



Newsletter of the Australian Geoscience Council

Update on activities of Geotourism Australia

Newsletter **26-02, dated 16 July 2026**

PURPOSE

To provide intermittent periodic updates of activities and achievements of the Geotourism Australia Working Groups and links to useful items. The most recent quarterly meeting of the Geotourism Australia Steering Committee was held on 22nd June 2026.

CURRENT STATUS

Further Updates to Geotourism Australia Operations

- Cultural Landscapes Theme Leader, Dr Melinda McHenry, has taken long-serve leave from Utas until 1 October 2026; her duties have been assumed by Nadine Hoffman who is WA based, a based mature age student from Melinda's student group with experience and a strong interest in regional and remote development. Nadine will be focusing her attention on progressing the work underlining the proposed WA Eastern Goldfields GeoRegion project and working alongside Allison Golsby, the Chair of the Kalgoorlie Branch of the AusIMM who has been active building local interest in this project. Email addresses for establishing contact with either Nadine and/or Allison are nadineh0@utas.edu.au and allison@golsby.org
- With Robert Taylor, CEO of WAITOC, stepping down from the role of representing Aboriginal interests, he has been replaced by Mark Saddler, a former director of the NSW Aboriginal Tour Operators Council and owner of Bundy Cultural Knowledge and Tours, located in the Riverina region of NSW. His email address E: marksad@live.com.au Geotourism Australia expresses appreciation to Robert for his guidance in developing links with Aboriginal cultural tourism in Western Australia.

Digital Technologies

Australian Geotourism Discovery Portal (AGDP)

Theme Leader, Mark Williams has advised on further progress with the Australian Discovery Portal and is now training four UTas students to help gather and verify geosite data. The students will work on filling data gaps in different regions, with one focusing on Northern Territory and another on New South Wales's Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion, and two others on data ingestion and verification. The Steering Committee remains committed to identifying a potential host for the Portal, hopefully government based.



Virtual Geotrail

With significant funding provided by the Sydney Mineral Exploration Discussion Group (SMDEG), development of an App based virtual geotrail along the entire Northern Beaches coastline forming part of the **Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion**, with a linked website. A contractor, who has

delivered Apps for the NSW Government's Geotours has been contracted to undertake this work.

Approval Pathways for GeoRegion and Geopark Development

Geopark Assessment Process

A new promotional presentation has been produced to explain the workings of the Geopark Assessment Process. The presentation encapsulates why Australia needed a different pathway, its critical success factors, the next steps, and a call to action can be sighted at <https://bit.ly/3P19X2D>

In addition, it has been recognised that prior to the establishment of the national framework, several Western Australian initiatives, supported by the Australian Geoparks Network (AGN) and GeoparksWA, developed as community-based 'local geoparks'. These Local Geoparks are defined and assessed by GeoparksWA to meet many of the UNESCO guidelines for development as geoparks that have significant abiotic, biotic and cultural features, and have a legally incorporated community-based organisation with a locally based management board that aspires towards becoming a UNESCO Global Geopark. Recent discussions have been held with the AGN and GeoparksWA representatives to

determine a mechanism that will enable these projects to be included for assessment under the new government approved arrangements.

Progress of Ku-ring-gai, Glen Innes Highlands, and Murchison GeoRegions

Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion (KGR)

- Representations to the NSW Minister for Local Government have been made in respect to his portfolio taking 'oversight' responsibility of the geopark assessment process as it relates to both the Ku-ring-gai and Glen Innes Highlands GeoRegion.
- Further to the commentary under 'digital technologies', Steering Committee member Dr Peter Mitchell has been driving the content development for these trails and will be working with the App developer to complete the project. Peter reported that the Sydney Minerals Exploration Discussion Group (SMEDG) has now formally approved the payment arrangements of \$15k for the implementation of the Northern Beaches Virtual Geotrail. The objective of the project is to enable the FOKE GeoRegion project team to develop a Virtual Coastal Geotrail from North Head to Barrenjoey highlighting the geologically significant attributes of the coast aimed at providing both an educational and informative resource for exploring the geology of this coastal section of the GeoRegion. The approach uses the GeoRegion website, www.kuringgaigeoregion.au as its foundation, providing four Geotrails in a user-friendly format that is downloadable (PDF) or accessible via a smart phone. The four Geotrails are: North Head, Long Reef, Narrabeen to Mona Vale, and Bungan to Barrenjoey.
- The NPWS is well advanced on building the new West Head geotrail with funding of \$30k obtained through the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife.



