

Stakeholder Perceptions about Establishing a Geopark in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia

Stage 1



A report based on PhD Research into the Creation of the Granite Way Geopark in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia.

Avongro Incorporated

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Supervised by Avongro Incorporated:

Avongro is a not-for-profit community-based organisation working with communities and land owners to improve agricultural environments through commercial and biodiversity planting in cooperation with metropolitan and rural-based communities.

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Disclaimer:

This report was prepared by Alan Briggs, PhD Candidate, in his research capacity. The opinions and views expressed in the research are the author's own and do not reflect nor represent the views of the Wheatbelt Development Commission, Royalties for Regions and the State Government of Western Australia.

Cover Photograph: Mt Stirling monadnock looking across the Salt River Paleochannel (Alan Briggs)

Acknowledgements

Local Government Authorities

The Local Government Authorities of Tammin, Kellerberrin, Bruce Rock and Quairading, through their respective Chief Executive Officers, have provided invaluable support for this research project including access to their Development Officers. Special thanks go to:

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Through providing a PhD research candidate to undertake this research Murdoch University has contributed significantly to the opportunity to move forward with the concept of establishing stakeholder perceptions regarding the establishment of a Geopark in the Wheatbelt.

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Executive Summary

This project has several aspects. This research has been designed to introduce stages that will lead towards the establishment of a Geopark in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia.

- Stage 1 involves research into stakeholder perceptions about the creation of a Geopark in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia and represents a lead into the overall process of developing the concept for a Geopark. Future development will be determined by stakeholder responses to the concept. If there is a positive community response to the concept further stages will be followed as outlined below.
- Stage 2 will be initiated as a pilot implementation of the Wheatbelt Geopark to measure implications in relation to tourism, marketing, visitor attraction and tourism development.
- Stage 3 will involve consolidation of the pilot project and expansion to include additional LGAs to develop a holistic approach across the Wheatbelt.
- Stage 4 will be where governance, management structures and management plans are developed in preparation for submission to State and Federal governments.
- Stage 5 will be the submission to UNESCO to seek Global Geopark status.
- Stage 6 will involve consolidation of the Wheatbelt Geopark including budgets, development, marketing and promotion, resources, monitoring and building on partnerships with business, government and educational institutions.

The report for Stage 1 has been developed in support of research being undertaken through Murdoch University and provides an indication of the response of stakeholders in the case study area, nominally the Local Government Authorities (LGA/LGAs) of Tammin, Kellerberrin, Bruce Rock and Quairading, to research stakeholder perceptions regarding the creation of a Geopark in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia. The report also introduces the concepts of Geotourism, Geotrails and Geoparks.

In 2015, research into the proposal for an aspiring Geopark commenced at Murdoch University. This was enabled through a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) which requires independent research by a student under the guidance of one or more supervisors. Planned field research involved forums, an on-line survey and stakeholder interviews which were designed to obtain the perceptions of stakeholders to the establishment of a Geopark in the Wheatbelt within the study area. This represents Stage 1 of a process to determine the potential for establishing an aspiring Geopark in the Wheatbelt. Additional information on further stages mentioned above is outlined in Attachment 7.

After consultation with the respective Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Economic Development and Community Development Officers (CDOs) of each LGA, forums were scheduled to avoid clashes with peak agricultural and educational activity periods. The online

survey was distributed through the LGA communication networks (email, newsletter distributions and webpage) and stakeholder interviews were held.

Overall findings from stakeholder forums included:

- In terms of developing a Geopark, most participant stakeholders held the opinion that any form of tourism promotion that brings tourists and visitors to rural towns is a positive process.
- There are geological features that the community would be willing to share with tourists and visitors, including those held in private ownership.
- LGAs have shown considerable support for the Geopark concept noting their appeal as experiential geological tours and potential for job creation and sustainable tourism.
- Federal and State government do not currently support Geoparks and a review of their policies is required to encourage support for Geoparks given their global tourism appeal and opportunity for international exposure, particularly with the emerging Chinese tourism market and in developing sustainable tourism.
- Funding Geoparks should be considered by government. There appeared to be resistance among community stakeholders to establishing local fund raising activities and levies.
- Local businesses and LGAs support the Geopark concept however there needs to be a facilitated approach to ensure commitments of financial and volunteer resources are shared, including those available from State and Federal government agencies.
- There appears to be considerable “burn-out” among community members with regards to personal contribution to their communities. Too few active residential people for too many opportunities and projects.

Each LGA has its own range of Geoheritage, some of which has already been developed and interpreted. The granite peaks and outcrops associated with each town mostly either have access roads to viewing points (Kellerberrin), interpretation (all LGAs) or are using privately owned areas for other purposes such as the Kellerberrin Speedway. Salt rivers, salt lakes and paleo channels were also identified as being important as supportive geological features within the proposed Wheatbelt Geopark.

Recommendations from Stage 1 include:

- The concept of establishing an aspiring Geopark be raised with the communities within the targeted area to confirm the level of support for the project.
- The targeted area for the project to include Cunderdin (with Meckering as the western entrance), Tammin, Kellerberrin, Merredin (as the eastern entrance), Bruce Rock,

Kondinin (for Wave Rock) and Quairading. Additional contiguous LGAs may be included subject to further discussion.

- Agreement is reached with each LGA to confirm their support for the project.
- A review and cataloguing of assets associated with geological formations, fauna and flora be undertaken to build a database for their conservation, protection and sustainable use within the project. The review would be in liaison with Aboriginal elders to ensure sites deemed culturally sensitive are protected where requested and appropriately acknowledged ensuring persons utilising these places respect the cultural sensitivity of the site.
- Agreement is reached and opportunities developed with Aboriginal elders for access and interpretation of accessible places and cultural sites, and Aboriginal people be engaged to provide tourism services within the aspiring Geopark.
- Review all current tourism businesses and opportunities to determine an overall strategic approach to developing each asset into the project.
- Establish a funded Project Development Officer position to engage with stakeholders and to coordinate the implementation of the pilot project.
- A staged schedule (as indicated above) for development of an aspiring Geopark is developed following UNESCO and Global Geopark Network requirements and resources made available to develop this proposal as a fully costed submission to UNESCO. An outline of the implementation method has been produced as a supplementary paper.
- The Western Australian State Government is approached to assist with development and planning with funding through the *Royalties for Regions* program to implement these recommendations.
- Federal and State Governments are approached to bring about recognition of Geoparks and the advantages they bring for sustainable tourism in rural areas.
- Establish an overarching incorporated not-for-profit association for the aspiring Geopark body to represent the coordination, development, facilitation, marketing and promotion of the Geotourism region.
- Develop primary and secondary school engagement within the aspiring Geopark to foster learning, conservation and advocacy for the Geopark environment.
- Further research by engaging with tertiary educational institutions to assist with developing the project and monitoring its implementation and management.

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ACRONYMS, Terminology and Definitions

CDO(s)

Community Development Officers attached to Local Government Authorities.

Geocaching

Geocaching is a worldwide treasure hunt using GPS and map coordinates travelling on foot or by vehicle to destinations located either remote or urban in search of these cached treasures.

Geoheritage

Geoheritage focuses on features that are intrinsically linked to the geological evolution of the earth and include more recently, culturally important sites (Brocx & Semeniuk, 2007).

Geoparks

Geoparks are areas where the earth's geographical and geological heritage is the focus of local protection, education and sustainable development (UNESCO, 2012). Now a worldwide phenomenon, Global Geoparks have been adopted by 33 nations with 119 Geoparks established by 2015, mainly in Europe and China (UNESCO, 2016).

Geoparks provide a means of interpreting the Geoheritage (the origin of the earth and its landscapes) within Geoparks and utilise the concepts of Geotourism and Geotrails to achieve this.

Geotourism

Geotourism is a form of nature-based tourism which involves the interpretation of the landscape, geology and generally, the land we walk upon, as well as flora and fauna and the culture of the communities living there. Newsome and Dowling (2010, p3) provide a detailed definition of Geotourism explaining "it is sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing the earth's geological features in a way that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation, and is locally beneficial". Farsani, Coelho, and Costa (2012) introduced Geotourism as "a new movement helping travelers to increase their knowledge about natural resources, the cultural identity of host communities and ways of preserving them." (p1).

Geotrails

Geotrails facilitate the interpretation of landscapes and areas of geological significance and deliver geotourism experiences through a journey linked by an area's geology and landscape as the basis for providing visitor engagement, learning and enjoyment (Ng, 2014).

In Western Australia (WA), the Granite Way has been adopted and marketed by the TourismWA (Tourism Western Australia, 2015) and several tourism industry businesses; and is a key tourist route through the case study area.

Inselbergs

Granite outcrops also known as monadnocks.

Likert scales

A widely used research approach of using 5 to 7 predetermined responses to determine the respondent's agreement or disagreement with a given statement.

LGA(s)

Local Government Authorities (located within or adjacent to the study area in this research).

Monadnocks

See Inselbergs.

Paleochannels

Ancient (*Paleo* is Greek for old) river channels often filled with sedimentary rock materials. Water movement occurs over considerable time periods (Department of Environment, 2005).

Salt lakes

Highly saline internal drainage areas subjected to evaporative drying leaving salt crystals exposed at the surface as remnants of a drainage pattern which was active before continental drift separated Australia from Antarctica (Geoscience Australia, 2017).

Salt rivers

Rivers, such as the Avon River, that drain saline water from salt lakes and paleochannels (Department of Environment, 2005).

Sustainable development

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Brundtland, 1987).

Sustainable tourism development

“Tourism development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (adapted from Bruntland (1987) by Weaver, 2006, p. 10). Also “tourism that wisely uses and conserves resources in order to maintain their long term viability” (Budowski (1976) in Weaver, 2006, p. 10).

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)

UNESCO is responsible for coordinating international cooperation in education, science, culture and communication. It strengthens the ties between nations and societies, and mobilizes the wider public (UNESCO, 2017).

Introduction

This project has several aspects. The research has been designed to introduce stages that will lead towards the establishment of a Geopark in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia.

- Stage 1 involves research into stakeholder perceptions about the creation of a Geopark in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia and represents a lead into the overall process of developing the concept for a Geopark. Future development will be determined by stakeholder responses to the concept. If there is a positive community response to the concept further stages will be followed as outlined below.
- Stage 2 will be initiated as a pilot implementation of the Wheatbelt Geopark to measure implications in relation to tourism, marketing, visitor attraction and tourism development.
- Stage 3 will involve consolidation of the pilot project and expansion to include additional LGAs to develop a holistic approach across the Wheatbelt.
- Stage 4 will be where governance, management structures and management plans are developed in preparation for submission to State and Federal governments.
- Stage 5 will be the submission to UNESCO to seek Global Geopark status.
- Stage 6 will involve consolidation of the Wheatbelt Geopark including budgets, development, marketing and promotion, resources, monitoring and building on partnerships with business, government and educational institutions.

The report for Stage 1 has been developed in support of research being undertaken through Murdoch University. The report provides an indication of the response of stakeholders in the case study area, nominally the Local Government Authorities (LGA/LGAs) of Tammin, Kellerberrin, Bruce Rock and Quairading, to research into stakeholder perceptions regarding the creation of a Geopark in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia. The report also explains the concept of Geotourism, Geoparks and Geotrails. A description of acronyms, definitions and terminology is shown following the Contents section.

