National Rock Garden

Celebrating the Geological Heritage of Australia

Newsletter No. 24

December 2022

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How you can help the NRG



The National Rock Garden is proudly supported by the Geological Society of Australia and the Australian National University and the Minerals Council of Australia



Australian National University



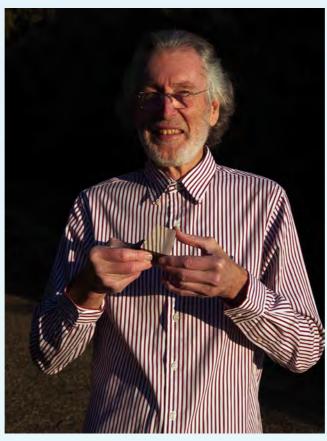
The end of another productive year for the NRG Committee

Brad Pillans, Director, National Rock Garden

A wet winter and spring dampened enthusiasm to push ahead with moving any rocks to our new site within the National Arboretum in 2022. In addition, we still await final approval from the National Capital Authority, based on a Works Application that requires submission of engineering drawings for our landscape design. With our Works Application about to be finalised, we hope for NCA approval early in the New Year, with the aim of proceeding to construction and opening our new display later in the year.

In the meantime, we are pleased to be able to give you an exclusive look at our concept design (later in this newsletter); the design will be added to the fabulous new NRG website (check it out!) in the New Year. The concept design, by Harris Hobbs Landscapes, features a series of themed rock clusters, connected by wheelchair-accessible paths and will be integrated with a complementary planting of Weeping Wilga trees (*Geijera parviflora*) in an Indigenous-inspired pattern (not shown). A proposed shelter, on a high point, adjacent to Cluster B, will be subject to a future Works Application.

Also in this newsletter, we have a great story about a recent rock acquisition—Eugowra Granite—as well as reports on recent grant successes, Indigenous liaison and another planned rock acquisition.



Brad Pillans holding a camouflaged hand-specimen of zebra rock, almost invisible against his red-striped 'zebra rock' shirt. Image courtesy Geoff Pillans.

In Newsletter 23, I described my quest for a zebra rock shirt and I'm pleased to announce that I found one! Once again, it was my ANU Emeritus Faculty colleague and friend, Verna Rosling, who put me on the scent. Having exhausted the possibilities in SABA and Sportscraft stores in Canberra, Verna spied one in another nearby store, Polo Ralph Laurent, and immediately alerted me to the fact. I wasted no time, and headed to PRL, where to my surprise they had one in a perfect size for me. The shirt was 'on sale' for \$139, reduced from \$199 but, despite the price, I bought it. Although I have never paid so much for a shirt in my life, the match to zebra rock is uncanny, as the photo shows.



As reported in Newsletter 23, there is a strong French connection to rocks on the western and southern coasts of Australia, as a result of research undertaken by mineralogists on the 1801–1803 Baudin expedition. Following that article, I am pleased to report that two large blocks of Tamala Limestone have been 'rescued' from a new coastal development site (Ocean Reef Marina) in north Perth, and are now safely stored at the Geological Survey of Western Australia. Coastal exposures of Tamala Limestone were closely studied by the Baudin scientists, including on Rottnest Island and at Shark Bay (Mayer 2008).

Tamala Limestone is a 'soft' limestone composed of calcareous aeolian and beach sands of Pleistocene age, often showing large-scale cross-bedding. My thanks to Don Poynton, Bert De Waele and the WA rock selection team. The assistance of DevelopmentWA, the land development agency of the Western Australian Government, is also gratefully acknowledged. They have an article on their Ocean Reef Marina Facebook page about the NRG rocks.

Two large blocks of Tamala Limestone, destined for the NRG. One of the blocks shows characteristic cross-bedding (left), the other is a spectacular solution tube (right). Images courtesy Don Poynton.





A large block of Tamala Limestone showing characteristic cross-bedding. Image courtesy Don Poynton.

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National Rock Garden on track for move

Ken McQueen, NRG Steering Committee

The much anticipated move of the National Rock Garden to its new site at the National Arboretum Canberra is now well on track for the coming year, following endorsement of the proposed landscape design by the ACT Government. The next step is submission of a works approval application, to the National Capital Authority, based on the engineering drawings of the landscape architects. Concurrently the Steering Committee is seeking quotes from construction companies to undertake the site works. If all goes well (and the site can dry out from all the rain!) we plan to have the first rock clusters installed in the second half of 2023.

