



Newsletter of the Australian Geoscience Council

Update on activities of Geotourism Australia

Newsletter **26-03, dated 12th October 2026**

PURPOSE

To provide intermittent periodic updates of activities and achievements of Geotourism Australia and links to useful items. The most recent quarterly meeting of the Geotourism Australia Steering Committee was held on 7th October 2026.

Digital Technologies

Australian Geotourism Discovery Portal (AGDP) – AI NOW BEING APPLIED

Theme Leader, Mark Williams has been exploring an AI-assisted approach to digitising and curating the data, using strict instructions and validation against multiple sources. The pilot testing looks extremely promising. The workflow can curate geotourism information to a high standard and generate geospatial data, including geotrail lines and geosite/mining-site points, where suitable maps and source data are available. This approach has been successfully tested with a dataset of 15 Tasmanian geosites and the Broken Hill geotrail brochure to generate the geotrail and associated geosite and mining-site data.

With financial support from the Australian Geoscience Council, Geotourism Australia has decided to invest in a Claude Max account for three months. This would allow scale up of the AI-assisted curation, which Mark anticipates would produce an initial seed dataset covering all states and territories over the next few months. The outputs would still require oversight and expert review from the Steering Committee, but the burden of initial data capture would be reduced.

Approval Pathways for GeoRegion and Geopark Development

The Australian Geopark Assessment Process, approved in December 2025, has established a nationally endorsed pathway for community and regional initiatives seeking recognition as potentially nomination as UNESCO Global Geoparks.

Its introduction addresses a longstanding gap in Australia: while community-led geopark initiatives have developed in some areas, there was previously no government-endorsed national process through which they could progress towards UNESCO consideration. The new process provides a staged pathway from regional development to potential international recognition.

The process comprises three principal stages: early consultation with relevant government agencies, Aboriginal stakeholders and communities; independent technical assessment by a national geoparks reference committee; and approval by the relevant State or Territory Government. Progression to a UNESCO nomination remains at the discretion of the Australian Government.

For Western Australia, the process now provides an opportunity to bring existing community-based 'Local Geoparks' into the national framework without losing the community leadership, branding, and local knowledge already developed. Should proponents elect to accept this offer, the proposed transition involves underpinning each initiative with an administrative GeoRegion status, as approved by the Geological Survey of Western Australia, followed by progression through the national assessment process.

GeoRegions remain the important foundational planning mechanism, providing a coherent geographic framework within which geological, landscape, biodiversity, and cultural values can be considered together; facilitating engagement with communities, Aboriginal stakeholders, and land managers; addressing governance and tenure issues; and establishing partnerships necessary for longer-term geopark development.

Importantly, a UNESCO Global Geopark is a management and development framework that works across existing land tenures and legislative protections, integrating conservation, education, interpretation, community participation, and sustainable economic development. Significant geosites must have appropriate legal protection before any nomination is submitted to UNESCO.

For proponents, the message is clear: GeoRegion development provides the foundation; the Geopark Assessment Process provides the nationally endorsed pathway; and geotrails, geosites, and community partnerships provide much of the practical delivery towards this objective. Together, these mechanisms create a coherent route from locally driven geotourism initiatives towards potential UNESCO Global Geopark recognition.

Representing Geotourism Australia (Dr Young Ng and Professor Pat James) and GeoparksWA (Dr Alan Briggs) were able to celebrate this enhanced arrangement at the Asia Pacific Geopark Network Conference recently held in Langkawi, Malaysia.

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

Ku-ring-gai GeoRegion (KGR)

Representations are now in the process of being made to other NSW State parliamentarians to gain a higher level of interest in the geopark assessment process as it relates to both the Ku-ring-gai and Glen Innes Highlands GeoRegions.

The combined Rock & Poster Outdoor Display at Kalkari Centre within the Ku-ring-gai National Park is progressing very well thanks to a lot of support not only from the five sub-committee members but from members of the KGR committee led by Rob Corkery.

