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## **Geoparks WA/AGN Newsletter April 2026**

### **Have You Heard About Geoparks?**

We know about World Heritage Areas and Biosphere Reserves, but what do we know about UNESCO's Global Geopark program? UNESCO endorsed the Geopark program in 2015 and it has rapidly grown to now have 241 Global Geoparks in 51 countries around the World. It has been a Worldwide phenomenon but there are currently none in Australia.

Geoparks are areas with a significant geological feature, a single boundary and managed by a local community. They foster regional development, growing local businesses and facilitating local pride through encouraging cultural awareness and development opportunities.

Two decades ago, Susan Turner wrote an article promoting geoparks in Australia. They were based on geological sites (geosites) and included among other areas she indicated features such as the Devonian rocks in the Northern Territory, dinosaur footprints in Queensland and the Naracoorte caves in South Australia.

What about Western Australia? From the Banded Ironstone of the Pilbara, Thrombolites in the Peel Region, basalt flows in the southwest (Nannup) and magnificent monoliths of the Wheatbelt and Great Southern such as Castle Rock. In the Perth region we have extensive coastal limestone cliffs and caves (Yanchep), ancient dune systems across the coastal plains and of course the foothills of the Darline Scarp (Yilgarn Craton). And more!

### **New Naming Policy – Local Geoparks**

Geoparks WA has launched a naming protocol for local geoparks. Yes, as more geoparks are proposed by community members and they reach agreed milestones, Geoparks WA and the Australian Geoparks Network (AGN) have agreed to term these geoparks "Local Geoparks" as a first step towards applying for UNESCO global status. It is an arduous journey but many international geoparks have done this before. That is where Geoparks WA and the Australian Geoparks Network provide assistance, guidance, and support.

For further information see: <https://www.unesco.org/en/igpp/geoparks/about>

### **Australian Government Policy and Proposed Way Forward**

The Australian government does not currently support the establishment of UNESCO Global geoparks in Australia. However, the Australian Geoscience Council has released its desired pathway for establishing geoparks in Australia via georegions. The communique, which was seemingly endorsed by the Australian Geology Working Group, was widely circulated to key decision-making government agencies. The AGN and Geoparks WA support the establishment of georegions where there is potential for conflict between landholding/leasing bodies, particularly mining and pastoralism. Unfortunately, the proposal stops short of Local Geoparks already established. The AGN and Geoparks WA continue to work with government and agencies to address this situation.

## Local News

While not a UNESCO Global Geopark yet, locally Nannup Geopark has been incorporated and launched within the shire and is fully supported by the Nannup Council. Indeed, the mayor made a trip to the Asia Pacific Geopark Network bi-annual convention to hear about and view geoparks in action such is his commitment to the Nannup Geopark. In April the Nannup Local Geopark received a significant grant of \$562,865 from Lottery WA. Minister, the Hon. Jackie Jarvis handed over the symbolic cheque, the largest she has handed out to date. Further contributions to establishing their interpretation centre were received from a nearby mining company and the Nannup Shire. The shire has already made available the land for the centre. The displays will have a significant impact on tourism for the town and region.

Geoparks WA also recognised Nannup Local geopark as a community-led geopark well on its way towards nominating for UNESCO status.



Minister Jackie Jarvis with Mark White – Chair, Nannup Local Geopark.

Part of the Nannup Geopark team with Minister Jackie Jarvis.



Dr Alan Briggs, President – Geoparks WA presenting the certificate to Mark White.

## Bindjareb Local Geopark Launched

The Bindjareb Geopark in the Peel Region has also been incorporated, has a geo-drive trail established and in April launched an APP and brochure in 2026. Each outcome was funded by the Peel Development Commission through Geoparks WA. The Minister for Peel formally launched the Bindjareb Local geopark at the event which was hosted by Visit Mandurah.