To ensure sufficient funds to cover construction costs the NRG is encouraging friends and supporters to consider making a donation to support the project. The Steering Committee is also seeking support through grant applications to the ACT and Federal governments and has recently been successful in winning two ACT Government grants totalling \$25K to design and construct the Indigenous Welcome feature for the NRG. This feature, to be designed in collaboration with the local Ngunnawal Traditional Custodians of the site, is likely to form the second cluster to be installed at the NRG after the existing Federation Rocks Cluster.

Also, over the past twelve months, the various state and territory Rock Selection committees have been busy selecting appropriate rocks and acquiring a number of these to add to the existing collection. Some of these have recently been transported to the ACT in readiness for transfer to the new NRG site as construction begins.



Concept design, by Harris Hobbs Landscapes, for the proposed NRG display within the National Arboretum Canberra. The garden, featuring a series of themed rock clusters linked by wheel-chair accessible paths, will be integrated with a complementary planting of Weeping Wilga trees (Geijera parviflora) in an Indigenous-inspired pattern (not shown).



New rock for the National Rock Garden represents our iconic new Parliament House in Canberra

Mike Smith, NRG Steering Committee

The NSW Rock Selection Steering Committee was introduced to the enthusiastic folk of the Eugowra Events & Tourism Association in mid-2021 by Sydney-based economic geologist, Russell Meares OAM. In February 2022, the NRG Steering Committee accepted the offer of an 8.8 tonne block of Eugowra Granite donated by Central West Granite Pty Ltd and agreed to assist the local Events and Tourism Committee with the preparation of a grant application for the associated costs. This rock is significant because it is the most substantially used Australian rock in the new Australian Parliament House. The rock has the commercial name of 'Carmina Grey' and its use is detailed by Wolf Mayer in his book Images in Stone: a guide to the building stones of Parliament House.

In November 2022, the NRG was donated the sum of \$5,000 by well-known GSA members Dr Jane Barron and Dr Larry Barron to cover the costs of uplift, transportation, placement and preparation of the specimen for display. The Steering Committee is most grateful for this support which allowed the transportation of this big rock to the ACT in December 2022.

Construction of the new parliament building began in 1981 and was completed in 1988. The principal design of the structure is based on the shape of two boomerangs and most people remember the grass roof topped by an 81-metre (266 ft.) flagpole. For geoscientists, the two boomerang shaped walls are very memorable as they are both 460 m long, 27 m max height, 3 m max width and covered by Carmina Grey rock slabs from the town of Eugowra NSW.



These major, curved structural walls are built with Eugowra Granite 'Carmina Grey'.

Image courtesy Brad Pillans.



The selection of this rock for the new parliament building is interesting. It eventuated when Italian-born Romaldo Giurgola, the Principal Architect of the Parliament House project, visited the property of renowned Australian architect John Andrews at Eugowra. Romaldo cut his leg on a flat polished piece of the granite at the farm. He liked the rock, visited the Eugowra Granite Mill and, as the hills around Eugowra abound with this granite, he was quoted as saying 'this is just what we want for Parliament House.' His vision was that our new Parliament House should have a connection with the natural environment and so used natural stone to achieve this.

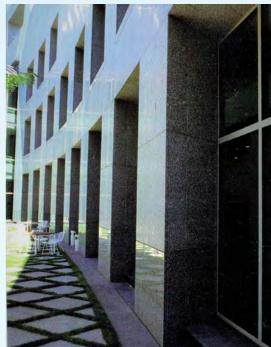
A total of 35 different types of rocks were used in Parliament House, coming from countries as distant as Italy, Brazil, Guatemala, India, China, Portugal, Greece and Norway (Mayer 2009). Many of these are located in the spectacular entry hall of the building. However, by far the largest quantity of any one rock is Eugowra's Carmina Grey (Mayer 2022, pers. comm.) with a total of more than 24,000 cut slabs of this rock.



A low wall of Carmina Grey granite wraps around a courtyard on the Senate side of Parliament House. Image from Mayer 2009.



View of one of the Carmina Grey walls as seen by the public from the windows on the 2nd floor of Parliament House. Image courtesy Mike Smith.