Rock Specimen stands are currently being manufactured which will soon be installed by NPWS Mt Colah Works Dept and NPWS volunteers. The Clear Lexan (polycarbonate) boxes are finished for the softer rock samples. John Martyn and Peter Mitchell have completed the first of six panels with the remaining panels in an advanced planning stage.

However, completion of this project will depend on the scheduling requirements of the NPWS designers, and it is therefore expected that this will take the opening date into the first quarter of 2027.

The Sydney Minerals Exploration Discussion Group (SMEDG) has now commenced progress payments 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, <https://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. Dr Peter Mitchell has continued the content development for these trails and will be working with the App developer to complete the project.

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.

Ku-ring-gai Council has provided a small community grant to enable the website to have multi-lingual functionality. In using the second \$1,000 community grant from Bendigo Bank, an excellent double-sided A4 colour brochure has been completed and the contents of which have

recently been approved by all three councils and NPWS. Hopefully, nearly 1,000 copies can be printed within budget with distribution through the Council's libraries network.

Glen Innes Highlands GeoRegion

Council has undertaken its community consultation for the Glen Innes Activation and Framework Strategy for geotourism implementation, to which Geotourism Australia has contributed.

Council has recently appointed Professor Patrick McKeever, the Former Head of Earth Science at UNESCO and Global Geoparks Network Honorary Member as its Honorary Advisor. Professor McKeever also recently delivered a presentation about this GeoRegion at the 18th European Global Geoparks Network conference held in Finland.

Council has commenced discussions with the NSW Linnean Society to hold a natural history symposium Glen Innes in November 2027 and with the Australasian Mining History Association to hold its annual conference in Glen Innes in September 2028.

Murchison GeoRegion

Karen Morrissey, Project Manager of the Murchison GeoRegion, reports that Western Australia's large GeoRegion, originally established with a regional geotrail of 21 geosites, has seen land tenure changes particularly relating to those within pastoral leases.

A review of land tenure has highlighted sites with or without public access, geosites requiring permission to enter, and other geosites which could be seen from a public access road. Information about inaccessible geosites have been identified to be accessed virtually or available at the nearest Visitor Centre.

A colour coding system was developed for the Geotrail map, to better articulate geosite access. The process of placement of a colour coded marker on each geosite, allowed all original geosites to remain on the map. This also recognised ongoing collaboration between agencies and leaseholders who are currently negotiating change of a geosite's land tenure, to enable public access. Some geosites have been active tourism sites for generations, however their land tenure as, for example applies within pastoral leases requires compliance by the lessee under the Land Administration Act. A Geosite's key was introduced; green - public access, yellow - view from public road, orange – permission required, and purple – no access.



With the loss of some geosites to any form of access, five new proposed geosites have been introduced following a workshop with the Geological Survey of WA and are located on Shire land, already accessible tourism sites, or viewed from a public road. The five new geosites added to the GeoRegion are Warrambo Hill Lookout (Mount Magnet), Kintore Blow Town Lookout (Cue), Big Bell (Cue), St Hyacinth Chapel Hill (Yalgoo- pictured), and Yalgoo Lookout. Work is underway to further interpret these

sites to meet geotourism needs.

While there are now 25 Geosites, of those 21 geosites remain accessible in some form or other. The original Geotrail lacked a coherent logical sequence for a traveller intending to visit all geosites. With introduction of new geosites and the change in numbering, it was the perfect time to reset the Geotrail in a logical sequence.

Rather than starting in the middle and criss crossing the entire region, the Geotrail now commences closest to Perth and, while navigating northwards, other roadways offer a choice of dispersal northeast and northwest, depending on interest and time availability of the traveller. The Geotrail now tracks from south to north, southeast, west then north. The installation of welcoming entry signage will also be placed on all main highways leading into the GeoRegion.

Sustainable Geotrails

Chillagoe Visitors Centre, Far North Queensland – New Time Walk Trail Proposed

At the request of the GSA, Geotourism Australia has submitted to Mareeba Shire Council about the value geotourism brings to a region in the refurbishment of the existing Chillagoe Geology Hub. This included a “fossil dig,” refurbishment of a replica of a plesiosaur and a time-walk with local boulder-like local stones. The advice stressed the importance that geotourism fosters local pride that in-turn encourages deeper appreciation of natural and cultural heritage and builds and expands sustainable visitor experiences.