In 2015 research into the proposal for an aspiring Geopark commenced at Murdoch University. This was enabled through a Doctorate of Philosophy (PhD) which requires independent research by a student under the guidance of one or more supervisors. Planned field research involved forums, an on-line survey and stakeholder interviews which were designed to obtain the perceptions of stakeholders to the establishment of a Geopark in the Wheatbelt within the study area. This represents Stage 1 of a process to determine the potential for establishing an aspiring Geopark in the Wheatbelt. Additional information on further stages mentioned above is outlined in Attachment 7.

After consultation with the respective Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Economic Development and Community Development Officers (CDOs) of each LGA, forums were

scheduled to avoid clashes with peak agricultural and educational activity periods. The online survey was distributed through the LGA communication networks using newsletters, email and web portals and stakeholder interviews were held.

The Wheatbelt Development Commission's Royalties for Regions Wheatbelt Community Chest Fund Grant enabled field work to be undertaken, interpretation of outcomes associated with the project to be developed and facilitated the preparation of this report.

Statement of Need

The Central Wheatbelt (the eastern half of Avon zone and the Central East zone in Diagram 1), continues to experience a decline in population from the 1950s (Western Australian Planning Commission, 2015) resulting in diminishing private and public services to the rural communities (Kington & Pannell, 2005). The change in rural demographics has been brought about by changing farm structures, reduced employment prospects and climate change (Ellis, 2017; Kington & Pannell, 2005). Rural property owners and workers are becoming drive-in/ drive-out employees reducing their needs for rural services including accommodation, food and fuel (Kington & Pannell, 2005) which impacts on local businesses and infrastructure.

At the same time, there are increasing numbers of intrastate, interstate and international tourists seeking rural experiences. The Western Australian Government is encouraging regional tourism as one of its strategic pillars of tourism growth (Tourism Western Australia, 2015). Furthermore, the Wheatbelt Regional Plan 2013-2020 for the Wheatbelt Region includes promotion of tourism forecasting it "will emerge as a growth export industry for Australia." (Regional Development Authority, 2013, p10) with the Wheatbelt "being in a prime position to capitalize on the growing demand for experiential services (e.g. tourism)" (Regional Development Authority, 2013)(Regional Development Authority, 2013, p12). Tourism is further promoted by the Wheatbelt Development Commission which states "Tourism growth will also occur as a result of increasingly affluent populations wishing to engage with the natural environment"(Wheatbelt Development Commission, 2015b, p4).

The changes in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia are encouraging for tourism.

Diagram 1: Local Government Authorities of the Wheatbelt Region with Zones.



Courtesy of Wheatbelt Development Commission (<http://www.wheatbelt.wa.gov.au/our-region/local-governments/>)

Origin of the Granite Way Geopark concept

The Granite Way drive trail was initiated through the auspices of the Local Government Authorities of Tammin, Kellerberrin, Bruce Rock and Quairading. The Granite Way, established during the late 1990s and early 2000s, was considered a means of promoting tourism opportunities within the shires and to bring visitors into the region.

Since then the Granite Way has become an established tourist route across the Central Wheatbelt with the most recent development being Kwolyin Rock, a free campsite within pristine bushland and featuring impressive granite rock outcrops. Kwolyin Rock is an anchor point in the Granite Way drive trail linking several other iconic granite outcrops within the region including Mount Stirling, Mount Caroline and Kokerbin Rock.

During a meeting of the then Chief Executive Officers of Tammin, Kellerberrin, Bruce Rock and Quairading in 2008, a proposition was tabled that consideration might be given to establishing a Geopark within the area. The meeting led to the development a catalogue of Geoheritage assets (Attachment 1). The proposal focused on the opportunity for marketing and promotion of the area at an international level using the UNESCO brand. The concept to develop an aspiring Geopark was initiated. This provides an ideal tourism opportunity focusing on local geology to be developed within a Geopark; indeed, it is an essential tourism product within Geoparks. There are already “signs” of support for the Geopark concept displayed in the entrance statements to Wheatbelt towns shown in Photographs 1-4.





Photographs 1-4: Creative stonework entrance statements for Shires of the study area already displaying the geology of the area.

Stakeholders and Perceptions

Stage 1 of this project was to determine stakeholder perceptions about creating a Geopark in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia. Stakeholders comprise a range of groups and individuals including any business, organisation, local community or individual person; and this makes it important to engage them prior to any form of development which might impact on them.

For the purposes of this study stakeholders include local town and farming residents, businesses within, servicing and interacting with the community, government and non-government agencies, and some city-based organisations. Each stakeholder is likely to have their own perception of the places and communities within the study area and the impacts that an aspiring Geopark might have on it.

Stakeholder perceptions may vary depending on a range of factors from personal to business and this might impact on their views towards a new proposal such as establishing a Geopark in “their” patch. If a project is perceived positively then the stakeholders are likely to be supportive. If perceived negatively then a range of strategies need to be adopted to determine the reason for this perception and for ways to further engage the stakeholders and address the issues associated with their perceived concerns about the creation of a Geopark.

The concept of determining stakeholder perceptions in advance of formally developing an aspiring Geopark can assist planners in decision making about directions that can or cannot be taken. That is the main reason for this Stage 1 research.

The Case Study Area

Research for this project has centred on the Local Government Authorities (LGA/s) of Tammin, Kellerberrin, Bruce Rock and Quairading (See Figure 1). Each LGA was involved in the original development of the Granite Way as a means of encouraging tourism into each shire areas and continue to show interest in this research. Each LGA has provided the resources of their respective Economic Development and Community Development Officers and office meeting space to assist with this research.

In developing or proposing an aspiring Geopark a defining boundary is required (UNESCO, 2016). The PhD research case study therefore adopted the LGA boundaries of each of the four shires.

During discussions within the community forums and with the CDOs it has become evident that should the proposal to establish a Geopark eventuate within this area then the boundaries should be extended to include Cunderdin (and Meckering, in particular due to its location on the Darling Fault Line) to provide a western entry into the proposed Geopark, Merredin to provide an eastern entry and Kondinin to include Wave Rock, an attraction that is a key tourism feature within the Central Wheatbelt. This is beyond the scope of research for this Stage 1 report.

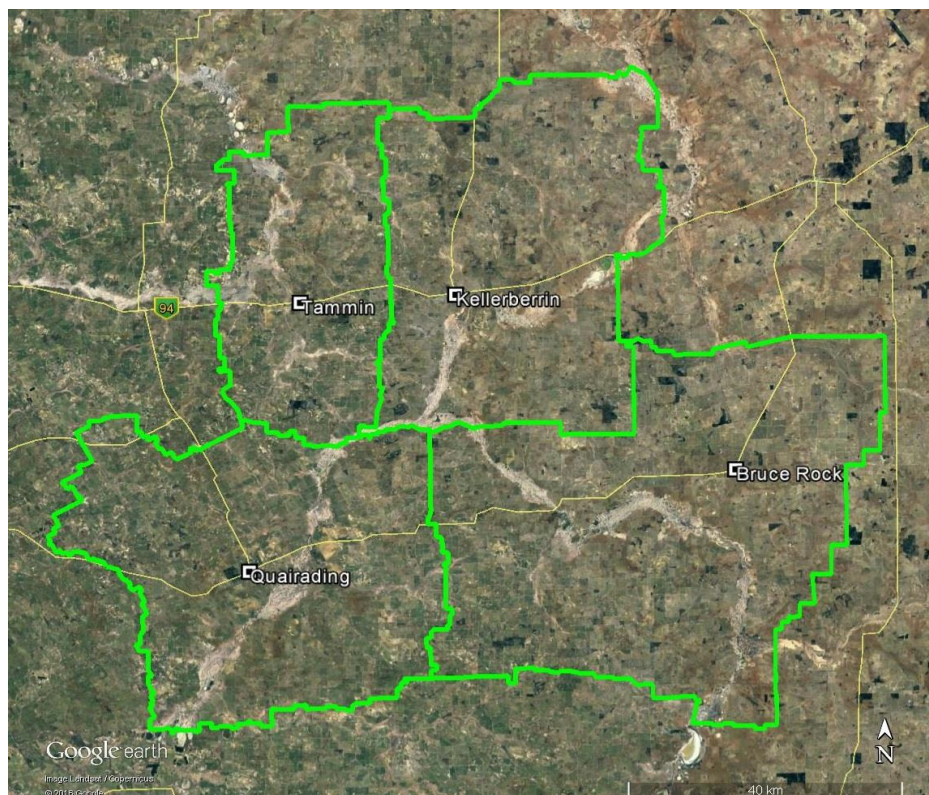


Figure 1: Google Earth image of study area.

Gathering the Information

Murdoch University Thesis Approval

In 2012 consideration was given to undertake research into the social contributions of Geoparks. After a literature review by a PhD candidate, research supervisors determined in 2014 that for Australia and Western Australia, determining stakeholder perceptions regarding the establishment of Geoparks would provide a valuable contribution to the current understanding about Geoparks in Australia. Research approval 2015/087 was obtained through Murdoch University Ethics Committee in July 2015.

Engaging with the LGAs

As three of the original four CEOs had moved on from the original 2008 LGA committee which had agreed to the concept of a Geopark, the remaining committee member, the Quairading CEO, was approached in 2014 to determine whether the project remained an option to develop. Following discussions that included the Quairading Economic Development Officer it was resolved that support would be provided from Quairading, that an introduction would be provided to the other CEOs in the study area and a nominal timetable be established that would facilitate the research project.

Over the following 3 months each LGA was visited to gauge their enthusiasm for the project. The outcome was of full support which included having each Community Development Officer (CDO) engaged with regular meetings to ensure feedback to the CEO and Council for each LGA. Each LGA offered to support the research project through use of their community facilities.

Quarterly meetings were then arranged which took place on a rotating basis between LGAs which enabled CDOs to meet, have discussions about the project and its progress, and to share their own community developments with the other CDOs. Photograph 5 shows participants in a Quairading field visit.



Photograph 5 – Alan Briggs (Left – PhD researcher) with Coordinating team - Ashleigh Waight (CDO, Bruce Rock), Natasha Giles (Kellerberrin CDO) and Richard Bleakley (Economic Development Officer, Quairading).

Engaging with the Community

Community engagement to determine their perceptions about establishing a Geopark in the Wheatbelt of Western Australia incorporated a mixed methodology approach where a range of research instrument were used. Two rounds of advertised community forums were arranged by CDOs within the four LGAs using public notices in newsletters, email, signs and web portals. Questionnaires were also administered to forum attendees and other stakeholders approached by the CDOs. An online survey was developed based on the questionnaire and this was advertised through the same notifications systems as used for the forums. Semi-structured interviews were arranged with nominated stakeholders. The nature of the interviews enabled stakeholders to provide qualitative input on their responses within the structure of the research. This then allowed comparisons to be made between each of the research methods.

Community Forums

To gauge stakeholder perceptions about establishing a Geopark within the Wheatbelt, a series of community forums were initiated within the case study area. Two rounds of forums were scheduled to be held in August 2015 and March 2016 in each LGA. This was to avoid clashes with agricultural and educational commitments and were designed to determine any change in perception about Geoparks by stakeholders during the 6-month period. Each forum was facilitated by an experienced community engagement consultant. A volunteer assistant also attended each forum to assist with facilitation arrangements. Notes were made of the

outcomes from open discussions where member's contributions were encouraged by sharing ideas and concepts. This sharing provided a valuable source of information about local tourism assets and nominations for stakeholder interviews. Photographs 6 and 7 show forums in action.



Photograph 6 – Stakeholder forum in action.



Photograph 7 – Support provided to complete a questionnaire and gain valuable Geoheritage information.

