



National Rock Garden

Celebrating the Geological Heritage of Australia

Newsletter No. 4

August 2012



www.nationalrockgarden.org.au

Preamble

Brad Pillans, Chair of the NRG Steering Committee

WE'RE LATE – This “July” newsletter is arriving in August. My apologies, but there was good reason. The project management crew have been working hard to get three things together by 1 August –

- 1) Fine tune the web site design and get it “live”.
- 2) Assembling material for a booth at the International Geological Congress
- 3) Lobbying frantically to get the National Rock Garden Trust approved by two Government Ministers, the Minister for the Environment, Tony Burke MP, and the Assistant Treasurer, David Bradbury MP.

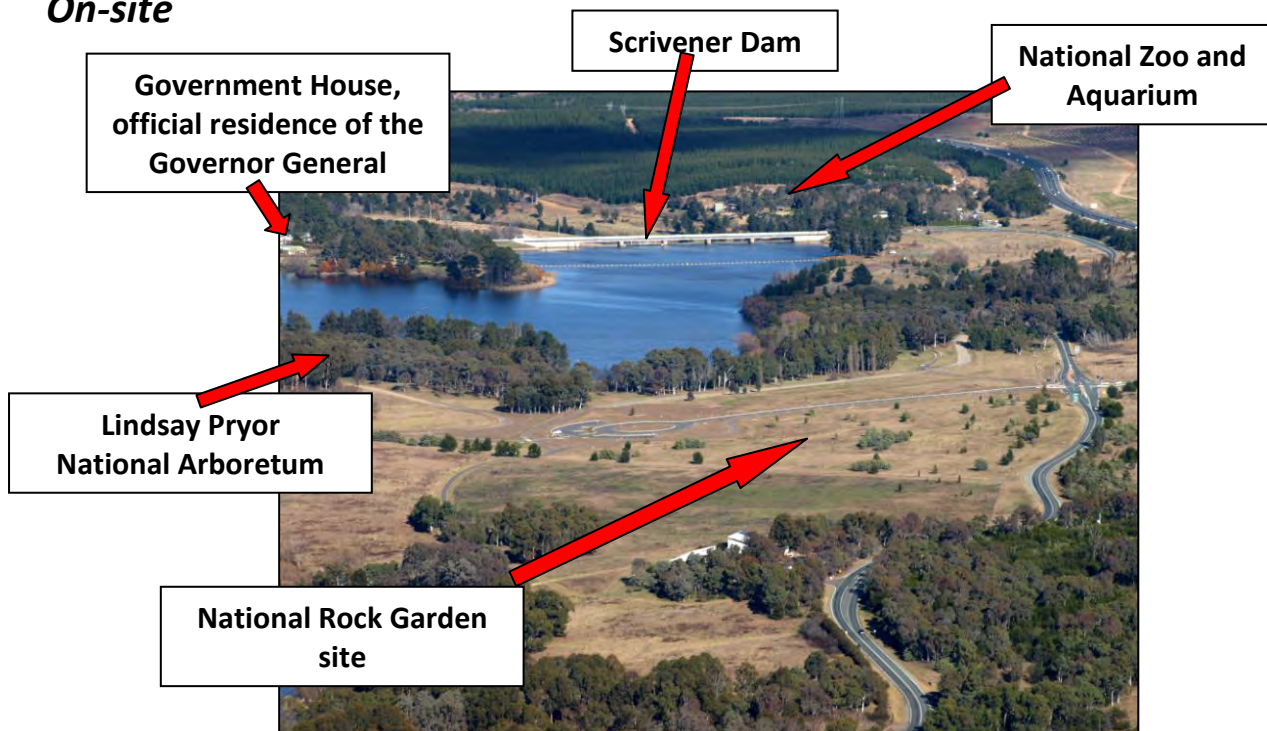
We achieved all three goals. More of that later in this Newsletter.