This work complements recent discussions held with the Qld National Parks Service and Mareeba Shire Council in support of a funding application to the Qld State Government to undertake upgrading of this facility .

Celebrating Geoheritage

The 'NSW Heritage Strategy - overview and implementation' webinar was held on 29th July to provide an overview of the NSW Heritage Strategy and to outline the implementation plan. Representatives of Geotourism Australia (**including theme leader Ruby Hoyland**), who had previously made a submission for the revised Heritage Strategy back in June 2025, were in attendance. Details of the revised strategy were not shared at this event, but it was communicated that these will become available over the coming year.

Building Geotourism within Cultural Landscapes

Geotourism Australia continues to make a number of 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.

There has also been further supportive conversations with Dr Alan Dale who has helped build integrated societal governance systems across the tropical world and northern Australia (particularly the Northern Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance - NAILSMA), Dr Dale is the immediate past Chairman of the Alliance.

A presentation https://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/DNAC2026_7august2026.pdf was also delivered to the Developing Northern Australia Conference (DCNA26 <https://northaust.org.au/> conference in August in Alice Springs. The presentation built the case for geotourism and GeoRegion offering mechanisms for contributing to Closing the Gap imperatives. The concept espoused that across Australia, the concept of 'GeoRegions' is creating opportunities to recognise landscapes as places where Country, culture, and deep time come together. It was argued that GeoRegions provide a practical framework for understanding land through both scientific knowledge and cultural meaning, supporting better land management, conservation, and community-led decision-making.

The presentation argued that for First Nations peoples, landforms are not simply physical features. They are part of living cultural landscapes shaped by Ancestors, story, and continuing relationships with Country. GeoRegions offer a pathway for these cultural connections to be recognised alongside geological and ecological values, ensuring that Indigenous knowledge is respected and embedded from the beginning, not added later. It pointed out that recently established World Heritage Sites at Victoria's Budj Bim and the Pilbara's Murujuga Cultural Landscapes demonstrate the power of Indigenous leadership in protecting and sharing cultural landscapes of global significance. These examples show how partnerships between Traditional Owners, communities, and governments can create positive outcomes grounded in respect and shared purpose.

The presentation also argued that GeoRegions can also support Aboriginal communities in shaping their own futures. Through initiatives such as place-based and positive impact geotourism, GeoRegions create opportunities for sustainable economic development, local employment, and intergenerational knowledge sharing. Importantly, they enable communities to tell their own stories, in their own voices, on their own terms. This approach reflects the idea of 'cultural geomorphology', recognising that landforms hold meaning, identity, and memory, as well as scientific value. It encourages visitors and younger generations alike to see landscapes not just as scenery, but as living places of cultural responsibility. GeoRegions are about strengthening relationships, with Country, with culture, and between people. By placing Indigenous knowledge and leadership at the centre, GeoRegions offer a respectful and collaborative pathway to care for Country and create lasting opportunities for future generations.

The presentation suggested that by supporting GeoRegions, with already established, government-approved pathways to UNESCO Global Geopark nominations, provides a practical mechanism for the Australian Government to advance 'Closing the Gap' imperatives, aligning investment with Priority Reforms and key targets in employment, economic participation, land and water rights, and cultural strength. By leveraging existing funding streams, Indigenous land and sea management, regional development, and tourism support for Indigenous-led, geotourism-driven enterprises can create jobs, build capability, and sustain intergenerational knowledge, all within a place-based, on-Country framework.

Subsequent discussions have now been held in Canberra with the policy advisor to indigenous Marion Scrymgour MP, Member for Lingari and Chair of the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia as well as Luke Gosling OAM MP, Member of Solomon. These representatives also sought advice about the potential of GeoRegion development for Christmas Island (and possibly the Cocos Islands).

Building International Outreach for Australian Geotourism

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.