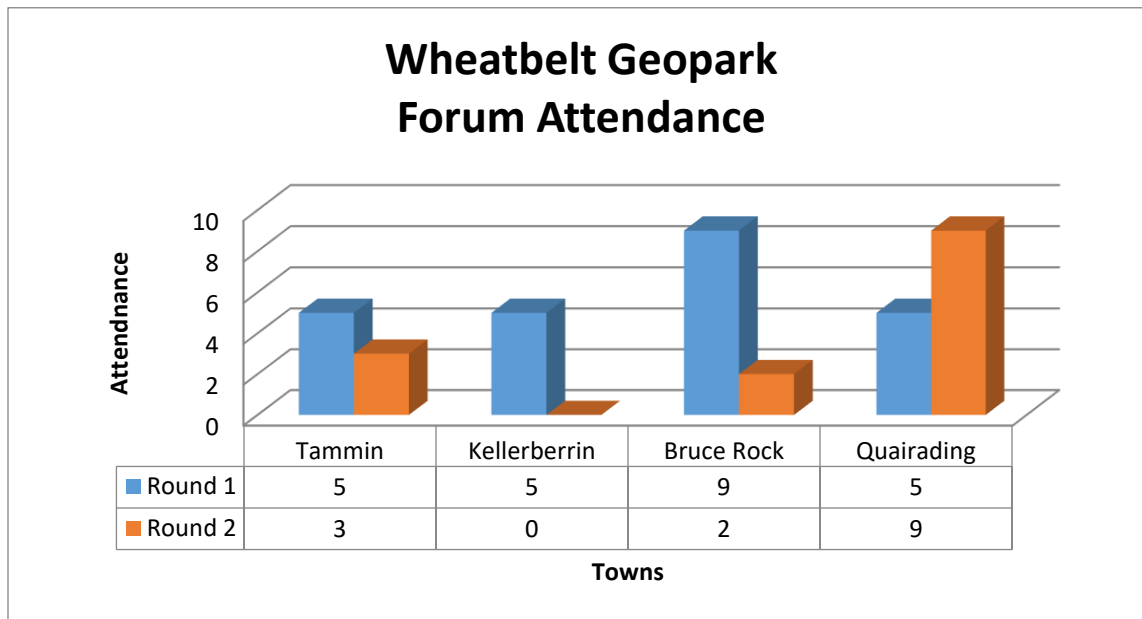
The forums were advertised in each LGA to attract stakeholders with an interest in community development, tourism and Geoparks. A notice was provided to community residents advising them of the forums (Attachment 2). Each forum was structured and facilitated to include an introduction to the forum and an outline of the stakeholder's role, contribution and consent before completing the questionnaire which was introduced and completed prior to the Geopark briefing. Then a participant contribution session was facilitated to seek out additional stakeholders, local Geopark values (activities/operations/locations) that will add value to the Geopark. The researcher then outlined future plans for research before finishing with a feedback session.

For research purposes, it was important to present a consistent approach for each forum. Each forum commenced with a meet and greet morning or afternoon tea during which time participants could become familiar with each other and the facilitators which assisted in creating a positive and contributory atmosphere during the formal forum process. Following a brief introduction, the research questionnaire was completed by attendees. After completing the questionnaire attendees were then presented with an outline of the nature and role of a Geopark. Completing the questionnaire first enabled the researcher to capture participant's

perceptions about Geoparks without having provided information that would influence their perceptions.

The first round of forums was held August 2015 commencing in Kellerberrin, combined with Tammin. Bruce Rock and Quairading forums were held the following day. During March 2016, the second round of forums commenced. Kellerberrin cancelled due to work commitments however forums scheduled for Bruce Rock and Quairading were held as planned. Tammin delayed their forum until later in the month to allow further promotion of the forum. Attendance at the forums (Figure 2) was limited and only those stakeholders with interests in or interested in tourism development participated. However, given the low level of populations in each town reasonable assumptions can be determined from the resulting information.

Figure 2: Attendance during each round of forums by towns.



Questionnaire

A questionnaire using Likert scales and short statements was designed to elicit stakeholder responses to determine their perceptions about tourism and tourists, current rural social trends, perceptions about Geoparks. A series of questions also asked about the local values that might contribute to a Geopark including individual involvement, culture, heritage, environmental factors, funding. The final section included questions about the demographic construct of the research area.

The themes designed for questionnaire are outlined in Attachment 3. Broadly, the themes included an introductory page which outlined the reason for the research, described the concept of a Geopark and advised the participant of consent required for undertaking the questionnaire and included focus areas of:

- Stakeholder Perceptions of Tourism.
- Stakeholder Perceptions of Rural Decline.
- Stakeholder Perceptions of Geoparks.
- Stakeholder Perceptions in Creating a Geopark.
- Stakeholder Contribution to a Geopark.
- Adding Areas of Interest and Values to Create a Geopark.
- Funding the Creation and Maintenance of a Geopark.
- Finally, something about you (Demographics).

The questionnaire was designed as a mixed method survey and structured mainly using the Likert scale method where stakeholders select a number on a scale to provide quantitative answers to indicate whether they agree or disagree with the statements. Stakeholders were also encouraged to provide qualitative short written responses in some sections to record their perceptions about community capacity, nominate Geosites they would be prepared to share with visitors and demographic information. These approaches enabled quantitative and qualitative analysis of data to determine influences as well as determining stakeholder perceptions about the impacts of establishing a Geopark in the region.

Online Survey

The questionnaire was converted in full to a web-based survey and circulated to residents within each LGA. The links to the survey was distributed through the LGA bulletin, email and general communications systems (Attachment 4). A time limit of one month was allocated for responses. A reminder was sent by email to LGA constituents 7 days prior to closure of the survey period. Responses were automatically returned to the PhD researcher for analysis. An initial indicator from stakeholders was that the survey proved to be too bulky and after several partial responses the original survey was abandoned. Due to the poor response rate of only 2 partly completed surveys this form of data collection has been discontinued.

Stakeholder Interviews

Prior to field research being initiated, consideration was given to stakeholder categories to be interviewed (Attachment 5). This approach was taken to ensure the broad range of stakeholders within the target area was being addressed. Selection of interviewees focused on stakeholders representing LGA representatives, local community members and business people engaged with tourism opportunities, Aboriginal community and tourism representatives and candidate State government and Non-government organisations; as well as tourism businesses that travel through the case study area. The forums encouraged participants to target individual stakeholders they considered most likely for interviews to add value to the study project.

To maintain consistency across the research process, the same themes as established for the questionnaire were used in developing semi-structured interviews. This approach ensured all stakeholder interviewees are asked the same questions. Stakeholders are given the opportunity following the semi-structured interview to provide any additional contribution they consider relevant to the study topic.

In July 2016 interviews with international and interstate experts were undertaken during an Australian Earth Sciences Conference in Adelaide organised by the Australian Geological Society of Australia. Stakeholder interviews in the case study area were initiated during the second half of 2016 and key Western Australian stakeholders who were external to the study area also interviewed. These interviews have included LGA representatives, Aboriginal and business stakeholders.



Photograph 8: Doongin Peak, Tammin; the first isolated Monadnock viewed when travelling east along the Great Northern Highway from Cunderdin.



Photograph 9: Toapin Weir, Quairading displaying granite rock, water storage and campground below.

Outcomes from the Community Forums - Overview

Forum Feedback

The limited number of forum participants (Table 1), and hence completed questionnaires, implies that statistically based interpretations are not reliable, however, general inferences can be drawn from the data. General observations can be interpreted from the data including:

- In terms of developing a Geopark, most participant stakeholders considered that any form of tourism promotion that brings tourists and visitors to rural towns is a positive process.
- There are Geoheritage assets that the community would be willing to share with tourists and visitors.
- There are opportunities for Aboriginal community and individual engagement and sharing of cultural sites, although some would remain culturally sensitive and not available for tourism activities.
- LGAs have shown considerable support for the Geopark concept.
- Federal and State government currently do not support for Geoparks and a review of their policies is required to encourage support for Geoparks given their global tourism appeal.
- Funding Geoparks should be considered by government. There appeared to be resistance among community stakeholders to establishing local fund raising activities and levies.
- Local businesses and LGAs support the Geopark concept however there needs to be a facilitated approach to ensure commitments are shared, including with State and Federal government agencies.
- There appears to be considerable “burn-out” among community members with regards to personal contribution to their communities. Too few active people for too many opportunities and projects.

Forum engagement, where participants contribute into discussions with other attendees, during the forums were very positive with many suggestions for opportunities to develop Geotourism within the case study area. In depth engagement with forum participants enabled identification of the Geoheritage as well as the strong cultural connections within the community and case study area (Attachment 6). Each LGA has its own range of Geoheritage, some of which has already been developed and interpreted. The granite peaks and outcrops associated with each town mostly either have access roads to viewing points (Kellerberrin), interpretation (all LGAs) or are using privately owned areas for other purposes such as the Kellerberrin Speedway. Salt rivers, salt lakes and paleochannels were also identified as being important for tourism and geotourism.

Awareness of Aboriginal Cultural Significance

At each forum, stakeholders were aware of the sensitivities associated with accessing areas of Aboriginal importance. These sensitivities are well established within the broader community with, for example, authors as early as Bindon (1997) noting “For Aboriginal people, inselbergs provided or facilitated access to a wide range of resources other than water, but water was and remains crucial to human occupation of much of Western Australia” (p193). Bindon (1997) also contributed to research indicating that Aboriginal people had occupied that land for some 125,000 years. It is more commonly recognized however that Aboriginal people have been resident in Australia for between 40,000 and 60,000 years with the Australian Government observing:

“The Indigenous cultures of Australia are the oldest living cultural history in the world – they go back at least 50,000 years and some argue closer to 65,000 years. One of the reasons Aboriginal cultures have survived for so long is their ability to adapt and change over time. It was this affinity with their surroundings that goes a long way to explaining how Aboriginal people survived for so many millennia.” (Australian Government, 2015).

In the case of Quairading, where local Aboriginal community members attended the last forum, areas were identified specifically as “no go” areas while other sites were nominated as being available for access and interpretation. This represented a significant movement forward in the development of Indigenous tourism opportunities for the region.

Results of the Online Survey

The original questionnaire was converted directly as an online survey through SurveyMonkey. This created a comprehensive and large (in terms of online file size) survey.

CDOs raised awareness of the online survey within each LGA through their email networks, newsletters and web pages in each LGA.

Discussion with the CDOs indicated that the size and complexity of the online format was too large and too time consuming. It affected computer download capacity for many rural stakeholders, and where it was attempted, the opportunity “timed-out”. The poor response might also reflect the number of online surveys people are offered, limited time available to do large online surveys and of limited online capacity creating connectivity issues. The CDOs also advised they had experienced similar responses with far less complicated local surveys. This outcome is supported by Nulty (2008) who found that, in general, online surveys are much less likely to achieve response rates as high as surveys administered on paper (p 302).

Developing a modified, smaller online survey was considered. However, given the very low online survey response rates to this questionnaire, and to online surveys in general, this line of research was discontinued.

Stakeholder Interviews

As shown in Attachment 5, as a result of predetermining categories for interview, almost 60 positions were identified based on selecting representatives from a range of interest areas within the study area. This also included stakeholders who were external to the study area but had an interaction through government and tourism business activities.

Stakeholder interviews in the case study area were initiated during the second half of 2016. The interviews were undertaken with international and interstate Geopark stakeholders, stakeholders within the study area and key Western Australian stakeholders who were external to the study area. These interviews have included LGA representatives, Aboriginal and business stakeholders. The results of those interviews were transcribed for analysis.