Signage work is proceeding in conjunction with the three LGAs with the latest signage being designed for erection in the Ku-ring-gai Wildflower Garden with funding of \$20k under a Community Grant jointly funded by the NSW Government and Ku-ring-gai Council. Northern Beaches Council has now erected a new, double-sided sign at Long Reef – Northern Beaches Council Mayor, Sue Heins pictured with Ku-ring-Gai GeoRegion Committee member, Dr Peter Mitchell OAM, who has been working on this project since the inception of the GeoRegion in 2018.



The newly completed Crusher Plant Precinct opened on 28th March is the first area of Hornsby Park (the site of the Hornsby Diatreme) to open and is now accessible to the public, offering a glimpse of what is to come as the wider Hornsby Park project continues to be delivered in stages. Steeped in history, the Crusher Plant Precinct, including a spectacular overhanging lookout, interprets the former

industrial plant that once crushed volcanic rock from the quarry for use across Sydney. This cultural landscape has now been reimagined as a tranquil space with lawns, picnic shelters, and barbeque facilities. <https://tinyurl.com/3kb3yth7>

- Kalkari Discovery Centre Rock Display: With substantial funding provided by the NSW Division of the Australian Institute of Geoscientists (AIG), the Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion is developing a geoscience interpretative display within a visitor display centre of the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park.



The NPWS Management has recently approved the establishment of this outdoor rock display within the Kalkari Discovery Centre

The Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion Steering Committee proposed to Chase Alive and various NPWS officers that funding could be sought from the AIG to establish a more informative rock display outside the centre building together with a range of interpretative information relating to the rocks and landscapes throughout the Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion and Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park. A concept for the proposed rock display was provided to AIG who in turn confirmed that they would provide \$15,000 for the erection of an outdoor rock display with accompanying interpretive panels within the Kalkari Discovery Centre. The AIG has now provided the \$15,000 as a donation through the auspices of the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife to the NPWS to manage throughout the acquisition and erection of the display.

Glen Innes Highlands GeoRegion

- Council has appointed an executive officer to project manage the further development of the GeoRegion.
- Discussions with Council have been initiated with a geotourism interest group intent on developing a stock route geotrail across sections of the GeoRegion. It is planned to engage the retired geologists (Geotourism Australia members) who have developed rail geotrails in SE Qld to assist in this development.
- Council is planning to commence work on developing the Ottery mine site at Emmaville as a mining heritage site https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ottery_Mine

Murchison GeoRegion

Project Manager, Karen Morrisey has prepared a comprehensive overview of what's happening in the GeoRegion for the information of Geotourism Australia members.

[https://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Murchison-GeoRegion-Report-to-June-2026 .pdf](https://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Murchison-GeoRegion-Report-to-June-2026.pdf)

Sustainable Geotrails

Published in the GSA TAG June 2026 - "From Outcrop to Outcome: Why Geotourism Matters More Than Ever for Australian Geoscience", an article by **Theme leader, David Robson**.

This article discusses how geotourism has long sat at the margins of mainstream geoscience in Australia, often viewed as interpretive, educational, or secondary to 'core' scientific work. That perception is now changing. A recent review by Geotourism Australia reframes sustainable geotourism as a rigorous, outcomes-driven discipline:

"A place-based form of sustainable tourism that safeguards Earth's geodiversity and geoheritage while strengthening interconnected biodiversity, cultural values, and the wellbeing of host communities—achieved through inclusive stewardship, meaningful interpretation, positive-impact practices and measurable outcomes."

Two case studies are cited – the Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion and the untapped potential of existing trails being upgraded/enhanced into geotrails.

https://issuu.com/gsaustralia/docs/tag_june_2026_issue_218

Celebrating Geoheritage

- **QLD Heritage Strategy Document**

Theme Leader, Ruby Hoyland has prepared the QLD Heritage Strategy document in March which was submitted by Geotourism Australia to the QLD Government following input from members of the Geoheritage theme group: <https://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/Geotourism-Australia-Geoheritage-Submission-for-QLD-Heritage-Strategy.pdf>

An additional submission was made on mining heritage:

https://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/04/QLd-mining-heritage_submission.pdf. The submission was prepared in consultation with the Heritage Committee of the AusIMM.