You will have also noticed that the Newsletter has taken on a different style to previous editions. This is because the project team has been working on new graphic designs to develop a corporate image. The new web site (see below) has been developed in stages over the last few months and a style has been adopted that I hope you like. We will be using a similar style in other project documents and flyers.

On the 6th August at the GSA annual general meeting held at the International Geological Congress, Brisbane, I completed my term as President of the Geological Society of Australia. Dr Laurie Hutton of the Queensland Division has taken over as GSA President and will also be joining the Steering Committee for the National Rock Garden.

Having stepped down as GSA President I expect to have more time to devote to National Rock Garden activities. However, during a visit to South Australia last month, I did manage to investigate a number of potential rocks for the NRG, including limestone from the famous Coonawarra wine growing area, the even more famous Ediacaran fossils near the Flinders Ranges and rock from the Andamooka opal field.

On-site



The National Rock Garden site viewed from Black Mountain Tower

National Rock Garden – Newsletter No. 4

At the National Rock Garden site things have been fairly quiet over the last six months. In the coming months we will be working to crystallise some design elements for the area. We have already had some preliminary discussions with the National Capital Authority (NCA) on aspects of design work but actual site construction work is some distance away. The NCA has to approve a design once it is prepared.

We did apply for an Environmental Grant from the ACT Government for screen tree planting but were not successful this year. We'll try again in the next round of applications.

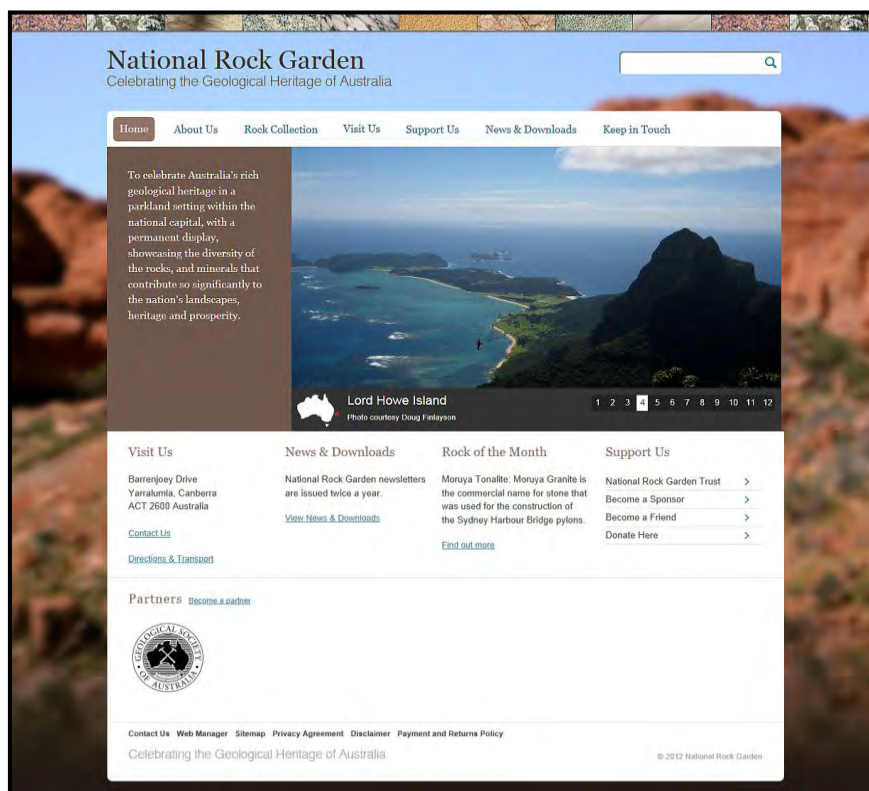
National Rock Garden web site

Doug Finlayson

After about twelve months of development by the project team both in Canberra and Sydney, there is now a “live” web site www.nationalrockgarden.org.au that you can look at for information and news. Doug freely admits to using ideas on the website of the National Gallery of Australia in his first draft of this new web site. The site was constructed by Rawideas in Sydney. Staff in the Sydney office have been brought up to speed on software to manage site content in-house.

