling digital connectivity), and digital industries and innovation (integrating digital opportunities in business). In this context, this submission <https://bit.ly/3V7In3k> set out to explain geotourism, the goals of the National Geotourism Strategy and how they are working to support Actions 7.5 and 7.7 of the government approved THRIVE 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy.
- Project Manager Karen Morrissey has reported that the Murchison GeoRegion (MGR) is navigating through significant changes to a range of land management issues in the region – which, while slowing down progress, is also strengthening the region's geotourism and ultimate pursuit of a UNESCO Global Geopark, through providing new and beneficial opportunities of collaboration.

Glen Innes Highlands GeoRegion

- Glen Innes Severn Council is further assessing its Destination Management Plan and has engaged a consultant to provide further advice. In support of this initiative, Geotourism Australia has provided, on request, additional advice as it relates to GeoRegions and the opportunity for geopark development as detailed at <https://bit.ly/4metXcY>
4. Further to the report of Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT), through its Trade Subcommittee Inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors being published, Geotourism Australia made a further submission <https://bit.ly/42gunYX> about this inquiry directly to the Tourism Minister. Steering Committee member and WAITOC CEO Rob Taylor has advised that he would be

attending a Ministerial Roundtable shortly and has kindly offered to table our interest in these developments.

Celebrating Geoheritage

- With the retirement of Jason Bradbury, the long-serving chair of this working group, the Geotourism Australia Steering Committee is pleased to welcome Ruby Hoyland to take over this role, although Jason has kindly agreed to stay on as a member of the Working Group. The Steering Committee has appreciated very much the outstanding service of Jason in leading the work completed in providing guidelines for geoheritage sites suitable for geotourism.
- Ruby is a physical geographer with a passion for geoheritage and geodiversity management. Her research with the University of Tasmania has focused on developing methods and tools to assess the consequences of fire for geoheritage and geosites. She is currently undertaking a PhD investigating how planning mechanisms can support the management of geoheritage in urban spaces across Australia. Ruby's work bridges science and practice, aiming to strengthen the role of geoscience in conservation and policy.
- A recent submission NSW Heritage Council Submission <https://bit.ly/4gie57W> has sought to have the final strategy include geoheritage and mining heritage, using recent representations relating to the lack of formal recognition for the Blue Mountains World Heritage Area. Geotourism Australia hopes that WG4 would look out for other opportunities to promote the inclusion of geoheritage values whenever other government agencies including national park organisations seek comment about strategy and/or destination management planning considerations.

Building Geotourism within Cultural Landscapes

Working Group 5, chaired by Dr Melinda McHenry (and supported by the Coordinator and Dr Sandra Close AM) has been developing geotourism in regional mining communities with potential geoheritage and cultural heritage sites.

Major Projects and Activities

- **Kalgoorlie Region/WA. - Goldfields Environmental Management Conference 2025 held in early May 2025**

In regard to advice in the June newsletter i.e., STEP 1: The establishment of 'Coordination & Internal Working Group Commitments', Geotourism Australia is delighted that Allison Golsby, the Chair of the Kalgoorlie Branch of The AusIMM has kindly agreed to chair the proposed Working Group and steps have been taken to approach identified stakeholders, refer AusIMM bulletin at <https://www.ausimm.com/bulletin/bulletin-articles/kalgoorlie-branch-embraces-geotourism/>

- **PMLU Valuation Work – EnviroMETS, UTas, and The AusIMM**

In his capacity as Geotourism Adviser to EnviroMETS <https://enviromets.net.au/> the has led a AusIMM Heritage Committee and a UTas team to contribute to the development of a Post Mining Land Use (PMLU) comparison tool to embrace monetary cultural and heritage values. Both the AusIMM Committee and the UTas has received an agreed level of remuneration for this project delivery with Geotourism Australia providing the coordination on a pro bono basis. The AusIMM Heritage Committee contributors included its chair, Dr Sandra Close and several AusIMM Committee members. In meeting the requirements of enviroMETS, the UTas team has resulted in the establishment of a pathway for further geotourism engagement in this project.

- **Proposed Collaboration with Qld Parks and Wildlife Service.**

WG5 leaders have met recently with representatives of the Parks Service to discuss the potential of a collaboration which might be constructed having regard to a successful model for geotrail development established in NSW referring noting that there are now six geotours to be listed with the sixth tour under development within the Ku-ring-gai National Park forming a key part of the Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion. It has been pointed out that of the six geotours listed <https://nswgeotours.stqry.app/>, four are contained within NSW National Parks with the Port Macquarie Coastal Geotrail being developed with content also supplied by the NPWS.