- **Caves Beach to Budgewoi Coastal Trail Master Plan Draft, Central Coast NSW**

Ruby Hoyland has just prepared a submission to the NPWS recognising that geoheritage values as distinct components of the landscape, through identification of significant sites, integration into interpretation strategies, and consideration of geotourism opportunities, would strengthen delivery of the Draft Master Plan objectives. Specifically, the submission has argued that this would support sustainable geotourism, enhance visitor experiences, improve understanding of coastal processes, and promote appreciation and conservation of the geological features that shape and sustain the coastline.

- **New research commenced: Geoheritage Planning**

Ruby has begun a new research project involving some members from Geotourism Australia's Geoheritage theme grouping to better understand how geoheritage is included in planning processes in Australia; the results of this research will contribute to the theme by identifying the planning processes relevant to geoheritage, with respect to how planning protections enable or constrain geotourism opportunities. As this research is conducted with the University of Tasmania, it has been approved by the Human Ethics Committee (HREC40458).

- **Contribution to the AGDP Project**

Ruby has been assisting Mark Williams in identifying ways in which we can add data to the AGDP with the help of students from the University of Tasmania. While the current aim is to add data to the staging portal, it is recognised that at a future date there will require input from geoscience professionals to verify some of the information presented and to validate the appropriateness of some sites (as per NGS WG4 Geoheritage Report).

Building Geotourism within Cultural Landscapes

Closing the Gap and Geotourism Investigations

- Geotourism Australia has made several inquiries through a range of channels aimed at stimulating interest in exploring geopark opportunities for First Nations peoples. Contact continues to be made with the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation, owners of the recently listed Murujuga World Heritage site in the Pilbara region of WA. A further meeting with their CEO is planned later in August.

Further supportive conversations have been held with Dr Alan Dale who has helped build integrated societal governance systems across the tropical world and northern Australia, and with his support he coordinated a meeting recently for Geotourism Australia with Barry Hunter, CEO of the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, with a follow-up presentation to be made to Mr Hunter's group. The Coordinator is also presenting at the Developing Northern Australia Conference (DCNA26 <https://northaust.org.au/> conference in early August in Alice Springs. The topic is *'Country at the Centre: How GeoRegions can support Indigenous Leadership, Story, and Sustainable Futures.'*

- Geotourism Australia has undertaken further consultations with Qld Parks and Wildlife Service in regard to developing a selection of say six geotours using a technology platform within National Parks across Qld involving 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. Discussions with the Chillagoe/Mungana Cave National Park/ Chillagoe Geology Hub could be the first project to be considered. A project in the Lamington National Park might also be in the offering, but not likely until next year.

A recent meeting included a most helpful discussion with a senior official of Qld Tourism and Events to the extent that for the first time a State/Territory tourism agency has now identified areas where geotourism input would be beneficial (and relevant) to their strategic industry development.

The Qld Government has announced its new '45 by 45' Ecotourism strategy, which makes no reference to the development of geotourism <https://tinyurl.com/yw5j4p6v>. This omission is consistent with the universal view of Australian tourism agencies (STOs) that geotourism is just a 'niche product' here in Australia and globally and does not require that much attention.

Geotourism Australia has undertaken some 'desktop' research as reflected in a document which in fact (in the first part) highlights the role of geotourism and ecotourism globally and with the second part suggesting the advancement of Queensland's global position through geotourism.

<https://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Geotourism-Strategic-Overview.pdf>

Geotourism Australia is now taking to market geotourism to the one government tourism agency, which as at least has already embraced ecotourism in a significant way.

Geotourism Australia continues to support geotourism development initiatives in the Mt Isa/Mary Kathleen/Cloncurry area of Qld and is staying connected with the Mt Isa Townsville Economic Zone (MITEZ) regional development group.

Building International Outreach for Australian Geotourism

Theme Leader Dr Young Ng is of the view that Geotourism Australia continues to strengthen its international presence through active participation in major global conferences, strategic partnerships with international organisations, and targeted initiatives in geoethics, geoconservation, and geotourism education. The upcoming program of events in 2026 provides significant opportunities to expand Australia's leadership role in the Asia-Pacific region and to deepen collaboration with global networks in geotourism, geoparks, and geoheritage.