One of the curved walls showing the high polish on the Carmina Grey reflecting the nearby garden and pathways. Image from Mayer 2009.

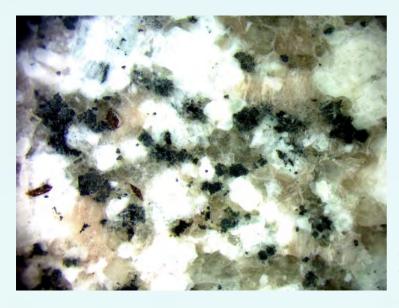




Photo of the Eugowra Granite Mural showing quarry operations and the new Parliament House, taken prior to the devastating flood in November 2022. Image courtesy Mike Smith.

Eugowra is located 39 km east of Forbes, in the Shire of Cabonne which has been the source of granite and marble construction materials for a long time.

The Eugowra Granite will clearly illustrate to visitors to the National Rock Garden the composition of a granite rock. It consists essentially of three minerals—black biotite, translucent quartz and white feldspar—as seen in this close-up of a polished slab from Geoscience Australia.



Close-up of a polished slab of Eugowra Granite showing the three main minerals: biotite (black), quartz (translucent to brownish) and feldspar (white). Image courtesy Geoscience Australia.



The Eugowra Granite is a roughly equant intrusive body, about 19 km across, which intrudes folded sedimentary rocks of the Late Silurian Moura Formation, as well as the Early Silurian Glenisla Volcanics. Geochronologist Lance Black, formerly of Geoscience Australia, has reported that the age of the Eugowra Granite is 394 million years. This places the magma intrusion in the Early Devonian time period.



Stonemason Ben Greenhalgh stands beside the specimen he donated to the National Rock Garden.

Image courtesy Russell Meares.



Uplift of the Carmina Grey block onto a flatbed truck in Eugowra. Image courtesy Shelley Norrie.

There are many beneficial aspects of this specimen including the following:

- 1. the Carmina Grey rock links our rock garden favourably to Parliament House
- 2. the simple story of formation is easily understood by younger school students
- 3. this rock has a very attractive polished appearance
- 4. the display provides recognition of a small country community
- 5. the large specimen, as well as \$5,000 in cash funding, has been donated to NRG
- 6. it has an interesting link to the Escort Rock bushranger story at Eugowra.

The final placement of the Carmina Grey block has yet to be decided but it will most likely be placed in Cluster E (Construction Resources) or Cluster G (Geoscience Knowledge).





Placement of the large block from Eugowra in the NRG's temporary storage site in the Steering Committee's approved storage site in Canberra. Image courtesy Mike Smith.

Mrs Shelley Norrie, Secretary of the Eugowra Events & Tourism Association attended the delivery of the granite block. She explained that Eugowra was devastated on the morning of 14 November 2022 by a flash flood that has been variously described as a 'wall of water' and 'inland tsunami'.

The NRG Steering Committee offers its deep condolences to the community of Eugowra for the loss of two lives and the destruction of numerous businesses and homes in the town. The town's famous murals were also ruined, including the one shown above. We believe Eugowra will recover, and we encourage all of our readers to visit the town once the community has substantially recovered.

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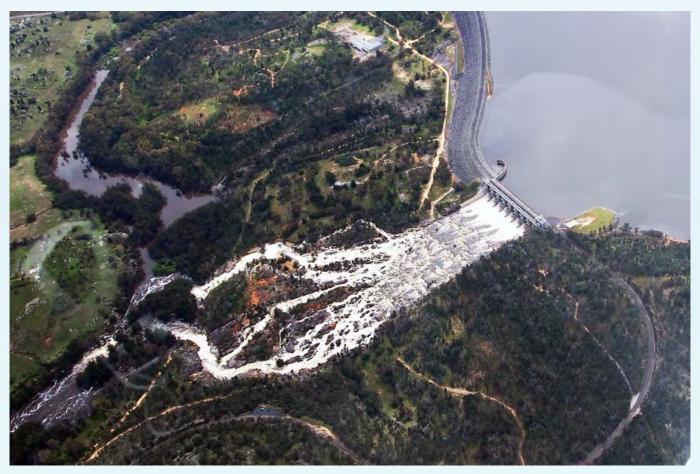
If you have an idea for a newsletter story, or there is a rock that you would like to see featured in a future NRG newsletter, please let us know via <a href="mailto:emailto:



Eugowra from the air and the story of Escort Rock

Brad Pillans, Director, National Rock Garden

On 16 October, my son, Geoff, and I flew from Canberra to Parkes (and back) to visit the Parkes Aviation Museum. Geoff is a pilot and we hired a small plane for the day, which has the advantage that you can choose your own flight path and altitude. October was wet and I was interested to see the landscape from the air. We flew over Lake George—plenty of water there—then headed northwest towards Parkes, flying over Wyangala Dam (overflowing), Eugowra (not yet flooded) and Forbes (already inundated by the Lachlan River). After lunch at the Aviation Museum, we flew to Cootamundra, then home via Burrinjuck Dam (also overflowing).



Wyangala Dam overflowing, 16 October 2022. Image courtesy Brad Pillans.

Knowing that we had a rock coming from Eugowra, I asked Geoff to do a couple of passes over the town and captured the image below, which shows the location of the granite quarry, about 3 km south of the town, and north of the flooded Lachlan River.

Escort Rock, 4 km north of Eugowra, was the site of Australia's most famous gold robbery. About 5pm, on Sunday 15 June 1862, a Cobb & Co coach from Forbes, carrying a driver, a police escort of four and a large amount of gold, cash and other mail, was attacked at what is now known as Escort Rock.



Frank Gardiner's gang of bushrangers—Ben Hall and Johnny Gilbert among them—lay in wait behind large granite boulders (Eugowra Granite, of course) after they had blocked the road with commandeered bullock wagons. This forced the coach to slow and, as it passed, the gang opened fire, wounding two of the police officers. The frightened horses bolted and the coach overturned. The bushrangers then ransacked the coach and made off with 2,719 ounces of gold and £3,700 in cash, packed on one of the coach horses. That much gold, some of which was never recovered, would be worth nearly \$7 million at today's gold prices! You can read the story of the Eugowra Rocks robbery and see a picture of Escort Rock on the A guide to Australian bushranging website.

A long-time friend of mine, Peter Browning, recently told me a family story about Escort Rock: His sister, Helen, who lives nearby, took her grand-daughter to see the location of the robbery, where there are now facilities, etc. After hearing the story, the grand-daughter declared that it was so lovely for the locals to have installed swings for the bushrangers to play on whilst waiting for the coach!



View over Eugowra, looking east, 16 October 2022. To the south, the Lachlan River was in flood and Forbes was inundated. One month later, on 14 November, Eugowra was devastated by flash flooding on a tributary of the Lachlan, Mandagery Creek, which flows south through the town.

Image courtesy Brad Pillans.

What happened to Frank Gardiner?

According to the Australian Dictionary of Biography, after the gold robbery, Frank Gardiner remained at large until February 1864, when he was arrested in Queensland where he had been living with his mistress, Kate Brown. He was given a cumulative sentence of thirty-two years' hard labour. In 1874, following petitions to the NSW Governor, Gardiner was released from jail, subject to his exile from Australia. This decision provoked a public controversy with petitions, counter-petitions and violent debates in the NSW Legislative Assembly and led to the fall of the NSW government.

On 27 July 1874, Gardiner embarked for Hong Kong and by February 1875 was in San Francisco where he ran the Twilight Saloon. The press continued to note his activities, including his death in Colorado about 1903, but most reports were unsubstantiated.

Source: https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gardiner-francis-frank-3589

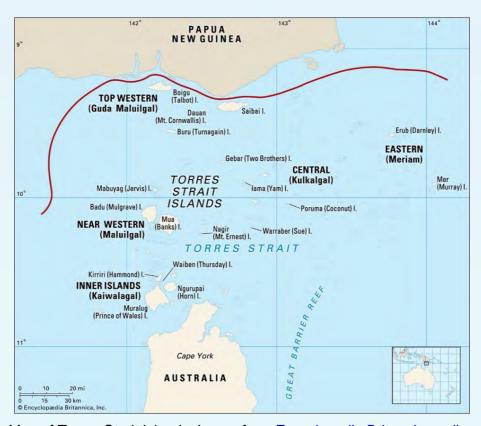


Deep-time and not so deep-time Indigenous stories of coastal inundation

Brad Pillans, Director, National Rock Garden

Some time ago, NRG Advisory Council member, Professor Tom Calma, suggested that we obtain a rock from the Torres Strait Islands (also known as Zenadth Kes), to celebrate the land bridge that once connected Australia and New Guinea and across which some of the first Australians would have walked. [The strait is named after the Spanish navigator, Luis Vaz de Torres, who was the first recorded European navigator to sail through, in 1606.]