### Comments attributed to Minister for Peel Jessica Stojkovski MLA:

*“It was my pleasure to be on Bindjareb Country today to officially launch the Bindjareb Local Geopark, Trail Guide & Mobile App, celebrating the region’s unique geology, culture and natural environment.*

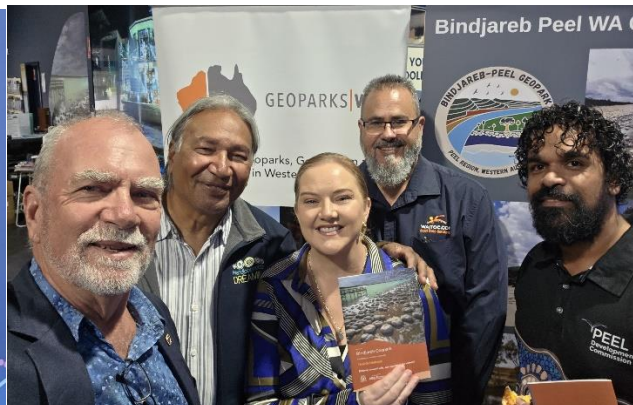
*The Trail Guide and mobile app have been designed to make the Bindjareb Geopark more accessible to locals and visitors, providing clear and engaging information about key geosites, landscapes and stories across the region.*

*Importantly, the Bindjareb Geopark forms part of a bigger picture for eco-tourism development in the region, complementing the Cook Labor Government’s major \$2 million election commitment to support Stage 1 activation of Yalgorup National Park. This reflects our commitments to protecting the environment, strengthening and diversifying our regional economies, and building inclusive, connected communities.”*

Special thanks were provided for the great work volunteered by Dr Yifei Ren (mobile app developer, Veilnet) who managed the development and integration of the App which will guide people to the Bindjareb Local Geopark. Yifei was presented with a small gift at a later opportunity.



Jessica Stojkovski MLA launching Bindjareb Local geopark.



Local Aboriginal Bindjareb hosts George and Kallan with WAITOC CEO Robert Taylor with the Minister.



The Bindjareb team behind the geopark.



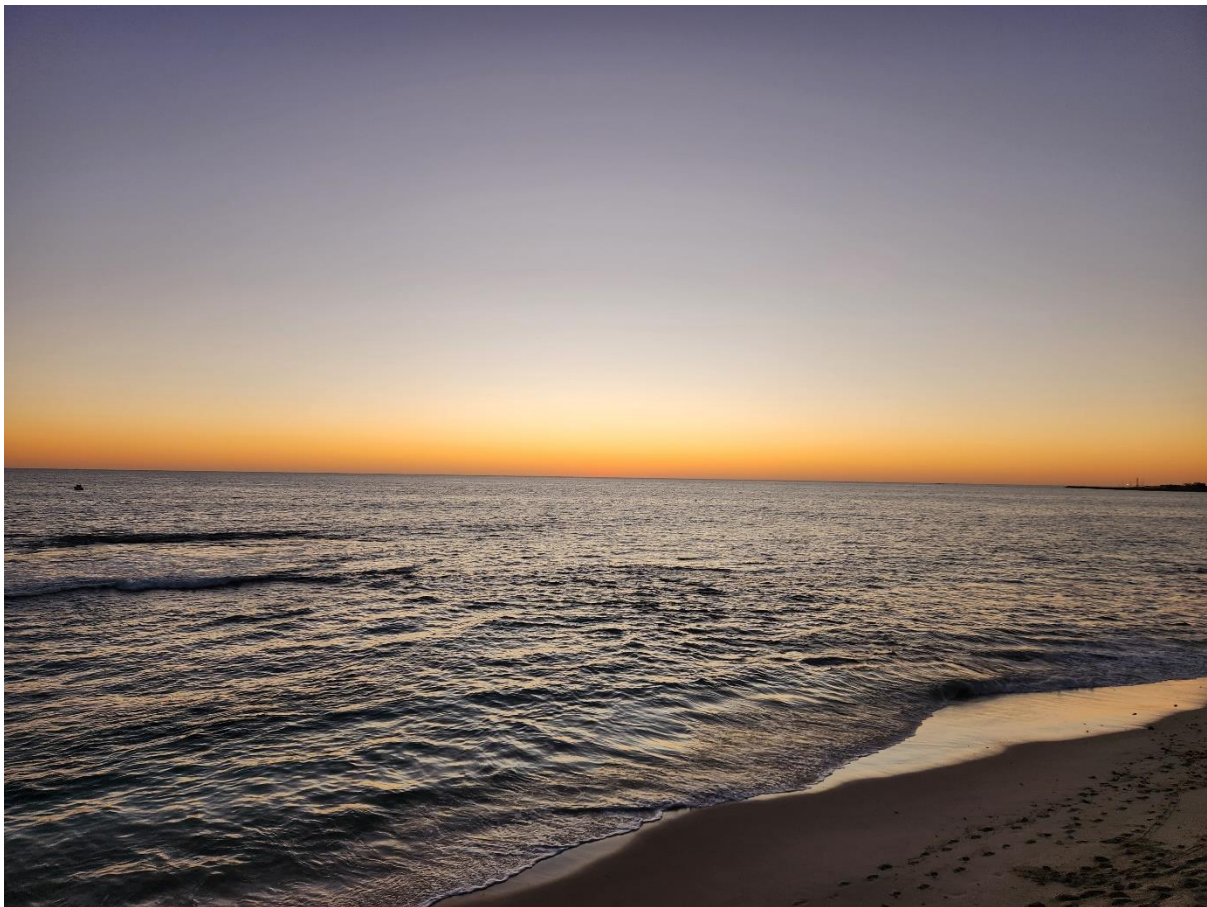
Dr Briggs presented Dr Yifei Ren with his gift for volunteering his time for the App.