1. Webinar on Geoethics

A Webinar on Geoethics was held on 25 May organised by Geotourism Australia together with the Indonesian Geoparks Network, and supported by the Chinese Geoparks Network, the International Association for Promoting Geoethics (IAPG), ProGEO, and the TARN Research Team of the University of Tasmania.

The session focused on the role of geoethics in geotourism and geopark development, with Dr Silvia Peppoloni delivering the keynote presentation. She outlined the ethical principles guiding responsible geoscience and sustainable tourism, emphasising ecological humanism, global citizenship, responsibility, respect for natural heritage, and inclusive decision making. Her talk highlighted how geoparks and geotourism can foster environmental awareness while balancing conservation with economic development.

Participants raised questions on applying geoethics in management planning, addressing waste issues, integrating mining activities, and improving geoethics literacy among communities and policymakers. The webinar drew over 100 participants from Australia, Indonesia, Africa, and other regions, demonstrating strong international interest in geoethics and sustainable geotourism. The presentation is available for shared learning:

<https://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/Silvias-presentation-20260525.pdf>

The presentation has been widely promoted through LinkedIn and the Facebook 'Global Geoparks' group.

2. Webinar on GEOfood, 23 November

Another webinar will be jointly organised by Geotourism Australia and the International Geoparks Network on 23 November 2026, featuring Sara Gentilini, Founder of GEOfood, as the keynote speaker, noting that Sara has already been introduced to Glen Innes Severn Council as a suggested themed events project for the GeoRegion.

GEOfood is a global initiative rooted in UNESCO Global Geoparks that links local food, geodiversity, and sustainable community development, resonating strongly with local communities. Now part of IGCP Project 726 under the UNESCO International Geoscience and Geoparks Programme (IGGP), GEOfood has evolved into an international branding and sustainability framework that promotes:

- Local food products grown or produced within a UNESCO Global Geopark.
- Clear connections between geology, landscape, and food traditions.
- Short food supply chains and strengthened local economies.
- Community participation in geopark identity and storytelling.
- Sustainable agriculture and responsible consumption.

3. UTAS/Public Lectures

To promote socio economic sustainability through geotourism and geoparks, three lectures and public talks were delivered by Young Ng in Hobart from 28–30 April 2026. The sessions included:

- 'Global Geoparks: How Landscapes Become Classrooms, Laboratories, and Tourism Destinations' (for UTAS's undergraduate students).
- 'China and the World: How Geoparks Shape Sustainable Futures Through Geodiversity' (for UTAS's postgraduate students).
- 'Geoparks for Everyone: How China and the World Turn Landscapes into Shared Futures' (for UTAS's staff and the public).

These lectures introduced global concepts of geotourism and geoparks, highlighting their roles in geoheritage and environmental conservation, cultural preservation, and sustainable development. Each session concluded by emphasising the implications for Australia and outlining how Australia can further strengthen community development through geotourism and the 'GeoRegion to Geoparks' approach.

4. Major upcoming international events of geotourism and geoparks

The following major upcoming international geoparks and geotourism events:

- Asia Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN) Symposium 2026 – Langkawi, Malaysia (4–12 September 2026).
- 18th European Geoparks Network (EGN) Conference – Saimaa, Finland (15–18 September 2026).
- 10th International Course on UNESCO Global Geoparks – China (9–15 October 2026).
- 8th Latin America Geoparks Network (GeoLAC) Conference – Mexico (19–23 October 2026).

5. Global Geopark Familiarisation



Steering Committee member Professor Pat James (pictured – far right) has been travelling in southern Italy to visit various regional and UNESCO Global Geoparks and hopes to visit and engage with local guides/officials/visitor centres in each of these, and to investigate their various communication and interpretation strategies. Pat has kindly submitted for publication on LinkedIn several travelogue reports which highlight his experiences and observations

Both Pat and Young have advised that they plan to attend the APGN Langkawi conference to be held in September this year.

Geocommunication

Theme Leader Professor Pat James has been reviewing the documents that the WG7 – Geocommunication and Geointerpretation team has been working on for the last few years and has discussed future outcomes with his South Australian colleagues. Pat is in favour of a 'dynamic' and upgradeable website rather than a printed 'Best Practice Guide'. Hence based on his current overseas experience he plans hope to return with a better idea of how this might eventuate, which he then hopes to communicate with the members of the former WG 7 Working Group.