Asia Pacific Geoparks Network Symposium 2026, Langkawi, Malaysia | 07-11 September 2026

Dr Young Ng delivered a major milestone for Australia's geopark development at the 9th Asia Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN) Symposium, where the presentation "Australia's National Pathway to UNESCO Global Geoparks: Policy Framework and Assessment Process" was formally introduced to the global geopark community.

Young Ng has advised that his presentation attracted significant interest from representatives of the UNESCO Global Geoparks Council, the Global Geoparks Network (GGN), the Asia Pacific Geoparks Network, and delegates from geopark active countries including Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and China. Along with Steering Committee member Professor Pat James, colleagues

from Australian Geoparks Network (AGN), GeoparksWA, and Nannup Geopark were also present, ensuring broad national visibility.

Following the session, targeted discussions were held with:

- Professor Artur Sá, President, Global Geoparks Network.
- Professor Jin Xiaochi, Coordinator, Asia Pacific Geoparks Network.
- Senior representatives from geoparks across the Asia-Pacific region.

These meetings provided an opportunity to address questions beyond the short Q&A period and to clarify the intent and structure of Australia's new pathway. All leaders expressed dedicated support, noting that Australia's approach is now credible, internationally aligned, and timely. Offers of assistance-technical, advisory, and collaboration were made to help accelerate geopark establishment in Australia.

Dr Young Ng suggested that this presentation marks the first public announcement of Australia's newly approved Geoparks Assessment Process at a major global forum. For the first time, Australia now has a clear, nationally endorsed pathway guiding community led GeoRegions toward potential UNESCO Global Geopark designation.

It is now believed that this achievement positions Australia to:

- Strengthen sustainable geotourism and regional development.
- Enhance geological heritage protection.
- Align local initiatives with national policy and global standards.
- Build credibility and trust with international geopark bodies.

Webinar (Gastronomy, Geoheritage, and Community Wellbeing in the Asia-Pacific: Integrating Local Food Cultures into Sustainable Geotourism)

To be jointly organised by Geotourism Australia and the Indonesian Geoparks Network with coordinated speakers from the Asia Pacific region (including Australia) to be invited to provide regional perspectives, this webinar has now been rescheduled to a date to be advised in early 2027.

Geocommunication

As an active member of the organising committee for the GeoSciEd-X, conference (14-16 August), chaired by AGC Convenor. Kim Frankcombe, theme leader Professor James reports that the conference was an outstanding success with more than 130 participants from across Australia (mostly schoolteachers), but with significant representatives from Earth Science University Departments. Although there was not a "Geotourism" strand, many of the activities in particular the Hallett Cove Excursion, local showcases including visits to the Tate Museum and Adelaide University Geodynamics modelling laboratory included aspects (videos, brochures, computer models etc), which incorporated components of Geocommunication

and Geointerpretation which could be readily transferred to geotourism opportunities. Pat has shared a communication from Kim Frankcombe following the conference.

Delegates

Hopefully the GeoSciEd buzz is still lingering, and you are looking at the landscape around you with a new appreciation. In the exit survey from GeoSciEd many of you wanted to see something tangible come from the Big Ideas Day.

We have attempted to do that! Sandra Villacorta has put together a draft report as well as a more graphical summary. The report reads a bit like a scientific report while the summary is more like a marketing document - intended for different audiences.

This is the link to the summary which contains a link to the full report on the last page. You should be able to post comments on the document, and we would welcome your constructive thoughts as to how it might be improved. We will leave it up for a couple of weeks before taking the comments and finalising. Once finalised it will be available from the AGC website, along with the abstracts, presentations and field trip handouts. I'll redirect geosciedx.agc.org.au back to the AGC site and use that as the seed for gathering links to resources to try and address some of your other requests.

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/17MUPwGZT2EwrWmXkBIG-bWvIM_hqJWOR/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=100002415234474726111&rtpof=true&sd=true

On behalf of the Organising Committee, thank you for making the three days such a success which we hope will roll on to grow and lead to real change.

