

## **Report of a Workshop on 'Geotourism, Geoparks and Geotrails' Warrnambool, Victoria, Australia 8-10 July 2010**

A two day Workshop entitled Geotourism, Geoparks and Geotrails was held from 8 to 10 July 2010 in Warrnambool, Victoria, Australia. Thirty Delegates attended from all over Australia as well two delegates from Hong Kong, China. Delegates represented a diverse range of backgrounds from tour companies, universities, schools, artists, local residents, photographic groups, 4 wheel drive clubs and museums.

On the morning of the first day, Friday 9 July, the Hon Denis Napthine, MP, Member for the South West Coast in the Victorian Parliament and Shadow Minister for Racing, Regional Cities and Ports, opened the workshop with a stirring talk on the attributes and benefits of tourism, particularly geotourism, to the south west coast and western Victoria.

Professor Ross Dowling, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia, gave an overview of geotourism globally. Together with Joane McKnight, Director Kanawinka Global Geopark, they presented illustrated reports on two recent relevant conferences in Malaysia. These were the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference in Geoparks and 2<sup>nd</sup> Geopark Fair held in Langkawi from 9-15 April 2010, and the Second Global Geotourism Conference held in Mulu Sarawak from 17-20 April 2010.

A number of papers were then presented. Associate Professor Bernie Joyce, University of Melbourne and Mr Ian Lewis, Department of Water, South Australia, gave an overview of the 'Volcanoes and Limestone of Kanawinka Global Geopark'. The Many Australian Photographers (MAP) Group outlined a photographic project to take place across Kanawinka over the next two years culminating in a coffee table book and exhibitions.

Raymond Arnold outlined art projects in Queenstown, Tasmania and the beauty and history of the Arkaroola Wilderness Area in South Australia was presented by Marg Sprigg. Finally Mr Young Ng, China, gave an exciting overview of the establishment of the Hong Kong National Geopark.

All speakers were well received and many questions were generated.

The second day, Saturday 10 July, was devoted to a wide ranging open discussion in which many items were addressed. They included:

- Australia's National Landscapes Program
- Australia's Environment Protection and Heritage Council
- Support for the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia which is currently under the threat of resumed mining exploration
- Advocacy for Geoheritage and Geotourism

These were discussed and several decisions were made but the main discussion focused on opening dialogue with the National Landscape Program and the possibility of having Geoparks together in parallel as is the case in the UK with Areas of Natural Beauty.

Due to considerable interest in geoparks generally and the existence of Kanawinka Global Geopark specifically, wide ranging discussion took place on the Geopark movement in Australia, the Asia Pacific Region, and globally. Professor Dowling and Joane McKnight stressed that it was most important that no public or political campaign was to be generated in Australia and that reference to UNESCO should not be made whatsoever.

In general discussion a press release from *The Bulletin* of 7 May 2010 was tabled regarding development at Capricorn Caves, Rockhampton, Queensland. Here Australian federal funding has been given for a 'Dig the Tropic' geotrail situated in what is referred to as a 'GeoPark precinct'.

Professor Dowling has since contacted the caves MD Ms Ann Augusteyn for clarification and explanation of the use of the title Geopark as well as ascertaining the way that Federal funding was obtained for a Geopark precinct, given the current Australian situation.

All delegates requested a formal setting up of the **Australian Geopark Network** and a Coordination Committee was elected with a Delegate from each state, some people are still to be contacted to confirm their interest and commitment

- SA – Lorraine Edmunds, Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary
- VIC - Joane McKnight, Kanawinka
- WA – Ross Dowling, Edith Cowan University
- NSW – Monica Yeung, Gondwanaland Dreaming?
- Qld – someone from Dig the Tropic Geopark (Ann Augusteyn)?
- TAS – Travis Tiddy, Queenstown Project
- NT – Ross to follow-up
- ACT – Phil Creaser?

Professor Ross Dowling was elected Coordinator  
Joane McKnight will act as Secretariat

The name Australia Geopark Network (AGN) is to be registered in Victoria and a simple website to be set up. Funding will be sourced for the AGN and sub committees or working committees will be established to address projects and issues as required. The AGN Coordination Committee aims to meet regularly by email and teleconference and another Workshop will be held in South Australia in mid 2011.

The Workshop ended with a tour to the Tower Hill Reserve, Victoria's first National Park, and the site of a nested maar volcano formation.

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