It has been suggested that a selection of say six geotours using this technology platform within National Parks across Qld to be developed by a consortium which might include the Service park managements, the Qld Geological Survey, Geotourism Australia (involving also the Geological Society of Australia), and at the local level for each location, the appropriate First Nations People representatives. The parks which were suggested as potential participants having regard to their outstanding geological heritage include the following, but not exclusively SE Qld parks, Undara Volcanic, Daintree, Chillagoe/Mungana, Carnarvon, and the Glass House Mountains. At the first meeting with Service representatives, it was also suggested that lesser-known parks (with identified promotional needs) could also be considered. Further meetings with the Service are now likely to take place.

- **Engagement with First Nations Peoples**

At its March 2025 meeting, the Geotourism Australia Steering Committee approved an update of Goal 5 to 'decide how best the two streams (sic, mining and Aboriginal engagement) implicit in the development of geotourism in cultural landscapes can best be accommodated, with the added goal of encouraging the establishment of new GeoRegions across Australia where the need arises, given also the findings of the recent Inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade as it relates to the development of indigenous cultural tourism within regional and outback areas of Australia.

The Coordinator has been acting in making a number of inquiries through a range of channels aimed at stimulating interest in exploring geopark opportunities for First Nations peoples., having regard to the Australian Government's 'Closing the Gap' imperatives. The most fruitful response so far has been at the suggestion of Steering Committee member Robert Taylor who recommended that contact be made with the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation, owners of the recently listed Murujuga World Heritage site in the Pilbara region of WA. A meeting with their CEO is being scheduled in October.

NOTE: Geotourism Australia Members, who would like to participate in any of the above-mentioned activities, are invited to contact the Coordinator at

E: angus@leisuresolutions.com.au

Building International Outreach for Australian Geotourism

Led by Dr Young Ng, this imperative is embraced by Goal 6 of the National Geotourism Strategy and employs geotourism to strengthen Australia's international geoscience standing and enhance its influence for the long-term benefits of Australian geoscientists. This is achieved 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, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, PNG and South Pacific nations etc.). This strategy is also relevant for countries that enjoy 'Gondwana age' geological relationships with Australia, specifically Indonesia, New Zealand, and nations within South America, Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, and the Arabian Peninsula.

The following is an update on upcoming international meetings and conferences relevant to interested parties. All members are encouraged to participate, as these events provide valuable opportunities for networking, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing within the geotourism and geoheritage communities.

1. Taiwan Conference: International Conference on Nature Conservation (7–11 June 2025, Penghu Islands)

Working Group 6 has participated in the International Conference on Nature Conservation, held in the Penghu Islands, and co-hosted by the National University of Taiwan and the Taiwanese Geoparks Association. The event was supported by Taiwan's National Park Services, Forestry and Nature Conservation Agency, Agriculture and Fisheries Bureau, and the Penghu County Tourism Administration. With approximately 150 participants from across the Asia-Pacific region, the conference provided a high-level platform for advancing regional collaboration in nature conservation and geotourism.

Australia was represented by Young Ng (Geotourism Australia) and David Newsome (Murdoch University, WA). Young presented on the Australian National Geotourism Strategy, highlighting the development of GeoRegions as a model for integrating geological heritage, community engagement, and sustainable tourism. His presentation underscored the strategic

alignment between geotourism and broader conservation and regional development goals. Professor Newsome contributed insights on geotourism and visitor management in protected areas, drawing on his academic expertise.

The conference facilitated meaningful engagement with international stakeholders and laid the foundation for future collaboration with institutions in Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and Southeast Asia. The presence of Australian delegates reinforced our national leadership in sustainable geotourism and strengthened Australia's visibility in global conservation dialogues.

2. Australia–Indonesia Partnership Workshop: Geohazard Challenges & Mitigation Strategies (18 October 2025, Virtual)

Young reported that WG-6 is coordinating an international virtual workshop in partnership with the Indonesian Geoparks Network, scheduled for 18 October 2025. This initiative will convene experts from both countries to address the intersection of geohazards and sustainable geotourism development.

The program includes two keynote presentations—one from each country—followed by a moderated Q&A session. Key topics include:

- Earthquake and tsunami characteristics, timing, and spatial distribution.
- Mitigation and management strategies tailored to geotourism contexts.
- Challenges and emerging opportunities for tourism in hazard-prone regions.

This workshop is designed to foster cross-border knowledge exchange and promote collaborative approaches to geohazard resilience, with potential applications in regional planning, risk communication, and community engagement.

3. International Seminar: Geoheritage & Parks (November 2025, Beijing)

WG-6 members have been invited to participate in the upcoming International Seminar on Geoheritage and Parks, hosted by the International Journal of Geoheritage and Parks. The seminar will convene global experts to explore key developments in geoheritage conservation, including:

- Geodiversity protection and site stewardship.
- Community-based geotourism models.
- Integration of digital technologies to enhance visitor experience and site monitoring.

Participation in this seminar will further strengthen WG 6's international engagement and support knowledge transfer across the Asia-Pacific region.

Dr Young Ng will present on the National Geotourism Strategy and the GeoRegions as a model for integrating geological heritage, community engagement, and sustainable tourism. Participation in this seminar will further strengthen WG-6's international engagement and support knowledge transfer across the globe.