Results from Forums

In addition to completing the questionnaire, one of the activities from the forums was to identify local community leaders and business people both within the study area and those having influence from outside the area. Several individuals from the four LGAs were noted as having strengths to contribute towards the promotion of establishing a Geopark and were nominated for interviews as representative stakeholders. The forums observed that this (Geopark) approach was timely in that there had been a resurgence of interest in tourism in the region. However, it was also noted that there had been many seminars and workshops in recent times and that there was seldom any follow up action. There was a keenness among the forums that “senior” members of the community should be engaged in the Geopark concept as well as school children.

There was also a strong recognition and emphasis on Aboriginal engagement with the Geopark process. As custodians for between 40,000 to 60,000 years and a genuine relationship with the land the forums were resolute in including Aboriginal heritage, Dreaming stories and participation in Geopark establishment and management. This was keenly expressed in Quairading where several local Aboriginal community members attended the forum and expressed support for the Geopark concept.

- Each LGA forum nominated a range of values that would be suitable for the establishment of a Geopark. These were identified under Geoheritage, Aboriginal and European history, and fauna and flora. The results are shown in Appendix 6. Highlights included the following:
- Popular geo-heritage sites from the forum at Tammin/Kellerberrin referred to Mt Caroline and Mt Stirling, Yorkrakine, Kokerbin Rocks and Gardner Reserve while Bruce Rock added its salt lakes network, Bruce’s Rock, Kwolyin and Coarin Rocks. Quairading added Nookaminnie Rock as it is central to the town reserve.
- Aboriginal values were noted by participants in each of the LGAs. Each saw the need in having the Aboriginal communities engaged in the Geopark with involvement in cultural tourism and geotourism. The cultural relationships of Aboriginal communities and the land (geophysical attributes) were noted as requiring sensitive management. Any interaction needed to be with Aboriginal communities and elder respective approvals, endorsement and involvement.
- Important sites such as birthing, painting (caves), water (gnamma holes) and food (bush tucker) need to be identified with local Aboriginal communities to determine which sites might or might not be included in cultural and geotourism activities. There exists a strong and growing interest from international tourists and visitors to observe Aboriginal culture and to learn about the importance of these aspects of Australian

culture and the Government of Western Australia is supporting this through its Tourism Western Australia Corporate Plan.

- European cultural features included Bruce's Rock (the history of sandalwood cutting and naming the town), the rabbit proof fence, historic wells, rail siding and published books on local history. There was also recognition of more contemporary land uses including the reasons behind land clearing for agriculture through to the extensive programs of rehabilitation and revegetation in the 1980s.
- The forums also provided support for showing local fauna and flora to tourists. Malleefowl, black flanked (faced) wallabies, spiny ant eaters (Echidnas), native bees and spiders along with local wildflowers, quandong and sandalwood trees.

Results of Determining Stakeholder Perceptions from Analysis of the Questionnaire

A key feature at the forums was the completion of a questionnaire at the start of the forum. The logic for this approach was to obtain the level of community awareness about tourism and tourists and their impacts on rural communities, the awareness of the perception of rural decline, Geoparks and then to obtain information about community support for establishing a Geopark in the Wheatbelt. After completing the questionnaire, forum attendees were then presented with information about the background and role of Geoparks where they had been established previously and were functioning currently. A follow up forum held approximately 6 months after the first round of forums was to determine if a change in awareness had been created through community interest stimulated by the first round of forums. However, only two community members of those attending the first round attended the second forum. All the feedback received can be regarded as first time forum attendees.

It should be noted that, as part of the research to determine perceptions about Geoparks, forum participants were not provided any information on the constructs and values of Geoparks prior to completing the questionnaire. It was anticipated that on the first round of forums there would show a limited awareness or knowledge of Geoparks.

Stakeholder Perceptions of Tourism and Tourists

Across the four LGAs, forum participants demonstrated a high level (97.4% Strongly or Agree) of support for tourism as an industry, with tourism seen as being more than a holiday and more about learning about the place being visited. They also acknowledged that tourism can have a positive impact on the local community indicating tourism was good for the economy and can assist rural towns by creating local jobs.

While most participants were supportive that tourists wanted to learn about Australia and its culture specifically, some (24%) were not convinced that this was the situation. There was also some recognition (28%) that tourism might have negative impacts on local culture and the environment.

When considering Aboriginal culture and tourism experiences, 23.7% indicated they perceived tourists were not able to experience Aboriginal culture even though 68.4% thought this was an experience tourists were seeking. Overall, there was a positive perception that tourism and tourists were good for the Wheatbelt.

Stakeholder Perceptions of Rural Decline

Rural decline has been a phenomenon of the Wheatbelt region for some time as mechanization encroached, property sizes expanded and services have been withdrawn. In response to the statement about stakeholder perceptions that rural towns are in decline, 71.1% of participants responded with a strongly agreed or agreed to this statement, 15.8% neither agreed nor disagreed and 7.9% disagreed. The possible reasons for this difference will be discussed later. The perception of increasing mechanisation impacting on rural workers was supported by 68.4% of the respondents. When asked about education policy impacts on families, 94.8% of respondents indicated they strongly agreed/agreed with this statement. Most also agreed that there were limited employment opportunities in rural towns, that young adults were leaving seeking employment elsewhere and that a decline in rural population will result in a reduction of community facilities. While over 42.1% of respondents had the perception that current rural strategies were not working, 47.3% indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed/disagreed that this perception was correct.

Noting that it is relatively easy to elicit negative responses, stakeholders were asked to recommend how the perception of rural decline might be addressed. The respondents indicated that there needed to be created an environment that encourages local investment and creates opportunities for employment.

To achieve this, participants indicated essential services need to be maintained including better internet services. Government was observed to have a role through the creation of tax breaks and incentives to encourage rural development and government decentralization was also promoted. Tourism was proposed as a major opportunity form employment creation with agencies and LGAs working together with facilitation and marketing and to create positive, rather than negative, images of the rural environment.

When asked specifically about the role of tourism in addressing rural decline all respondents were very positive. From promoting existing businesses and facilities to developing new tourism businesses and recreational facilities there was acknowledgement that tourism can lead to job

creation. Several respondents also promoted Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences to be developed integrating these experiences with the natural surrounding for interpretation. It was recognized that by developing Aboriginal tourism young people might reconnect with their culture and help grow this opportunity.

Stakeholder Perceptions of (about) Geoparks

In seeking stakeholder perceptions about Geoparks, it should be recognized that the respondents had not been exposed to the concept of Geoparks during this research prior to completing the questionnaire. Apart from a very brief outline of the purpose of a Geopark on the introduction section of the questionnaire, it was possible none of the respondents had been exposed to the concept of Geoparks. Indeed the questionnaire results revealed none of the respondents had ever knowingly visited a Geopark.

The following perceptions were observed from the questionnaire. There were consistent “Don’t know” responses. One respondent didn’t provide any response, not even “Don’t know”, as the participant confided after the forum they had not previously heard about Geoparks. This outcome was anticipated however there were other responses that showed that respondents perceptions about Geoparks were quite positive.

When asked about the role of Geoparks in promoting the geology of the area, 63.2% of participants perceived this to be the case. When asked about the role of Geoparks in education and science, there was a strong perception in favour of this (both greater than 70%). This also extended to the role of Geoparks in assisting with conservation of the Geopark area (76.4%).

Many participants perceived Geoparks to be compatible (not in conflict) with National parks (44.7%) and nature reserves (50%) but on the other hand indicated they indicated Geoparks should not be developed or managed by government, rather they perceived Geoparks to be driven by community interests. 73.7% of participants indicated the community should be involved in managing Geoparks.

The unfamiliarity with Geoparks was displayed when asked whether Geoparks were easily established. There was a range of responses from “Strongly Agree” to “Don’t know” with 38.6% indicating “Neither Agree nor Disagree”.

When responding to the involvement of State Government in developing Geoparks, stakeholders were largely in the “neither agree nor disagree” category (31.6%) with others agreeing (18.4%) and still others disagreeing (15.8%). 26.7% disagreed that State Government should take the role of managing Geoparks while 26.3% neither agreed nor disagreed. Instead, there was strong indication that Geoparks should be community based areas of interest (62.2%) with the local community involved in managing Geoparks (73.7%).

Apart from several participants who were unfamiliar with Geoparks, most participants perceived that Geoparks would assist in promoting existing local tourist activities and cultural values and would encourage local communities to participate in tourism events and activities.

Stakeholder Perceptions in Creating a Geopark

Creating a Geopark requires a consolidated effort, time, planning, funding and some community champions. Determining stakeholder perceptions about creating a Geopark provides scope for determining whether the concept should be pursued, or not. Generally, the communities within the study area are “tourism aware” and see activities that attracts visitors and creates employment as positive opportunities.

When asked whether there was community support for tourism development, 50.0% of the participants indicated they were in favour of tourism development and, individually, 86.8% supported tourism development. This was reflected even more so with 86.8% of participants indicating they were prepared to share their town with tourists.

When it came to considering the impacts of tourism on the environment, most participants were cautious with 31.6% not knowing and a further 31.6% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Local businesses can be key to successful tourism development. Participants appeared less certain about local business support for a Geopark with 57.9% indicating they didn’t know whether this support would be available. However, when asked whether they perceived local businesses would contribute to a Geopark 50.0% indicated they thought they would.

The participants rated community consultation and participation very highly with scores of 76.3% and 78.9% respectively for combined Strongly agree and Agree categories.

The level of support from government agencies was queried and most participants indicated they were unsure (Don’t know – ranging from 60.5 – 73.7%). The Western Australian Tourism Commission received the highest rating (26.3% Agreed) indicating they perceived there would be support from that agency while the Department of Parks and Wildlife received the second highest rating of 18.4%.

Local government authorities were perceived to be the main supporters for the creation of a Geopark with 50.0% of participants perceiving LGAs being supportive of the creation of a Geopark and supportive of a Geopark when it was established.

Reflecting on the capacity of the local communities to support a Geopark most participants (63.2%) considered there was capacity to create a Geopark.

Stakeholder Contribution to a Geopark

It is important to determine whether there is sufficient support for establishing a Geopark before formal commitment and actions are initiated to commence the Geopark process. This avoids creating unrealistic expectations by, and of, the communities engaged in the aspiring Geopark creation and management processes. To establish the level of support forum participants were asked to consider what roles they might undertake towards establishing and managing a Geopark.

Half the respondents indicated they would participate in committee work, 39.6% in education Geopark programs, 39.5% in marketing, few were interested in fund raising with 44.8% indicating no interest, 52.6% indicated they would contribute their personal time, 44.8% were interested in coordinating events, 36.9% were interested in research programs, half were interested in promoting the Geopark concept and activities, 39.4% were interested in preparing grant applications while few were interested in providing IT (Technical) support.

To determine the level of participation of participants the questionnaire also sought to identify those who were engaged in business. 42.1% of the respondents indicated they were engaged in some form of local business and of these 18.4% provided a tourism service that involved providing tours, visitor information, food and beverages, web design and tourism consultancy.

When asked whether the business participants saw a future role for their business in a Geopark 76.9% indicated they perceived so. The roles foreseen in a Geopark included providing tourism information at distribution points, catering for tourists (on farm and in town), developing business opportunities and engaging with tourists (and students) to bring them to the Geopark.

The business participants were also requested to nominate whether they would support a Geopark by promoting it through their business and 76.9% indicated they would do so. When asked how they would promote the Geopark a range of promotional opportunities were presented including advertising (on social media and web, brochures and signs, word of mouth); fund raising; arranging tours for and of the Geopark; and value-adding to existing tourism experiences.