In the interim, Leisure Solutions® has been successful in being awarded an Austrade grant to develop geotrail brochure supported projects at two sites along the West and East MacDonnell Ranges (Ormiston and Trephina Gorges respectively; the latter incorporating the Arltunga historical mining

reserve) using the Standley Chasm project as a model. The grant (inclusive of a financial contribution by Leisure Solutions®) covers all the design and printing costs for some 40,000 brochures. The content development work will be undertaken by Dr Anett Weisheit, with both Geotourism Australia members undertaking this work on a 'pro bono' basis. Tourism Central Australia is providing partnership support by distributing the brochures to tour operators visiting these attractions. It is believed that this project would serve to raise awareness of geotourism amongst NT tour operators.

Report on Geotourism Awareness Building

- LinkedIn – Australian Geotourism Development (938 members to date); weekly postings to all members through LinkedIn have continued with resultant variable levels of impressions received.
- The above-mentioned LinkedIn articles have continued to be published over the past three months which explain various aspects of geotourism.
 - <https://bit.ly/4dXXir6> GEOTOURISM AND GEOTRAILS: MORE THAN JUST SUSTAINABLE
 - <https://bit.ly/4e18WBx> GEOETHICS: RETHINKING RESPONSIBLE GEOTOURISM
 - <https://bit.ly/3Q7MgGH> GEOSCIENCE IS DISAPPEARING FROM OUR UNIVERSITIES—JUST WHEN WE NEED IT MOST
 - <https://tinyurl.com/3kb3yth7> MINING HERITAGE CELEBRATED WITHIN THE KU-RING-GAI GEOREGION
 - <https://bit.ly/3Sjc8zX> FROM GEOPARK ASPIRATIONS TO POTENTIAL GEOREGION DEVELOPMENT: A NEW PATHWAY FOR PLACE-BASED STORYTELLING

- <https://bit.ly/4aAHQij> COUNTRY AT THE CENTRE: WHY QUEENSLAND'S CENTRAL HIGHLANDS HAVE ALL THE MAKINGS OF A GEOREGION
- <https://bit.ly/4g7Cuig> COUNTRY AT THE CENTRE: PUTTING INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP FIRST IN GEOREGIONS AND THE FUTURE OF OUR LANDSCAPES
- <https://bit.ly/4xEcjg3> SNOWY MONARO LANDSCAPE - DREAMING STORIES
- <https://bit.ly/4uxvXB8> IS EUROBODALLA READY TO EVOLVE AS ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S EARLY GEOREGIONS?
- <https://bit.ly/4aEtoG4> AUSTRALIA'S NEW PATHWAY TO UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK NOMINATIONS
- <https://bit.ly/3PXj8BY> WILDLIFE TOURISM FIGHTING EXTINCTION: A CONFERENCE WITH PURPOSE
- <https://bit.ly/3RWFV1m> FROM CAVES TO COUNTRY: HOW GEOTOURISM IS TRANSFORMING AUSTRALIA'S UNDERGROUND EXPERIENCES
- <https://bit.ly/445vpaA> GEOTOURISM AND GEOPARKS IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF GEOETHICS
- <https://bit.ly/3S14ni2> FROM NATIONAL LANDSCAPES TO GEOREGIONS: A NEW PATHWAY TO UNESCO GLOBAL GEOPARK NOMINATION
- <https://bit.ly/4aUMdoT> WHAT DO WE REALLY MEAN BY GEOTOURISM?
- <https://bit.ly/3T4fZBo> DISCOVER THE STORY BENEATH THE SURFACE: NEW GEOTRAIL LANDFORM VISTA SITES TRANSFORM MURCHISON GEOREGION'S JOURNEY
- <https://bit.ly/455mRBb> WHO'S PLANNING FOR AUSTRALIA'S DEEP-TIME STORY?
- <https://bit.ly/3TiEHOOr> CELEBRATING MURGEOPARK IN PUGLIA, ITALY
- <https://tinyurl.com/5hcd9pka> RECOGNISING A PIONEER GEOPARK, MADONIE, ITALY
- <https://bit.ly/4ymgqHg> NEW GEOTRAIL BROCHURES SET TO TRANSFORM HOW VISITORS EXPERIENCE THE MACDONNELL RANGES

In addition, the AIG has published three articles on geotourism in their June newsletter, refer <https://www.aig.org.au/news-item/23900/aig-news-162-june-2026-is-available-now>

Angus M Robinson Coordinator, Geotourism Australia
16 July 2026