

# **Celebrating Planet Earth**

## **UNESCO GEOPARKS**

***Susan White***

The recent initiative by UNESCO to establish a worldwide Network of Global Geoparks has important implications for Australia, especially western Victoria and south eastern SA.

The Geological Society of Australia and various state government departments have been documenting geological sites of conservation and heritage value for over 30 years.

The Geopark Network aims to promote geological sites for geotourism, education and research. The Geopark model most likely to be effective in Australia is a 'Grass-roots' approach where local communities in conjunction with different levels of government take responsibility for their own region. Comparison with some of the European Geoparks Network provides useful examples. An informal network of people interested in forming Geoparks in Australia and the South Pacific has been formed.

A formal application for a Global Geopark is currently underway for the region known as the Kanawinka Geopark, extending across the South Australian and Victorian borders. This Geopark is concerned predominantly with the volcanic landscapes of the Western District Volcanic Province and its geological context.

This presentation will outline aspects of the proposed Kanawinka Geopark. The area proposed, extends from Colac and Red Rock to the coast of South Australia past Millicent and North to Nigretta and Wannon Falls and the base of the Grampians. This area has significant volcanic caves and associated karst areas and is of interest to both CEGSA and VSA. Since 1998 the local Government bodies of this region commenced operation of the Volcanoes Discovery Trail Committee to promote the region and link geology with tourism.

Important aspects of Geoparks are the links between the geology and the people, their stories, culture and history that build into a sustainable source of geotourism, bring jobs to rural and indigenous people and in turn help protect sites of importance and promote geoheritage complementing the work of the interested non government and government organizations.

## Celebrating PLANET EARTH

UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in  
the Australasian- Pacific Region



Slide 1

Celebrating Planet Earth  
UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian- Pacific Region

- Increasing role for Geosciences
- Geodiversity and Geoheritage
- Identification, Protection and interpretation of sites of geological interest



Slide 2

Celebrating Planet Earth

UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian- Pacific Region

- Lists of key geoheritage sites
- Promotion of Geological heritage sites
- Some sites already functioning to Geopark Principles

Slide 3

Celebrating Planet Earth  
UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian- Pacific Region

### UNESCO Network of Global Geoparks

- To encourage understanding of Earth Science
- To enhance sustainable management of resources
- Provide education opportunities



Slide 4

Celebrating Planet Earth  
UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian- Pacific Region

- Local Communities with cooperation from government departments
- Taking responsibility for their region
- Model on European Geopark Network



Slide 5

Celebrating Planet Earth  
UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian- Pacific Region

- 500 Geoparks proposed across the Earth
- 12 Countries in Europe - 30 Geoparks
- China Designated 85 areas... have 18 accepted as Global Geoparks.
- Iran and Brazil made Application in 2005 and been accepted
- Now 50 Global Geoparks




Slide 6

Celebrating Planet Earth  
UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian- Pacific Region

## What is a Geopark?

- A territory with well-defined limits that has a large enough surface area for it to serve local economic development.
- It comprises a certain number of geological heritage sites (on any scale) or a mosaic of geological entities of special scientific importance, rarity or beauty, representative of an area and its geological history, events or processes.
  - It may not solely be of geological significance but also of archaeological, ecological, historical or cultural value.



Slide 7

Celebrating Planet Earth  
UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian- Pacific Region

## To Qualify:

According to UNESCO, for a Geopark to qualify it needs to have:

- A management plan designed to foster socio-economic development that is sustainable (most likely to be based on geotourism).
- Demonstrate methods for conserving and enhancing geological heritage and provide means for teaching geoscientific disciplines and broader environmental issues.
- Joint-proposals submitted by public authorities, local communities and private interests acting together, which demonstrate the best practices with respect to Earth heritage conservation and its integration into sustainable development strategies.



Slide 8

Celebrating Planet Earth  
UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian- Pacific Region

## Geoparks foster

- Employment
  - Protection
  - Heritage
- Education
  - Tourism
  - Fun



Slide 9

Celebrating Planet Earth  
UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian- Pacific Region

- Since 2003 Dr Sue Turner has been forging the Asia Pacific and informal Oz Geopark Network
- Support from Tourism Commission of SA
- Tourism Vic, Museums, Academics
- Geological Society of Australia Inc.
- National Trust



Slide 10

Celebrating Planet Earth  
UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian- Pacific Region

## Australia has two areas very close to applying for Geopark Status:

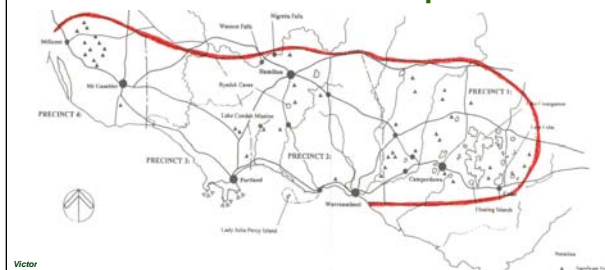
- Flinders Ranges
- **KANAWINKA GEOPARK.**