Adding Areas of Interest and Values to Create a Geopark

As an additional contribution to the perceptions about creating a Geopark, participants were requested to record whether they considered there were any features within the study area, their local LGAs, that they would consider sharing with tourists and other visitors that would add value to a Geopark if it was to be created. There were four categories nominated i.e. areas of geological, Aboriginal, European/Settler, fauna and flora significance. Following completion of the questionnaire, a snowballing session was also conducted to see if additional areas of significance could be identified. These are listed in Appendix 6.

Geological

Participants (76.3%) indicated, in their perception, there were areas of geological significance in the study area. There was a lot of repetition in the nomination of geological sites however the significant granite outcrops included Kokerbin, Mt Caroline, Mt Stirling and Yorkrakine Rocks being the most mentioned. The salt river paleo channels were also raised as worthy of interpretation.

Aboriginal

When responding to whether there were areas of Aboriginal significance in the study area participants (65.8%) were also of the perception that the study area held areas of interest. There was a recognition that any sites being nominated would require Aboriginal endorsement and participation before being used for tourism. Notably, many of the granite outcrops, some of which were nominated for their gnamma holes, were observed to be of Aboriginal significance. Other sites included the confluence of salt rivers and areas that included rock paintings and caves.

European/Settler/Early Explorer

Participants (57.9%) considered there were areas of European/Settler/Early Explorer significance. Sites that were impacted by early explorers such as town sites, wells, fences and homesteads, mining sites and water storage areas (including where granite rocks were modified to provide water runoff such as Toapin Weir) and the Mundaring-Kalgoorlie pipeline were considered significant.

Flora

Participants were asked if they perceived any fauna to be significant in the study area. 65.8% responded indicating they perceived there to be flora of significance. Several participants referred to previous flora surveys that indicated rare and endangered species were present and that the study area was within the World Biodiversity Hotspot of southwest of Western Australia. Native bush foods such as the quandong were also local and important. There was also reference to the range of wild flowers within the study area and on specific reserves.

Fauna

Participants were also asked if they perceived any fauna to be significant in the study area. 65.8% responded positively with the black flanked wallaby (*Petrogale lateralis lateralis*) being the most mentioned. Kangaroos, echidnas, spiders, lizards and snakes were mentioned as animals not often seen by tourists. Possums and “small marsupials” were noted. Resident and seasonal birds were also identified as significant species. The origins of the fauna through evolution was also considered a significant aspect for the study area.

Funding the Creation and Maintenance of a Geopark

The creation and maintenance of a Geopark requires a level of funding. Participants were asked to outline their perceptions of where the funds would be derived from. A range of options was provided including community events, business, government, grants and user pays approaches.

While 34.2% of participants agreed that the community should be involved in fund raising through events such as street fairs, 29.1% disagreed with a further 23.7% neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Applying a levy through the local government authority to local businesses was not perceived as being a contender to raise funds with 52.6% of participants not agreeing to this proposition.

Forming a Geopark association and raising funds through this approach was perceived by 39.5% of the participants to be more likely to succeed as would including a royalty for using a Geopark brand where 34.2% agreed. Interestingly the sale of souvenirs was perceived to be a positive fund raiser with 76.3% considering this satisfactory to raise funds. 18.4% of respondents indicated they Didn't know. The user pays principle was also supported with 63.1% of participants perceiving this was a desirable approach.

Seeking government funding either directly or through grants was perceived to be the most favourable means of raising funds with 81.5% of participants preferring grants and 71.0% considering direct government funding to support the Geopark. Crowd funding was also positively viewed as a means of fund raising with 52.6% of participants supporting this approach. Some participants were not aware of fund raising with 15.8% indicating "Don't know".

Finally, something about you – Demographics of Participants

This section of the questionnaire identified the demographics of stakeholders. It has implications for access to the internet and levels of awareness that might influence their perceptions about creating a Geopark and their levels of awareness about Geoparks.

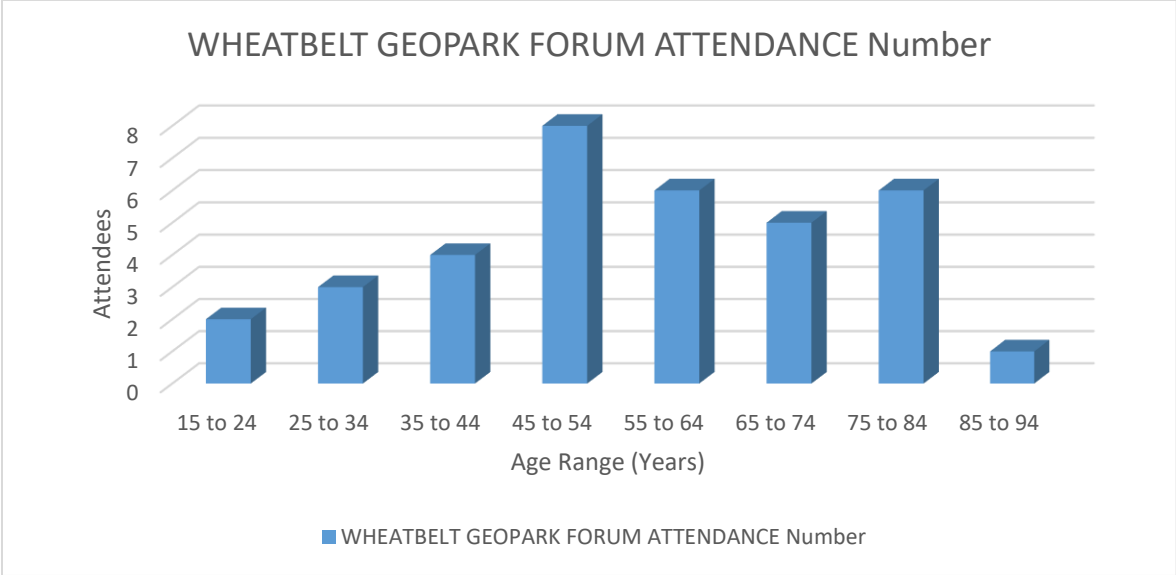
Stakeholder participants were 65.8% female and 28.9% male attendees. While five Aboriginal people attending the second forum in Quairading, two submitted questionnaires. Each did however contribute to the forum discussions.

Participants were mostly local community residents and business people. Several attendees were guests of others at the time of the forums and this provided valuable external input, particularly into the discussions at the forums.

Most stakeholders held educational certification or higher (76.3%) and most participated in some form of local association or organisation.

The age range was broad which provided an interesting mix of ideas, knowledge and reflection across the LGAs. Figure 3 demonstrates the age ranges of attendees.

Figure 3: Age range of attendees to Geopark forums.



Discussion about Stakeholder Perceptions

Outcomes of this Geopark Research – Stage 1

Stakeholder perceptions reveal the personal feelings of individuals as they perceive situations within their environment or sphere of influence. This research into stakeholder perceptions about creating a Geopark within the Wheatbelt of Western Australia reflects a point in time within a case study environment. Forums, questionnaires and interviews have been used as methods to determine stakeholder perceptions for this research.

Stakeholder Perceptions of Tourism and Tourists

A positive outcome from this research is the perception that tourism, per se, has a role in improving community living in rural areas through job creation, employment locally and increased wellbeing in rural communities. This perception appears to reflect the positive nature of most of the participants about the future for rural areas and the attractions, culture and lifestyles it holds.

There was a positive reaction to the role of tourists in that they, the tourists, are interested in learning about Australia and Australian, Aboriginal and contemporary culture. However, there was also the perception that tourists were not being exposed to Australian culture and were not getting exposure to Aboriginal cultural opportunities. This support is creative in terms of being able to develop tourism product. Many participants supported the concept of developing Aboriginal and local tourism product through engaging with local community members.

There were some misgivings about tourism and tourist impact on the environment and local culture. Sustainable tourism principles need to be adopted to manage these scenarios to ensure the product being developed and the impact of tourism and tourists is addressed from the start.

Stakeholder Perceptions about Rural Decline

There was broad acknowledgement of rural decline. This was perceived as largely brought about by improving farming technologies resulting in decreasing levels of employment. The reduction in employment and limited job opportunities in rural towns has contributed to an increasingly aged population with younger community members seeking employment in built up areas including hub towns and the metropolitan area. However, there was also a recognition of new opportunities being creating through mining and other diversification of industry. This has in some instances begun returning farming family members and town dwellers to the region.

Seeking education for children from rural areas has also been a contributor to rural decline. Parents with children often migrate, either as individuals or as a supporting parent (where the other parent stays to work), to the metropolitan area seeking suitable schooling rather than boarding out their children.

This mostly out-migration was perceived to be a significant contributor to a reduction in community facilities as government departments and private businesses withdraw their services. Other studies and research supports this and the Wheatbelt Regional Investment Blueprint seeks to address this concern (Wheatbelt Development Commission, 2015b). Again however, there is a general perception that current strategies are not working and participants considered more needs to be done.

On this note when asked what could be done to change this circumstance, some participants indicated that there needs to be created an environment that attracts and facilitates external investment. This could be supported through decentralization of government and business, promoting regional attractiveness (lower land costs), changes to government policy (such as tax breaks, infrastructure improvements) and encouraging value-adding to regional products in the region as well as taking a strategic approach to such improvements, particularly where tourism is concerned.

Respondents were of the perception that tourism could bring about job creation and improved communities. Suggestions included promoting regional tourism opportunities (lifestyle, natural products, activities), providing improved tourism facilities and infrastructure and encouraging “visitourism” to attract day trippers and increase overnight stays. Aboriginal cultural tourism was perceived to have significant opportunities in the region linking in with the natural assets, their uses and interpretation. An added benefit was perceived by the respondents was for connection to country, engagement of young Aboriginal people and a relearning of Aboriginal culture.

Mercer (2016), a reporter with the West Australian, recently reported West Australians are participating in National Park visits and enjoying natural areas. There is opportunity for this increased visitation to be channeled into the Wheatbelt Region. The Wheatbelt Regional Investment Blueprint also seeks to address tourism acknowledging “Tourism growth will also occur as a result of increasingly affluent populations wishing to engage with the natural environment.”(Wheatbelt Development Commission, 2015a, p. 3)

[Stakeholder Perceptions about Geoparks](#)

Information about Geoparks was not provided prior to filling out the questionnaire. There was a research expectation that many participants would indicate they didn’t know about Geoparks. The rationale behind this was to determine if, having been subsequently exposed to the concept of Geoparks, participants would undertake their own research and when reassessed

during the second round of forums, there would be a change in perceptions. This research strategy was not realised as mostly new participants attended the second round of forums. However, the information provided by these participants was very useful in adding to the previous forums outcomes.

According to the results of the questionnaire, none of the participants have knowingly visited a Geopark. Participants responded with their perceptions about Geoparks as a new concept. Their perceptions revealed an awareness of tourism and its potential to improve communities through private business and employment creation. The Global Geopark Network explains this concept as embracing areas that integrate preservation of geological heritage with sustainable economic activities (Global Geopark Network, 2014). Unlike the formal classifications of national parks and nature reserves within which there are limited development opportunities, Geoparks include sustainable economic development activities and indeed can include national parks and nature reserves within their boundaries. Participants indicated while Geoparks primarily promoted the geology of the area, they did not perceive them to conflict with State Government managed national parks and nature reserves.

According to the Global Geopark Network

“A Geopark partnership between different types of managed lands within a Geopark (federal, state, or private) must recognize and adhere to each unique management plan for individual sites, but must also have a common strategic management plan for the entire Geopark partnership with established goals.”
(Global Geopark Network, 2010).