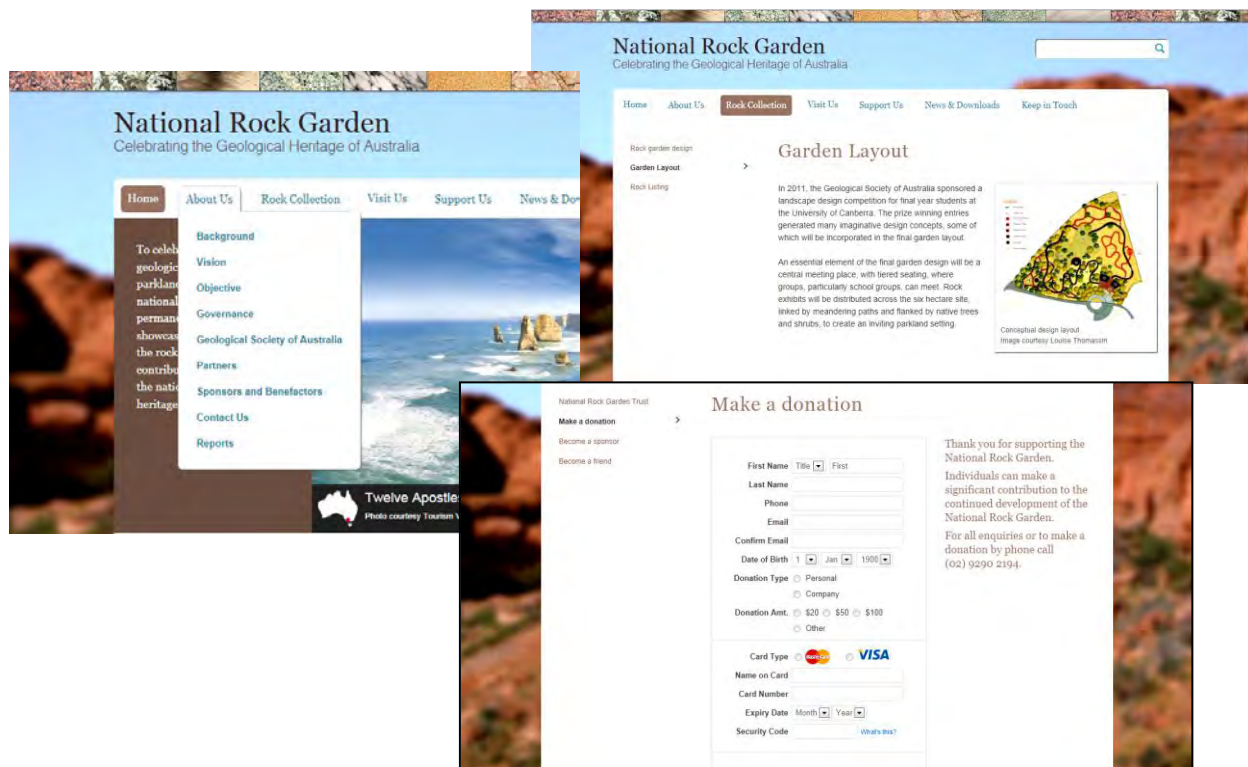
Try it out. Let's have some feedback and critical comment using the “contact us” box. I personally like clear rather than fuzzy background images. I'm sure others have their opinions about other aspects of the site. Also on the web site you can, if you wish, now make a tax deductible donation to the National Rock Garden Trust directly from the web site. Although the site has been tested before going “live”, tell us if something doesn't work or is not clear.

This is the first stage of the web site. It will grow as new content comes to hand. The project has ambitions to make the site a useful educational tool for students and a pleasant tool for the general public to find out more of the interesting and fascinating geological landscapes around Australia.