## **Sunset Coast Local Geopark**

While not formally adopted as the proposed name for this future metropolitan local geopark, Geoparks WA continues to work with the cities of Wanneroo, Joondalup, and Stirling to consider a Sunset Coast Local Geopark. Council staff have been driving the process and meanwhile have been working towards establishing trails, geo-information, and maps for the proposed geopark.

The proposed geopark has a multitude of geo-related attributes extending from the Marmion Marine Park and its underwater dive trails, beaches and limestone cliffs, linear and circular lakes located over a range of five different sand dunes, karst topography including Yanchep Park's cave systems and more, even before we start talking about flora and fauna and culture.

A series on geo-interpretation outcomes has been applied to existing and new walking trails, and a drive trail is being considered so it is a matter of "watch this space".



**Sunset Coast view from the Marmion Aquatic and Angling Club**

## Future events

### **The 9th Asia Pacific Geoparks Network (APGN) Symposium 2026 – September, Langkawi UNESCO Global Geopark**

<https://www.langkawigeopark.com.my/events/the-9th-asia-pacific-geoparks-network-apgn-symposium-2026/>

Geoparks WA and the Australian Geoparks Network will be represented and providing presentations on Western Australian and Australian aspirations for establishing geoparks. As this is a bi-annual symposium, perhaps one should try to attend to see just what geoparks are about.

### **12th International Conference on UNESCO Global Geoparks in Oeste UNESCO Global Geopark, Portugal, in 2027.**

<https://12thconferenceggoeste.com/>

The global conference brings representatives from around the world to network, share and enjoy the amazing feats of their fellow UNESCO Global geoparks. It is a fabulous opportunity to see what is happening on a global scale.

## Local forums

Due to travel arrangements during 2026, it is unlikely there will be any specific forums being presented although both Professor Ross Dowling AM, Chair of the Australian Geoparks Network and I will be working directly with geopark proponents whenever we can. We will also be engaging with Government and associated agencies to encourage regional development through the establishment of Local Geoparks across Western Australia and Australia.

## In Closing

Geoparks WA was incorporated to advocate and assist local communities in bringing their respective geoparks to life and to facilitate recognition as UNESCO Global Geoparks. We have a way to go through the complicated processes, but we will get there.

Dr Alan Briggs - President – Geoparks WA

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