In the former Kanawinka Global Geopark in South East Australia, Mount Eccles National Park maintained its park status while nesting within the Geopark (Kanawinka Geopark, 2016).

Most participants expressed an interest in managing the Geopark at community level rather than having government involvement. This was a reflection on the levels of bureaucracy and decision making that often ensued rather than a lack of ability. To achieve this would require relatively high demands on volunteers and forum participants perceived this to be the case.

Having international recognition as a Geopark was perceived to be a positive outcome that would attract tourists. This has previously been experienced with *World Heritage* and *Man and the Biosphere* areas where UNESCO recognized areas of focus have resulted in increased promotion of the areas and as a result has attracted increased numbers of tourists (Buckley, 2004).

Some of the values for establishing Geoparks includes promotion of the areas geological features, developing Geotourism opportunities and promoting existing tourism activities and local cultural values as well as encouraging education and scientific purposes. Overall,

participants considered these attributes to be very important. Global Geopark Network lists all of these values, and more, as components of successful Geoparks stating that:

“While a Geopark must demonstrate geological heritage of international significance, the purpose of a Geopark is to explore, develop and celebrate the links between that geological heritage and all other aspects of the area's natural, cultural and intangible heritages. It is about reconnecting human society at all levels to the planet we all call home and to celebrate how our planet and its 4,600-million-year long history has shaped every aspect of our lives and our societies.” (Global Geopark Network, 2014).

Participants also perceived Geoparks to be encouraging for local community participation and that local communities would establish and participate in Geopark activities and events. This demonstrates a willingness for taking ownership of the Geopark concept, process and management.

Stakeholder Perceptions about Creating a Geopark

Given that most participants had never knowingly attended a Geopark, their perceptions about establishing a Geopark are important as this might impact on the community willingness to participate. Geoparks are bottom up concepts, raised, promoted and managed by the community in strategic partnerships with other stakeholders (Global Geopark Network, 2010). Perceptions about community support reflected the level of awareness of tourism with most participations perceiving there to be a level of support for tourism development and that they supported tourism development themselves. This might also be a reflection on the attractiveness of the forum to people with an established interest in tourism. The willingness of participants to share their town with tourists was, however, a positive sign that any opportunities for tourism development might be taken up within the community.

One of the key aspects in considering establishing a Geopark is to have stakeholder support and this is reflected in the participant's perception that community consultation and participation is important. This may be a reflection that stakeholders wish to be involved in what is taking place within their communities in general rather than solely about the concept of establishing a Geopark.

This reflection was also conveyed when respondents were asked to show their perception about a range of government agency levels of support for the establishment of a Geopark. In these cases, over 70% of participants indicated that they didn't know what levels of support would be available. It is, after all, a new concept and few of the participants had any connection directly to the agencies, with the exception of LGAs. The Western Australian Tourism Commission was perceived to be the agency most likely to support the concept of a Geopark.

Where LGAs were concerned, most participants perceived they would be supportive of the concept for a Geopark and would support the creation of a Geopark should the concept proceed. This change in LGA roles has been noted previously “The days of describing a Council’s functions as “roads, rates and rubbish” are long gone (Local Government Authority of South Australia, 2013, p. 14). All Councils to varying degrees provide social, economic and environmental services” (Local Government Authority of South Australia, 2013). LGAs might require additional support if they are to be engaged in supporting creating and managing Geoparks.

Stakeholder Contributions to a Geopark

Geoparks require stakeholder collaborations, contributions and support to ensure they operate in a fully functioning manner. In addition to perceiving there was capacity within the community to assist in developing and managing a Geopark, participants indicated they, as individuals, would be willing to contribute to undertaking a range of volunteer roles ranging from committee work to information technology. Volunteer time is important in communities as it enables individuals to meet and share experiences and build community collateral. Verbal comments received from forum participants suggested that community volunteers were almost “over-engaged” however there remains a section of the community who remain keen to participate in their areas of interest.

Local businesses, both town and farm, are the mainstay of rural communities by providing services and creating employment. Feedback from the forums indicated the change in farming techniques has resulted in the need for fewer permanent on-farm employees and now there is a trend to drive-in/drive out casual employment. This in turn has led to a level of underemployment for some individuals and a lack of available staff for existing businesses. Tourism startup businesses might also be faced with this dilemma.

Approximately half the attendees at the forums were business operators ranging from farming and LGA employees to service providers to tourism. Many saw a future role in the proposed Geopark with providing services for tourism and to tourists. Opportunities to promote the Geopark through the internet and social media were some of the ways individuals considered they could contribute. Others proposed more direct measures such as providing guided tours, farm stays and consulting to other tourism businesses. From the feedback from forum participants, there are opportunities available however a catalyst is required to initiate and implement these proposals. The consideration was that in addition to adopting a common overarching brand i.e. a Geopark, there needs to be improved infrastructure for access, information and tourism as well as marketing and promotion, signage and value-adding to existing tourism businesses and experiences.

Adding Areas of Interest and Value to Create a Geopark

Geoparks are comprised of areas of geological heritage but are not considered “an area of outstanding geological heritage alone, a small single site of geological interest, a fenced off area just for scientists, it is not a geological theme park, nor an area with no local community involvement, or no sustainable economic development strategy. Very important but frequently asked: Geopark is not a category of protected area.”(Global Geopark Network, 2010). So, when asked about their perceptions about whether there was any geological significance in their LGA, most participants indicated they thought there was. This makes a good start, a foundation for a Geopark. However as indicated above, there is much more to a Geopark.

Participants also showed they were aware of the significant Aboriginal cultural values particularly associated with the granite outcrops within the region. They were also supportive of a range of European/Settler heritage as well as flora and fauna. Many of the known interests and values are listed in Attachment 6.

Participants nominated granite outcrops as being important to the region and also recognised the salt rivers, ancient paleochannels created through the slow erosion of the landscape over millions of years, as being of significance. While impressive as they are as landforms, it is when they are interpreted by enthusiastic community members and professional tourist guides that these landscapes come to life. Being able to interpret not only the geological history of the place, but also the Aboriginal cultural connection developed over the past 40,000 to 60,000 years, the early explorers and settlers and then contemporary land uses, that tourist will be attracted to the region. These attributes need to be developed into tourism product and marketed locally and internationally to bring tourists to the region.

Funding the Creation and Maintenance of a Geopark

In any new venture, there are associated costs for establishment and maintenance. This also applies to establishing a Geopark. Currently, there are no obligations on government to take any measures to develop or protect or promote a Geopark. However, in October 2015 Geoparks were adopted under UNESCO as an operating program. This might bring about a change in requirements if government agree to adopt Geoparks as a program. This will most likely bring about obligations on government along similar lines as apply to World Heritage Areas and Man and the Biosphere areas. The roles and responsibilities of Nations (also States) is described as:

“States that are parties to the Convention agree to identify, protect, conserve, and present World Heritage properties. States recognise that the identification and safeguarding of heritage located in their territory is primarily their responsibility. They agree to do all they can with their own resources to protect their World Heritage properties.

They agree, amongst other things, as far as possible to:

- *'adopt a general policy that aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community and to integrate the protection of that heritage into comprehensive planning programs'*
- *undertake 'appropriate legal, scientific, technical, administrative and financial measures necessary for the identification, protection, conservation, presentation and rehabilitation of this heritage'*
- *refrain from 'any deliberate measures which might damage, directly or indirectly, the cultural and natural heritage' of other Parties to the Convention, and to help other Parties in the identification and protection of their properties."* (Australian Government, 2016).

Currently neither the Federal nor State governments formally recognise Geoparks. The reasons for this were outlined in a letter from the then Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard (Murphy, 2011) which indicated among other things that there were several legislative protective mechanisms already in place and that the National Landscapes Program was addressing similar matters. A similar response was received from Premier Colin Barnett (Barnett, 2011) who indicated that there were sufficient protection measures in place for geological features and that the Tourism Western Australia was working with the Tourism Australia to market and promote Australian assets under the National Landscape program. In both cases reference to the National Landscapes program is now defunct as that program is no longer funded. It was top-down looking at Australian iconic tourism assets. Furthermore, the response demonstrated a misunderstanding of the role of Geoparks. Geoparks are driven from the bottom-up and support sustainable development within broad areas associated with geological features. It is not just about protection of those assets.

While this lack of government support remains the case, and given the level of community support for the concept of Geoparks and their perceptions of the values of that Geoparks might bring to their regions, the concept of Geoparks can be facilitated. The more interest being demonstrated by regional communities will in time influence government policy.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, forum participants indicated a range of support for various means of raising funds. The responses indicated that there should be contribution by government through grants and direct funding. This reflects the perceptions that sustainable tourism development affects a broader community than the immediate LGAs being researched. There were indications that the participants considered raising funds through their own contribution through activities and events such as street fairs as well as the sale of souvenirs (cards, maps, books). The concept of a business levy through local government was not

supported. Discussions revealed this was more about not having the LGAs as tax collectors than imposing levies on businesses. This was supported by participants indicating they through payment to join an association or through payment of a royalty for the Geopark brand or logo was more acceptable. Crowd funding, a relatively new approach to raising funds online, also received support. This means of fund raising has been gaining impetus in recent years and can include a mix of tax deductible appeals when partnering with a suitable provider.

Finally, something about you.

Demographics can be used to demonstrate various biases and peculiarities of those from whom information is being gathered. The data from questionnaires revealed demographics of participants covered the full suite of ages, education, employment, businesses, professions and incomes.

Of interest was the time participants had lived in their respective LGAs as this can be an influence of levels of acceptance of change. Where residents have been domiciled for long periods of time some are resistant to change. On the other hand, other long term residents see that change is necessary to maintain the lifestyles they are familiar with. In the case of this research, there was a uniform distribution of time periods that participants had been living within their respective communities. As such, there was no clear pattern of influence other than most participants were in favour of developing tourism to create business and employment.

The level of community participation was also very high. Most participants in the forums, as indicated in the questionnaires, were engaged in some form of community association or organisation. This reflects a strong commitment to their community and of their personal time towards achieving a better community.

main attraction for regional tourism development. Early explorer heritage and contemporary land uses were also considered to be highly relevant areas to be developed, particularly through storytelling and developing experiences to engage with tourists. While attracting international visitors was flagged, stakeholders also indicated local tourists (inter and intrastate) should also be considered as a prospective market.

Community engagement was mentioned consistently within interviews, as was business development and support. Stakeholders expressed concern that local communities and businesses be consulted and encouraged to participate in establishing any aspiring Geopark as to not do so would quickly lose overall support.