## Western Plains of Victoria and South East South Australia



Slide 11

## Australia's First Proposed UNESCO Global Geopark



Slide 12

## Four precincts:

- Lakes and Wetlands (Camperdown and Colac)
- Cones and Falls (Hamilton and Warrnambool)
- Coast and Caves (Portland and Nelson)
- Craters and Limestone (Mount Gambier District)

Victoria and South Australia

Slide 13

## Precinct 1: Lakes and Wetlands (Camperdown and Colac)



- Lake Bullen-Merri
- Mt Noorat
- Red Rock
- Mt Elephant
- Lake Purrumbete
- Lake Gnotuk
- Stony Rises

- Lake Bookar
- Lake Cundare
- Mount Leura
- Mount Sugarloaf
- Lake Keilambete
- Lake Tooliorook
- Skipton Cave



Slide 14

## Precinct 2: Cones and Falls (Hamilton and Warrnambool)



- Mt Eccles
- Tower Hill
- Mt Rouse
- Byaduk Caves
- Wannon and Nigretta Falls
- Mt Napier

- Mount Hamilton
- Mount Warrnambool
- Mount Shadwell



Slide 15

## Precinct 3: Coast and Caves (Portland and Nelson)



- Lady Julia Percy Island
- Cape Bridgewater
- Bats Ridge
- Cape Nelson
- Cape Grant

- Mt Richmond
- Lake Condah
- Cape Sir William Grant



Slide 16

## Precinct 4: Craters and Limestone (Mount Gambier District)



- Mount Gambier (Blue Lake)
- Mount Schanck
- Lake Leake
- Mount Burr
- Lake Edward
- Mount Muirhead
- Mount Graham



Slide 17

## Volcanoes Discovery Trail Committee was formed including representatives from:

- Local Government of Victoria and South Australia  
(annual funding provided from the Shires of Southern Grampians, Corangamite, & Glenelg in Victoria and in South Australia: Mount Gambier City Council, Grant District Council and Wattle Range Council)
- Regional and Local Tourism Associations,
- Department of Environment and Heritage, SA
- Parks Victoria
- Greater Green Triangle Area Consultative Committee

Victoria and South Australia

Slide 18

International Significance: 6 sites  
(4 Vic)

National Significance: 18 sites  
(all Vic plus SA ones)

State Significance: 8 sites  
(many more than this!)

Regional Significance: 25 sites  
(many more than this!)

Heaps of local sites!

The Volcanic Plains of Western Victoria and South Eastern South Australia include the following specific features:

- International Significance: 6 sites
- National Significance: 18 sites
- State Significance: 8 sites
- Regional Significance: 25 sites



Slide 19

**The main associated cultural features of importance include:**

- Floating Islands Reserve
- Ramsar Lakes of Western Victoria
- Geothermal Energy - Portland
- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage
- Stone Walls

Slide 20

### **Australia's Kanawinka Geopark**

- Meetings held in Mount Gambier and Hamilton in December 2005
- Overwhelming support for Geopark Application
- Application and Strategy will be ready for public comment in late August 2006 before sending to UNESCO for assessment in November.

Slide 21

### **Issues for ASF**

- Has issues for us as it includes caves & karst
- Geoparks people here don't understand ASF or its structures and roles
- Cannot be ignored
- Useful public relations and getting our message out there!

**LIVING ON KARST!**

Slide 22

### **Australia's Kanawinka Geopark**

After public meeting in Mount Gambier  
Photo courtesy Dr Sue Turner



Dr Turner, Graham Arkinstall and Joane Mcknight at Mount Leura in December 2005  
Photo Courtesy Camperdown Chronicle

Slide 23

## Australia's Kanawinka Geopark

*Not just Volcanics but also grasslands,  
lakes, caves, wetlands, homesteads,  
gardens, towns, villages, culture, heritage,  
legends, history and exploration, stone  
walls, soldier settlement and much much  
more.....*

EDUCATION, PROMOTION AND PROTECTION

Slide 24

Celebrating Planet Earth  
UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian-Pacific Region

### IN SUMMARY

The important aspects of Geoparks are the links between the geology and the people, their stories, culture and history that build into a sustainable source of geotourism, bring jobs to rural and indigenous people and in turn help protect sites of importance and promote geoheritage complementing the work of the Geological Society and Government Bodies..

Slide 25

## Australia's Kanawinka Geopark

**Celebrating Planet Earth  
UNESCO Assisted GEOPARKS in the Australasian-  
Pacific Region**

**THANK YOU  
to Dr Susan Turner  
UNESCO Advisory Group of Experts for Global Geoparks  
for support and valuable guidance.**

Joane McKnight  
Chair  
Volcanoes Discovery Trail Cross Regional Committee  
Joane\_McKnight@msn.com

Slide 26