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National Rock Garden – Newsletter No. 4



National Rock Garden Trust

Doug Finlayson

It's been a long and tortuous road to get the National Rock Garden Trust up and running starting in August 2010 when the GSA legal advisors, Babingtons Law Pty Ltd., were initially asked to undertake the job. Their advice was that the Geological Society of Australia should establish a trust, the National Rock Garden Trust, and apply for it to be placed on the Register of Environmental Organisations with the Australian Department of the Environment.

The Trust was registered in August 2011 within the State of NSW after the Minister for Regional Australia, Simon Crean MP, had approved the gazettal of the National Rock Garden site at the western end of Lake Burley Griffin, a site negotiated with the National Capital Authority (NCA).

The application for the National Rock Garden Trust to be placed on the Register of Environmental Organisations was submitted from Babingtons Law Pty Ltd on 15 August 2011.

Feeling anxious about the lack of any reply from the Department of the Environment by the end of 2011, Doug Finlayson applied for feedback via the Freedom of Information Act on 17 January 2012. This led to the opening of discussions with the office of the Register of Environmental Organisations on 20 January 2012. However, the officers concerned indicated that there was a review of many applications and that a reply could not be expected before the end of February. Thus no panic yet.

However, the end of February came and went. Numerous enquiries were made with the Department. Eventually the application took nearly seven months to wind its way through the various offices within the Department of the Environment and on 9 March 2012 the GSA received a letter indicating that the application had been rejected with the comment *"...documents of the National Rock Garden Trust do not clearly demonstrate that the Trust satisfies the principal purpose test."*

National Rock Garden – Newsletter No. 4



After numerous phone calls and emails with Departmental staff, the problem sentence in the application was identified as being in Section 2.1 of the application. Two alternative wordings were submitted on 21 March 2012, by Doug Finlayson. One of these alternatives was thought likely to pass the principal purpose test when the application was re-submitted to the Department of the Environment on 22 March 2011.

After a favourable reply, the deed establishing the National Rock Garden Trust was amended on 23 April 2012 by the GSA lawyers and lodged again with the NSW State authorities and then the full application was re-submitted to the Department of the Environment

with a note emphasizing the desirability of the whole approval process being completed before the International Geological Congress in August 2012.

Feeling nervous about the Trust being approved before the International Geological Congress in August 2012, contact was regularly maintained with the office of the Register of Environmental Organisations within the Department. However, as with all administrations the officers concerned were not allowed to say anything about the “state of play”.

Various GSA members then sought help from their local Federal Parliamentary Members, Minister for Sport Senator Kate Lundy, Canberra, and Parliamentary Secretary Dr. Mike Kelly MP, Eden – Monaro, in June-July 2012, a few weeks before the International Geological Congress in Brisbane. Both Senator Kelly and Dr Kelly made representations on behalf of the GSA.

Phone calls directly to the Minister for the Environment’s office (Tony Burke MP), indicated that the approval did not just require his approval but also that of Assistant Treasurer David Bradbury who manages Treasury matters. The documents eventually left the Minister for the Environment at the end of June to be approved by Treasury officers. After further emails to the Assistant Treasurer emphasizing the imminent International Geological Congress (IGC) at which the project would be showcased to 6000 national and international delegates, an email was received on the last working day before the IGC (Friday 3 August at 6.14 pm) that approval had been given for the National Rock Garden Trust to be placed on the Register of Environmental Organisations. After two years this was great news for the National Rock Garden