Geotourism Communications and Interpretation

By September 2024, Working Group 7 had completed a draft 45 page 'textbook' focused booklet. However, as resources were not available to complete this work, the project has been 'on hold' for the past 12 months. With the rapid advent of AI as an editing tool during this period, a concise document has been generated by AI and updated to be relevant for geotrails as well as geosites. It is currently being reviewed by the Geotourism Australia Steering Committee, and it is hoped that it will be submitted to Working Group members for further review and endorsement.

Report on Geotourism Awareness Building.

- LinkedIn – Australian Geotourism Development (902 members to date, an increase of 12 members over the last three months); weekly postings to all members through LinkedIn have continued with resultant variable levels of impressions received.
- The last NGS newsletter was published by the AGC on 12th June

<https://www.agc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/2025-02-AGC-NGS-Newsletter.pdf>

- The above-mentioned LinkedIn articles have continued to be published since the last meeting which include a number which serve to explain various aspects of geotourism.
- <https://bit.ly/463jFGw> KU-RING-GAI GEOREGION GOES ONLINE!
- <https://bit.ly/4oV5Is2> THE GREAT NORTH ROAD AND THE CONVICT TRAIL PROJECT AS A GEOTOURISM JOURNEY
- <https://bit.ly/47jl91w> HOW DOES GEOTOURISM DIFFER FROM ECOTOURISM?
- <https://bit.ly/463lvHc> ABIOTIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KIMBERLEY
- <http://bit.ly/4mLLJoU> FISH TRAPS - GEOTOURISM IN AUSTRALIA AND TAIWAN
- <https://bit.ly/47pzGZv> GEODIVERSITY, GEOHERITAGE, AND GEOTOURISM
- <https://bit.ly/4p9QKt8> DERBY, TASMANIA - FROM TIN MINE TO TRAIL TOWN
- <https://bit.ly/41zARSB> ROCK CLIMBING - EXPLORING GEOCONSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES
- <https://bit.ly/4nfbb64> LIGHTNING RIDGE – GEOTOURISM AS A CATALYST FOR REGIONAL RENEWAL
- <https://bit.ly/47qAUUy> GEOTOURISM AUSTRALIA HASN'T FORGOTTEN KALGOORLIE!
- <https://bit.ly/3JK06LJ> WARRUMBUNGLE GEOTOURISM – ONCE A GEOPARK PROPOSAL, NOW A SUCCESSFUL GEOTRAIL NETWORK
- <http://bit.ly/4mKFEZZ> UNEARTHING ETHERIDGE THROUGH THE SAVANNAH WAY

- <https://bit.ly/45Mg2Wy> NEW GEOTOUR APP AVAILABLE FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GEOTOURISM
- <https://bit.ly/3VzdpkE> CHALLENGING HERITAGE FUTURES: AUSTRALIA ICOMOS 2025 BALLARAT CONFERENCE
- The **Coordinator** attended as keynote speaker to address the Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association conference in Wellington NSW on 4th September, accompanied by Dr Melinda McHenry. <https://bit.ly/4gkVfwU>
- **AESC 2026**
David Robson, Chair of the GSA Geotourism Standing Committee, has been appointed as Convenor of a symposium on geotourism at the upcoming **AESC 2026 Conference on 3-6th February in Melbourne; an event of the Geological Society of Australia**. This symposium forms part of Conference Theme 5 on 'Geoscience at the Interface of Society and Culture'. Abstracts close on **Friday 26th September 2025**. <https://aescgsa.com.au/pages/program/call-for-abstracts>

A 'call for papers' has been distributed through social media outlets and which covered the following themes.

- The employment and societal benefits of building a geotrail highlighting the 'A' (abiotic – sky, climate, landscape, and geology), the 'B' (biotic – flora and fauna) as well as 'C' (culture, both Aboriginal and post European settlement) aspects of geotourism.
- Geotrail creation – integrating the links with soft adventure tourism, cultural tourism, ecotourism, astrotourism, cave tourism, and agritourism.
- Challenges and experiences encountered by geoscientists in interpreting and communicating content about geosites frequented by tourists and visitors.
- New and proposed geotrails developed within both protected areas and unprotected areas, including mining and Aboriginal cultural landscapes.
- Nomination of areas within Australia that have outstanding potential as future GeoRegions, given their outstanding natural heritage, particularly geoheritage and cultural heritage values.
- New digital applications to be used for highlighting geotrails.
- Exploring opportunities for building 'positive impact' focused, sustainable geotourism for enhancing community engagement.
- New pathways for major geotourism project development.

Further information and inquiries, David Robson can be contacted at E: robodavidf@gmail.com
Geotourism Australia members are encouraged to consider submitting an abstract or attending as a delegate.

Angus M Robinson Coordinator, Geotourism Australia
12 September 2025