Work on developing further the "Best Practice Guide to the Interpretation and Communication of Geosites and Geotrails in Australia" booklet is programmed to recommence shortly. Pat James is very keen to utilise the past involvement of the previous working group to develop a draft of such a guide with the various components of the AI Guide plus the many examples of Geointerpretation and Geocommunication from around Australia in the form of an online website or digital guide.

Report on Geotourism Awareness Building

LinkedIn - Australian Geotourism Development (949 members to date - a further substantive increase over the past three months); weekly postings to all members through LinkedIn have continued with resultant variable levels of impressions received.

'NGS Achievements -2021/2026' document has been recently submitted to the Executive of the AGC <https://www.leisuresolutions.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/NGS-Achievements-2021-2026.pdf>

The last NGS information bulletin was published by the AGC on 16th July 2026
<https://www.AGCInformationBulletin16july2026.pdf>

with a shorter overview version published on 3rd September 2026
https://www.agc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/AGCInformationBulletin_Overview_3-September-2026.pdf

A set of three selected articles have been published in the September issue (163 of the AIG Newsletter <https://tinyurl.com/ms2nfm5b>

LinkedIn articles have continued to be published since the last meeting which explain various aspects of geotourism.

- <https://lnkd.in/p/e89fxGVW> WHAT DO WE REALLY MEAN BY GEOTOURISM?
- https://lnkd.in/p/e_WyfMrQ DISCOVER THE STORY BENEATH THE SURFACE: NEW GEOTRAIL LANDFORM VISTA SITES TRANSFORM MURCHISON GEOREGION'S JOURNEY
- <https://lnkd.in/p/eaCvNgTw> WHO'S PLANNING FOR AUSTRALIA'S DEEP-TIME STORY?
- <https://lnkd.in/p/eBBF-yxA> CELEBRATING MURGEOPARK IN PUGLIA, ITALY
- <https://lnkd.in/p/eZi8UM-R> RECOGNISING A PIONEER GEOPARK, MADONIE, ITALY
- <https://lnkd.in/p/eNFVKjpn> NEW GEOTRAIL BROCHURES SET TO TRANSFORM HOW VISITORS EXPERIENCE THE MACDONNELL RANGES
- <https://lnkd.in/p/eX6CmDMq> LONG REEF GEOTRAIL: INTERPRETING GEOHERITAGE THROUGH INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIP
- <https://lnkd.in/p/egKJdvV3> WHEN IS A GEOPARK NOT A GEOPARK? WHEN IT'S THE AEOLIAN ISLANDS!
- https://lnkd.in/p/eJSjkk_X GEOTOURISM DELIVERS 'EDUCATION AND OUTREACH' FOR GEOSCIENCE IN SPADES!
- <https://lnkd.in/p/ePR9cQaM> UNLOCKING THE GEOTOURISM POTENTIAL OF THE CAVES BEACH–BUDGEWOI CORRIDOR
- <https://lnkd.in/p/e3XaeCHw> CLOSING THE GAP: HOW GEOREGIONS CAN SUPPORT INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP THROUGH CREATING SUSTAINABLE FUTURES
- <https://lnkd.in/p/e-hFxvyb> "THERE'S GOLD IN THEM THAR HILLS"
- <https://lnkd.in/p/eZiU8AUm> WILDLIFE TOURISM FIGHTING EXTINCTION
- <https://lnkd.in/p/e-HBJ-Mv> BEYOND SCENERY: READING COUNTRY THROUGH GEOTOURISM
- <https://lnkd.in/p/e8ZFhv4G> KU-RING-GAI GEOREGION: BUILDING MOMENTUM TOWARDS A UNESCO FUTURE

- <https://lnkd.in/p/ehmkHGc6> TREPHINA GORGE: WHERE DEEP TIME MEETS LIVING COUNTRY
- <https://lnkd.in/p/eRdG6Ysr> ENHANCED GEOTOURISM EXPERIENCES FOR THE MURCHISON GEOREGION
- <https://lnkd.in/p/gYwGhzYT> WHY THIS VIEW - FROM WITHIN SCOTLAND'S HIGHLY SCENIC GLOBAL GEOPARK?

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