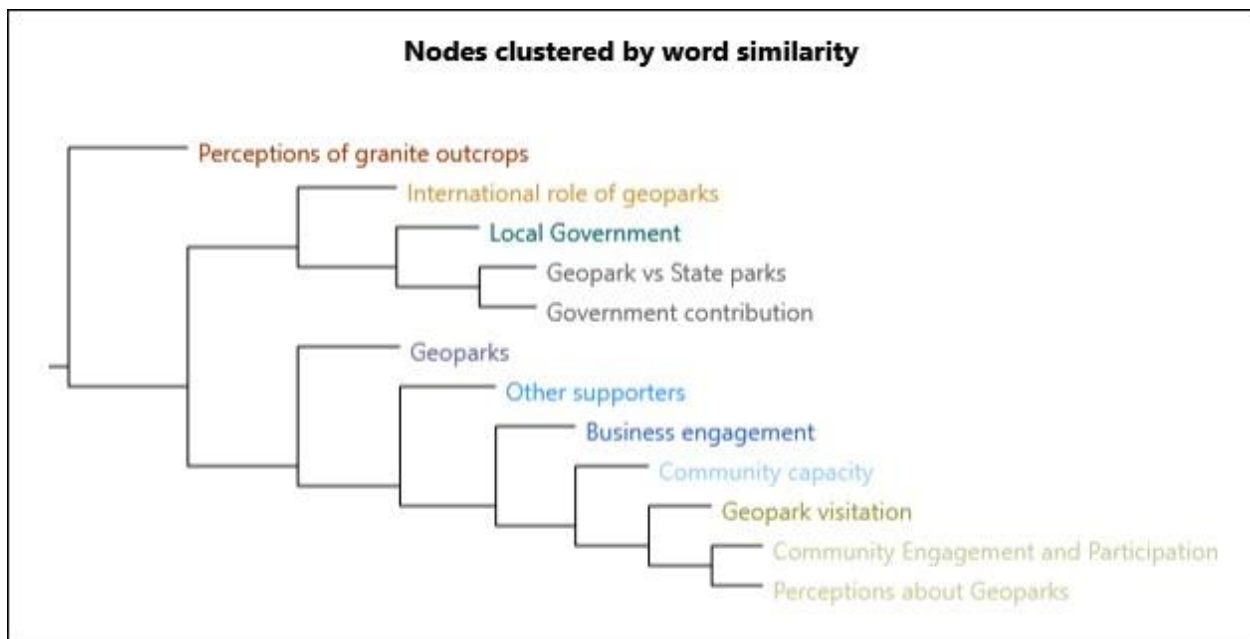


Diagram 3: Display of nodal linkage from analysis of stakeholder interviews

Linkages between Geoparks and the nodal analysis (Diagram 3) shows the relationships developed from stakeholder interviews. The hierarchy reflects the level of concern and support raised by stakeholders for each nodal area of interest.

Several stakeholders observed that by attracting attention to proposed Geopark conservation values could be enhanced and protected as they were components of the Geopark that would attract tourists. In making these observations most interviewees separated the role of the Geopark from national parks and nature reserves and did not see any conflict between the State land classifications and the aspiring Global Geopark.

Geotourism opportunities for development within the aspiring Geopark included Geotours, Geo-caching and Geo-glamping (tenting). Experience in established Global Geoparks has included developing Geo-menus in cafes and restaurants (Ng, 2014) for example “rock” cakes and “lava” coffee.

As tourism was not considered to be a panacea, stakeholders suggested alternative businesses be considered including aged care and private education.

Recommendations

This research project has been to determine stakeholder perceptions about creating a Geopark within the study area, the LGAs of Tammin, Kellerberrin, Bruce Rock and Quairading.

The research has indicated a significant amount of support in general for the development of tourism within the Wheatbelt region, specifically within the four LGAs forming the case study. Participant stakeholders were enthusiastic about the prospects of tourism as a means of improving community life within their towns. Indeed, some rural towns have taken measures to improve the social environments within their places and tourism has been promoted on a limited scale.

Establishing a Geopark is not a simple process. It can take years to develop a case for submission to the Global Geopark Network, and then there is the current lack of Federal and State government policy to support Geoparks in Australia.

Notwithstanding this, the research project has identified several positive aspects from stakeholder perceptions that would suit establishing a Geopark within the Wheatbelt of Western Australia. Indeed, there appears to be a keen interest in developing tourism per se within the area. However, this needs to be tempered with community concern about previous tourism opportunity promotions, community burn out and limited resources within the community. Champions are needed to carry such projects forward and it appears through the forums that rural communities are aging, populations continue to decrease and the number of employment opportunities available are filled by short term backpacker recruitment.

The concept of a Geopark has encouraged positive reaction among forum attendees and stakeholder interviewees. Several opportunities for tourism activities have been proposed however more work is required, including finding champions and resources, before these can be further developed.

Recommendations from Stage 1 include:

- The concept of establishing an aspiring Geopark be raised with the communities within the targeted area to confirm the level of support for the project.
- The targeted area for the project to include Cunderdin (with Meckering as the western entrance), Tammin, Kellerberrin, Merredin (as the eastern entrance), Bruce Rock, Kondinin (for Wave Rock) and Quairading. Additional contiguous LGAs may be included subject to further discussion.
- Agreement is reached with each LGA to confirm their support for the project.
- A review and cataloguing of assets associated with geological formations, fauna and flora be undertaken to build a database for their conservation, protection and sustainable use within the project. The review would be in liaison with Aboriginal elders to ensure sites deemed culturally sensitive are protected where requested and appropriately acknowledged on ensuring persons utilising these places respect the cultural sensitivity of the site.
- Agreement is reached and opportunities developed with Aboriginal elders for access and interpretation of accessible places and cultural sites, and Aboriginal people be engaged to provide tourism services within the Geopark.
- Review all current tourism businesses and opportunities to determine an overall strategic approach to developing each asset into the project.
- Establish a funded Project Development Officer position to engage with stakeholders and to coordinate the implementation of the pilot project.
- A staged schedule (as indicated above) for development of an aspiring Geopark is developed following UNESCO and Global Geopark Network requirements and resources made available to develop this proposal as a fully costed submission to UNESCO An outline if the implementation method is attached.
- The State Government is approached to assist with development and planning with funding through the *Royalties for Regions* program to implement these recommendations.
- Federal and State Governments are approached to bring about recognition of Geoparks and the advantages they bring for sustainable tourism in rural areas.
- Establish an overarching incorporated association for the aspiring Geopark body to represent the coordination, development, facilitation, marketing and promotion of the Geotourism region.
- Develop primary and secondary school engagement within the aspiring Geopark to foster learning, conservation and advocacy for the Geopark environment.
- Further research by engaging with tertiary educational institutions to assist with developing the project and monitoring its implementation and management.

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Attachments

Attachment 1 - Spreadsheet of Geo-Assets within the Study Area

| Shire | Name | Location | Title Description | Ownership | Access | Attractions | Site Issues |
|--------|---------------|--|--------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|---|
| Tammin | Hunts Well | Hunt Rd 3.5km south of Tammin | Reserve 2083 Loc 28813 | Vested Shire of Tammin - Stopping Place for Travellers & Stock | Open off Hunt Rd | Historic site Good views | Dam walls require reformation. Directional signage required. Interpretative material requires update. |
| Tammin | Yorakine Rock | Yorakine Rock Rd 26km north of Tammin | Reserve 23586 Reserve 27483 | Vested NPNCA | Open off Yorakine Rock Rd | Good views Unique scorpion | |
| Tammin | Doongin Peak | Off Golf Links Rd 4.5km north west of Tammin | Reserve 11996 | Unvested trigonometrical station | Access through private property | Historic site Good views | Access agreement Walk path definition Interpretive signage |
| Tammin | Tammin Rock | Goldfields Rd 5.5km south east of Tammin | Loc 27515 | GM & KL Caffell | Access through private property | Unknown | |
| Tammin | Youering Rock | Youering Rd 17.5km north west of Tammin | Loc 13388 | D & P York | Access through private property | Unknown | |
| Tammin | Barine Rock | Yorakine West Rd 29 km north of Tammin | | | | Unknown | |

| Shire | Name | Location | Title Description | Ownership | Access | Attractions | Site Issues |
|------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Bruce Rock | Kokerbin Nature Reserve | Kokerbin Hill Rd Shackleton | Reserve 347 Loc 14520 Reserve 105 Loc 11043 | Shire of Bruce RockDEC, Noongar groups - Njaki Njaki (Merredin) & Balardong (Badjaling Quairading) | Access off Kokerbin Hill Rd | Kokerbin Rock, flora and fauna attractions, Black flanked Rock wallaby camp site, picnic area, Historic well, view and surrounds | Camping area encroaching on day picnic area (therefore potential relocation of campsite), current carpark area, current wood fire BBQs, undefined picnic area, picnic area & areas close to the face of the rock require rehabilitation, improved visitor information and interpretation required, walks trails require attention in numerous areas. Lookout - retained, erosion issue requires attention, rehabilitate old track and realign pedestrian access. Rock car park - relocate, rehabilitate old track, new alignment required. Historic well - car park, picnic area and improve path access required. |
| Bruce Rock | Bruce Rock Nature Reserve | Bruce Rock East Rd Bruce Rock | Reserve 12277 | Vested Conservation commission of WA, managed by DEC | Access off Bruce Rock East Rd | Bruce's Rock, flora and fauna attractions, picnic area, view and surrounds | |
| Bruce Rock | Nungegin Hill | On private lanholder's property | Reserve 2083 Loc 19675 | Private | Private no access | Nungegin Hill, flora and fauna attractions, picnic area, view and surrounds | |
| Bruce Rock | Karebrenin Rock | On private lanholder's property | | Private | Private no access | Karebrenin Rock, flora and fauna attractions, view and surrounds | |
| Bruce Rock | Conway Patch | Fushsibichler Rd Bruce Rock | Reserve 2083 Loc 13035 | Vested Shire of Bruce Rock | Access off Fushsibichler Rd | Conway Patch, flora and fauna attractions, view and surrounds | |

| Shire | Name | Location | Title Description | Ownership | Access | Attractions | Site Issues |
|--------------|--|---|----------------------------|--|---|---|--|
| Bruce Rock | Kulbullikin Rock | Sippe Rd Bruce Rock | Loc 14424 | Shire of Bruce Rock | Access off Sippe Rd | Kulbullikin Rock , flora and fauna attractions, view and surrounds | |
| Bruce Rock | Banduppin Rock | Caporn Rd Bruce Rock | Reserve 15003 Loc 20505 | Shire of Bruce Rock | Access off Caporn Rd | Banduppin Rock , flora and fauna attractions, view and surrounds | |
| Bruce Rock | Cummunin Rock | | | Shire of Bruce Rock | | Cumunin Rock , flora and fauna attractions, view and surrounds | |
| Bruce Rock | Granite outcrop behind Railway reserve dam | | | Shire of Bruce Rock | | Granite outcrop, flora and fauna attractions, view and surrounds | |
| Kellerberrin | Kellerberrin Hill | 2km from Kellerberrin Townsite, off Kellerberrin-Bencubbin RD | Reserve 2913 | | Open, left off Kellerberrin-Bencubbin Rd | Good Views, Golf Course | |
| Kellerberrin | Durokoppin Nature Reserve | Off Kellerberrin-Bencubbin Rd, 20km north of Townsite | A-22921 | Vested Conservation commission of WA, managed by DEC | Open, right off Kellerberrin-Bencubbin Rd | Very Diverse Flora. Educational opportunities re: salinity management and the Wallatin Wildlife & Landcare groups activities | Needs DEC Consultation |
| Kellerberrin | Mt Caroline Nature Reserve | 20km from townsite, left off Kellerberrin-Yoting Rd | A-11047 | Vested Conservation commission of WA, managed by DEC | Open, left off Kellerberrin-Yoting Rd | Excellent Views, Diverse Flora, Black Flanked Rock Wallabies. Good photo point on the Kellerberrin-Yotting Rd - views of Mt Caroline, Mt Stirling etc - suit info bay | Needs DEC Consultation. Significant population of Black-flanked Rock Wallabies. Reserve is baited with 1080 dried meat baits every 4 weeks. Code of practice for the safe use of 1080 prohibits recreation within areas baited with 1080. Noongar sensitive site (not registered) - high degree of interest from Njaki Njaki & Ballardong groups |