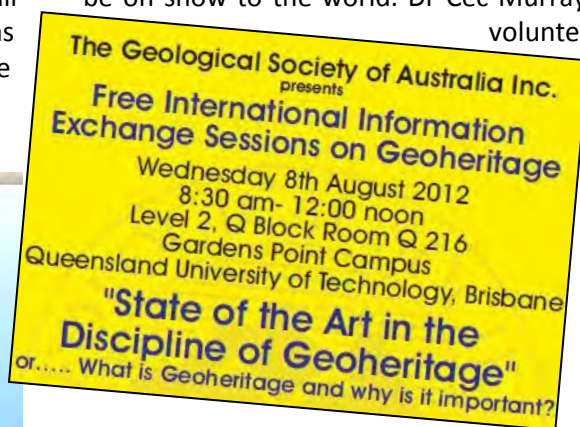
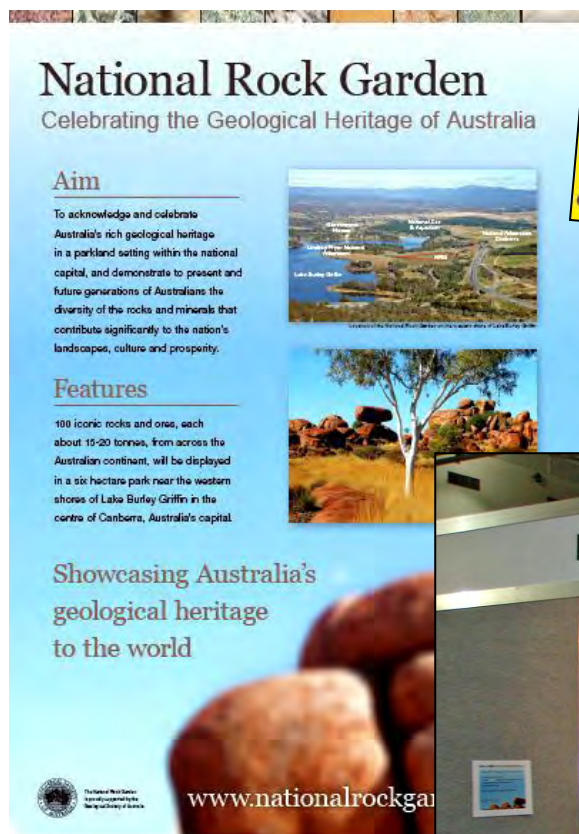
The approval means that donations to the National Rock Garden Trust are now tax deductible (see the web site www.nationalrockgarden.org.au), perfect timing for our booth in the exhibition hall at the International Geological Congress in Brisbane.

34th International Geological Congress, Brisbane

The biggest earth science event on the international stage is undoubtedly the International Geological Congress that is held every four years in various countries around the world. The 34th Congress is being held in Brisbane during August this year and there are about 6000 delegates expected from all corners of the globe and from across Australia. They will be discussing every conceivable earth science topic. One of the members of the National Rock Garden Steering Committee, Dr. Neil Williams, is the Chairman of the Organising Committee of this world event.



Geological heritage is one of the many topics that will be discussed in Brisbane. Associated with the Congress will be numerous field excursions to showcase to an international audience the Australian sites that feature on the world stage. The National Rock Garden will have a booth at the Brisbane Conference and Exhibition Centre at which the concept will be on show to the world. Dr Cec Murray, formerly volunteered to be "on duty" at the booth for the five days of the Congress.



Rock Specimens

John Bain and Doug Finlayson

There are now working groups in all the States and Territories that have undertaken to examine the merits of rock specimens from around Australia. We know that every State and Territory has its favourite granite but it would not be sensible to include them all in the mix of 100 rocks from around Australia. Thus some robust debate is anticipated.

Other difficult decisions might have to be made about how to display fossils in a public space without the unsociable and destructive people in this world trying to vandalise or steal them. Let's hope we can eventually construct a secure display space because there are some fabulous suggestions from around the continent. Perhaps some imaginative use of secure underground display space/tank with transparent walkover paths may be the way to go.

One fossil specimen promised to the National Rock Garden from the **Age of Fishes Museum**, Canowindra (central NSW) is shown below. This rock specimen (Slab 4) is predominantly a hard sandstone unit with embedded Devonian fossils with an age of about 360 million years.



