



GEO PARKS
AUSTRALIA

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Geoparks WA Reflections - November 2023

It has been a hectic six months for me. Three overseas trips to Europe as part of a Covid catchup. But it was extremely rewarding catching up with family and old friends as we traveled. And I got to see some fascinating UNESCO Global Geoparks.

However, it is the successes here in Western Australia that have truly inspired me.

The Murchison Georegion and Aspiring Geopark continues to develop and is looking ahead to incorporation. Incorporation is the only legal requirement we need under UNESCO's rules for geoparks. Mid West Development Commission continues to provide support to the development of the geopark along with the excellent support of the seven LGAs within the georegion.

Wanneroo/Joondalup has been working on and establishing geotrails and guided walks in Yanchep and Neerabup National parks. Geotrails are a prelude to establishing geoparks. Both LGAs continue their pathway to establishing a geopark over their boundaries.

Binjareb-Peel geopark is incorporated and preparing for this next stage of establishing a community management team. A drive geotrail is almost completed. The geotrail is based on and drawn from an excellent review of geosites within the Peel region. The geotrail is almost ready to be launched. Thrombolites are the jewel in the geopark. The drive geotrail has been funded by the Peel Development Commission who also host regular meetings of the geopark steering committee.

Nannup Geopark has been incorporated and recently won a significant grant to develop an APP, Website and commence work on a static display in the town. The grant will see excellent development work for the geopark.

Geoparks WA continues its liaison with government agencies and recently, following a positive meeting with the Geological Survey WA, met with the Lands Department to determine whether geoparks influence land tenure and its classifications. We presented our case that geoparks, according to UNESCO, do not influence land titles, have no requirement for legislation, are bottom-up led community organisations. We described geoparks are like Regional Tourism Organisations in that they do not affect land tenure but rather they are marketing and promotional organisations. Well, we do know that geoparks do more than that but in our case it was sufficient. The result was that the Lands department indicated that geoparks do not impact land tenure ... another myth busted!

As we head into the festive season, Geoparks WA is updating its three Strategic Plan.

Oh, and another LGA has indicated its interest in establishing a geopark. Coincidentally it is in an area that I presented to a community group debating ecotourism and sustainable tourism. I introduced geotourism and collected more data for my PhD. Eight years later ... More on this in 2024.

Have a great festive season, Merry Christmas and we will see you in the New Year.

Cheers

Dr Alan Briggs

President – Geoparks WA