| Shire | Name | Location | Title Description | Ownership | Access | Attractions | Site Issues |
|--------------|--|--|---|--|--|--------------------------|--|
| Kellerberrin | Lake Bandee | Right off Great Eastern Highway, 4km East of Doodlakine | Reserve 27145 vested in Local Government Authority for 'Recreation; Sportsground; Waterway' | LGA | Open, Right off G.E. Highway onto Ski Lake Road | Good views, water sports | |
| Kellerberrin | Mournucking Nature Reserve | 9km from townsite, Left off Kellerberrin-Yoting Rd, onto Saunders Rd | A-24897 | Vested Conservation commission of WA, managed by DEC | 9km from townsite, Left off Kellerberrin-Yoting Rd, onto Saunders Rd | Diverse Flora | Needs DEC Consultation |
| Kellerberrin | Glenluce Nature Reserve | 25km from townsite, left off Kellerberrin-Yoting Rd, onto Gardner Rd | A-25112, A-26266 | Vested Conservation commission of WA, managed by DEC | 25km from townsite, left off Kellerberrin-Yoting Rd, onto Gardner Rd | Diverse Flora | Needs DEC Consultation |
| Quairading | Mount Stirling Nature Reserve (includes private property & Shire reserves) | Glenluce Rd 28km north east of Quairading | Loc 241, 351, 8527, 8528, 8530 and 8567 Reserve11048 and 11999. | Hammond Hayes DEC | Open off Glenluce Rd | | Reserve is baited with 1080 dried meat baits every 4 weeks. Code of practice for the safe use of 1080 prohibits recreation within areas baited with 1080. Noongar sensitive site (not registered) - high degree of interest from Njaki Njaki & Ballardong groups |
| Quairading | Banduppin Rock | Caporn Rd 19km east of Quairading | Loc 26509 and 16012. | B. Caporn G. Wishart | Access through private property | | |

| Shire | Name | Location | Title Description | Ownership | Access | Attractions | Site Issues |
|------------|---|--|--|--|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Quairading | Pikaring Hill (includes Pikaring Hill Nature Reserve) | Old Beverley Rd 30km east south east from Quairading | Loc 25547 Reserve 976 | Vested Conservation commission of WA, managed by DEC | Open off old Beverley Rd | | |
| Quairading | | Old Beverley Rd 25km east south east from Quairading | Loc 14887 | | Access through private property | | |
| Quairading | Two out Crops | Old Beverley Rd 23km east south east of Quairading | Loc 12523 | G. Stone | Access through private property | | |
| Quairading | | Old Beverley Rd 27km south east of Quairading | Loc 18716 and 16360. | | Access through private property | | |
| Quairading | | South of Beverley Rd and Heal Rd Intersection 13 km south east of Quairading | Loc 597, 695, 2582, 2102, 6642, 6643, 8067, 9852, 10909 and 10910. | | Access through private property | | |
| Quairading | Toapin Rock | Toapin Rd 5km north west of Quairading | Loc 18489 | | Access through private property | | |
| Quairading | Ulonging Hill | Shenton Rd 16km south east of Quairading | Loc 8382 | | Access through private property | | |
| Quairading | West of Mount Stirling | Mt Stirling Road 23km north east of Quairading | Loc 17043 | | Access through private property | | |

| Shire | Name | Location | Title Description | Ownership | Access | Attractions | Site Issues |
|------------|--------------------------|---|-------------------|--|-----------------------------------|-------------|---|
| Quairading | Moulien Estate | Kellerberrin Yotting Rd 23km north east of Quairading | Loc 17046 | | Access through private property | | |
| Quairading | Coolalling | 13km south east of Quairading | Loc 9194 | | Access through private property | | |
| Quairading | Quairading Springs | 3km south of Quairading near the speedway | Loc 21617 | | Access through private property | | |
| Quairading | Nookaminnie | Weir Rd 3km west of of Quairading | Reserve 16405 | Shire Vesting | Open access of York Quairading Rd | | |
| Quairading | Adamsons Rocks | Adamson Rd 8km north west of Quairading | Loc 21600 | | Access through Private property | | |
| Quairading | Gundaring Nature Reserve | Pantapin Rd 26Km north east of Quairading | Reserve 11039 | Vested Conservation Commission of WA, managed by DEC | Open off Pantapin Rd | | Reserve is baited with 1080 dried meat baits every 4 weeks. Code of practice for the safe use of 1080 prohibits recreation within areas baited with 1080. |
| Quairading | Juropin Rocks | Quairading South Rd 12km south east of Quairading | Loc 4858 | | Access through Private property | | |

Attachment 2 - Advertisement for Forums

TOWN HALL FORUM

Developing Tourism in Our Shire

Tourism has the potential to create business and jobs. The Granite Way Tourist drive and the new camping facility at Kwolyin Rock are just two examples of how tourism is increasing in our area.

Your ideas are important to this new tourism research.

You are invited to attend a community forum to be held at the Town Hall on (day/date/time) to discuss the proposal to establish a Geopark in our region.

A Geopark is an area of geological heritage and interest supported by local communities and encouraging tourism, conservation and education. It includes social and cultural values of the area.

Establishing a Geopark can lead to increased tourism, more businesses and more employment.

If you are 18+ years, please come along to give your perceptions and ideas about this proposal.

NOTE: This poster will be displayed on LGA notice boards and in the LGA hall and office.

The LGAs will also promote the forums in their local newsletters to residents.

Attachment 3 - Themes for Forums, Interviews and Online Survey

Introductory Page – about the research and an introduction to Geoparks

Themes for Questions

- Stakeholder Perceptions of Tourism
- Understanding of Rural Decline
- Stakeholder Perceptions of Geoparks (economic, social and environmental/conservation and educational benefits)
- Stakeholder Perceptions in Creating a Geopark
- Stakeholder Contribution to a Geopark
- Adding Values to Create a Geopark
- Funding the Creation and Maintenance of a Geopark
- Finally, something about you.

NOTE:

1. Questionnaires, interviews and web-based survey to be completed by stakeholders 18+ years only.
2. The information contained here represents the questions being asked of stakeholders.
3. The questionnaire design will incorporate these questions and structure.

Attachment 4 - Advertising the Online Survey to LGA Residents

Developing Tourism in Our Shire

Tourism has the potential to create business and jobs. The Granite Way Tourist drive and the new camping facility at Kwolyin Rock are just two examples of how tourism is increasing in our area.

Your ideas are important to this new tourism research.

You are invited to complete an online survey to determine your perceptions about creating a Geopark in our region.

A Geopark is an area of geological heritage and interest supported by local communities and encouraging tourism, conservation and education. It includes social and cultural values of the area. Establishing a Geopark can lead to increased tourism, more businesses and more employment.

If you are 18+ years, please click on the following link to enter the survey.

(survey link)

The Shire

Attachment 5 – Criteria for Stakeholder Interview Nominees

To ensure appropriate coverage of key stakeholders within and influencing the nominated LGAs area the following criteria will be applied in selecting interviewees:

Government (2 representatives from each)

- Department of Parks and Wildlife
- Department of Water
- Department of Agriculture and Food
- Department of Planning

Total 8

Other Government (1 representative from each)

- Wheatbelt Development Commission
- Wheatbelt Natural Resource Management

Total 2

Non-Government (1 representative from each)

- National Trust of Australia (WA)
- Greening Australia
- WWF

Total 3

Business

- Local in each LGA (4x4) 16
- Influencing local LGAs (4) 4

Local Government Authorities

- LGA Council (1x4) 4
- LGA Staff (CEO, CDO/NRMO) (2x4) 8

Community

- Aboriginal (Traditional Owners) (3x4) 12
- Key (3x4) 12

Nominal Maximum Stakeholder Interviews 59

Attachment 6 - Community Nominations – Geo-Assets within the Study Area

| | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Significant Places | Mt Caroline | Bruce Rock (the site) | Toapin Weir (Views, tranquil, facilities) |
| | Yorkrakine Rock | Salt Lake network | Kokerbin Rock (3rd largest Rock) |
| | Kokerbin Rocks | Shackleton Golf Club (Lookout/Rock) | Nookamine Rock (Indigenous area) |
| | Gardiner Reserve | Coarin Rock | Pink Lake |
| | Hunt's Well (Although not sure now) | Kokerbin Rock (Well. Flora/fauna) | Ski Lake |
| | | Cunni Rock (Old school site) | Lake Mears |
| | | Kwolyin (Old town site) | Pinnacles (Trevor Stacey's farm) |
| | | Mt Stirling | Rabbit Proof Fence (Interpretation) |
| | | Babakin (underground orchid) | Badjeling (Indigenous centre) |
| | | Nangine Rock (Rare flora) | The Grove |
| | | Bruce Rock ampitheatre | Quairading Nature Reserve |
| | | Old Hotels (Bruce Rock/Ardath) | Speedway (Rock - Corrigin Road) |
| | | Homesteads | Pikarring Rock (Gnamma hole/sacred site) |
| | | Lakes/Dams catchments on rocks | Quairading Springs (Water hole/well) |
| | | | Golf course (Well dug by Chinaman) |
| Interesting features | Ancient soils | Echidna (Spiny ant eater) | Black flanked wallaby |
| | | Native bees | Quarra (small kangaroo) |
| | | Quandong | Red Kangaroos |
| | | Sandalwood | Native bees |
| | | | Spider (The Grove - Jen Green) |
| | | | Echidna |
| | | | Bird book of area (Jill/Jen/Rolly) |
| | | | Yabbies on farms (dams) |
| | | | Quandong (jams/art/didjerridoos) |

| | | | |
|--------------------|--|---|---|
| Flora | | | Orchids (Underground) |
| | | | <i>Banksia cuneata</i> (Endangered) |
| | | | Dinosaur plant (Bert Hort) |
| European History | | Kokerbin Well | History book - Golden Grain and Silver Fleece) |
| | | Bruce Rock well | |
| | | Remnant buildings (Stone/timber) | |
| | | Shackleton Discovery Centre (Smallest bank) | |
| | | Old rail sidings (Babakin, Erikin, Shackleton, Ardath) | |
| | | 2 history books | |
| Aboriginal History | | Memorial plaque (Hollands) | Badgelin (Billy tea/Damper) |
| | | Kokerbin Rock (Birthing/paintings) | TAFE (Aboriginal Art) |
| | | Opportunity for young Aboriginal people to be involved in tourism | TAFE/Old School Buildings |
| | | | Railway Station |
| | | | Wood sculptures |

Attachment 7 – Proposed Geopark Implementation Schedule

| GRANITE WAY GEOPARK PROPOSAL | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| OUTLINE OF IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM | | | | | | |
| ITEM | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 | Stage 4 | Stage 5 | Stage 6 |
| Initiate research into stakeholder perceptions about creating a Geopark | X | | | | | |
| Arrange forums | X | | | | | |
| Conduct surveys (questionnaires, online survey, interviews) | X | | | | | |
| Analyse findings and report. | X | | | | | |
| Initiate pilot project | | X | | | | |
| Configure Geopark boundaries | | X | | | | |
| Measure implications in relation to tourism, marketing, visitor attraction and tourism development | | X | | | | |
| Secure agreements to proceed | | X | | | | |
| Secure funding | | X | | | | |
| Build constituency - business, community, education, tourism | | X | | | | |
| Consolidation of the pilot project and expansion to include any additional LGAs to develop a holistic approach across the Wheatbelt | | | X | | | |
| Consolidate governance, management structures and management plans | | | | X | | |
| Management plans developed in preparation for submission to State and Federal governments | | | | X | | |
| Complete planning and submission to UNESCO to seek Global Geopark status | | | | | X | |
| Consolidation of the Wheatbelt Geopark including budgets, development, marketing and promotion, resources, monitoring and building on partnerships with business, government and educational institutions | | | | | | X |
| NB: Stages can be associated with years ie 1-6. | | | | | | 0 |