Bothriolepis yeungae
360-370 Ma

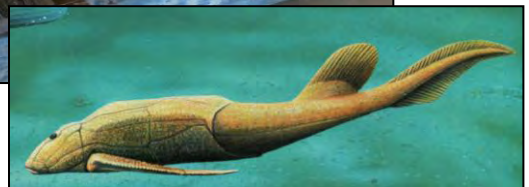


Figure from Age of Fishes Museum

The **Canowindra fish fossils** are found within the Mandagery Formation of the Hervey Group Late Devonian rock sequences. It is described as being predominantly white sandstone, interbedded with minor red and green shale and siltstone. The faunal assemblage establishes a Famennian (Late Devonian, 374.5 – 359.2 Ma) age for the Mandagery Formation. The first tetrapods appeared during the

National Rock Garden – Newsletter No. 4

Famennian geological period sub-division. The Mandagery Formation yielded the prolific fish fauna from a site 10 km southwest of Canowindra in central NSW north of Cowra. The site was discovered accidentally by road workmen widening a country road near Canowindra.



For a description of the discovery and excavation of the Devonian fish fossils see:

Australian Geographic No. 43, July-Sept, 1996, pages 100-115.

While we are on the topic of fossiliferous rocks, just have a look at the spectacular specimen of ***Chinaman Creek Limestone*** from North Queensland shown below.



Photo - Rob Cameron of NQ Marble Pty Ltd

The Devonian **Chinaman Creek Limestone** is a major component of the Broken River Group that formed a broad shelfal succession in the northern part of the Graveyard Creek Subprovince, southwest of Greenvale in north Queensland. The formation is up to 790 m thick and consists largely of clastic limestone intervals up to 250 m thick.

National Rock Garden – Newsletter No. 4

The Megalodont bivalves (superfamily: *Megalodontoidea*) are an unusual and very distinctive fossil of the middle Palaeozoic to early Mesozoic geological periods. Many species are large, thick shelled, and have great preservation potential. Megalodont bivalves are predominant in the spectacular slab of limestone shown in the photos.

Photo - Rob Cameron of NQ Marble Pty Ltd



Partners, sponsors and patrons

Now that the National Rock Garden Trust has been established the focus for the project management team must be on funding the construction. GSA knows that it cannot do this on its own. It must establish partnerships with other professional associations and institutions to take forward the funding targets necessary to construct the National Rock Garden.

The project must also prepare a business plan to take to potential sponsors and patrons of the National Rock Garden. There can be little or no construction until the National Rock Garden Trust has significant funds to meet expected design and construction costs.

Web site – www.nationalrockgarden.org.au



National Rock Garden

Celebrating the Geological Heritage of Australia

To recognise, acknowledge and celebrate Australia's rich geological heritage in a parkland setting within the nation's capital, and demonstrate to present and future generations of Australians the diversity of the rocks and minerals that contribute so significantly to the nation's landscapes, heritage and prosperity.

www.nationalrockgarden.org.au

Friends of the National Rock Garden

Anyone is welcome to join the support group, whether or not they are an earth scientist. Clubs and institutions may also wish to join us. GSA encourages input and support from the public at large, academia, commerce, and the education, tourism and resource industries. See the news and information boxes on the National Rock Garden web site – www.nationalrockgarden.org.au

Feedback and further information

The Geological Society welcomes feedback and suggestions on the development of the National Rock Garden. See the feedback boxes on the National Rock Garden web site – www.nationalrockgarden.org.au

Newsletter – compiled and edited by:

Doug Finlayson

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The newsletter will be circulated twice a year, Dec/Jan and June/Jul. New “friends” are welcome and can be added to the email circulation list by contacting the editor. You don’t have to be an earth scientist. Members of the public, students and educators with an interest in the evolution of the Australian continent are all welcome.

Newsletters are also posted on the National Rock Garden web site –

www.nationalrockgarden.org.au