While the exact route that the first Australians took to reach Australia from Southeast Asia is debated, it certainly involved voyaging by boat, for at least part of the journey. Even at the height of the last glaciation, around 20,000 years ago, when sea level was more than 120 metres lower than present, there was not a continuous land bridge from Asia to Australia. Yes, Australia and New Guinea were joined, but many of the Indonesian islands remained as islands separated by deep water with strong ocean currents. By comparison, Torres Strait is very shallow and would become dry land if sea level was only some 10 m lower than present, which means that it was one of the last parts of Australia's continental shelf to be flooded after post-glacial sea-level rise reached its present level around 7,000 years ago.



Map of Torres Strait Islands. Image from Encyclopedia Britannica online.

As documented by Nunn & Reid (2016), there are stories belonging to Aboriginal groups from all around the Australian coast, of a time when the former coastline of mainland Australia was inundated by rising sea level. According to Nunn and Reid, it is entirely plausible to conclude that these stories refer to events that occurred more than 7,000 years ago. Such stories imply an extraordinary longevity of Aboriginal oral traditions (more than 300 generations), which can be celebrated in the National Rock Garden.



Rising sea-levels, associated with anthropogenic global warming, are now impacting low-lying islands in Torres Strait and many other Pacific islands. In November, two Traditional Custodians, Uncle Pabai Pabai and Uncle Paul Kabai, from the islands of Boigu and Saibai, respectively, travelled to Egypt to attend the COP27 meeting, with a simple message to world leaders—reduce greenhouse gas emissions or we will lose our islands and become Australia's first climate change refugees (Canberra Times, 25 Nov 2022). Low-lying islands, such as Boigu and Saibai, are being flooded during storms and king tides, damaging homes and inundating gardens with saltwater. As a result, traditional food crops such as taro are being destroyed. Freshwater swamps are also being inundated, resulting in loss of habitat for barramundi and mud crabs, while seagrass breeding grounds for dugong and turtle are being covered in sand.

In pre-European times, Torres Strait was envisaged to be a boundary between horticulturalists in New Guinea and hunter-gatherers in Australia, but that dichotomy is increasingly challenged (e.g., Pascoe 2018). Recent work by Robert Williams has documented terraced gardens for banana cultivation on Mabuyag Island around 1300 years ago, so there is clearly a long history of horticulture in Torres Strait, with likely diffusion of cultivation practices and cultivars from New Guinea (Williams et al 2020). Robert was a member of the NRG Steering Committee, several years ago, and is a Ngambri-Ngunnawal Traditional Custodian from the Canberra area.

How very appropriate it would be for the NRG to display a rock from Torres Strait, to celebrate Torres Strait islander culture and heritage.



Uncle Pabai Pabai and Uncle Paul Kabai at COP27. Image courtesy Bianka Csenki/Canberra Times.

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Tom Calma AO FAA announced as ACT Senior Australian of the Year

Brad Pillans, Director, National Rock Garden

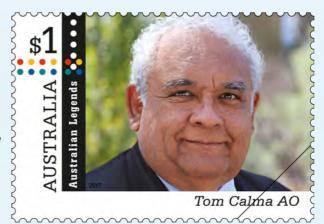
Professor Tom Calma AO FAA is a member of our NRG Advisory Council. He is an Aboriginal Elder from the Kungarakan tribal group and a member of the Iwaidja tribal group whose traditional lands are south west of Darwin and on the Cobourg Peninsula in the Northern Territory.

Professor Calma is a passionate supporter of the National Rock Garden, but he also has many other commitments, notably as Chancellor of the University of Canberra (since 2014), and co-chair of the Senior Advisory Group of the *Indigenous Voice to Government*, along with Professor Marcia Langton AM (since 2019). In 2012, he was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for distinguished service to the Indigenous community and in 2013 he was named ACT Australian of the Year. Earlier this year, Professor Calma was elected as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science, in recognition of his championing the improvement of Indigenous Australian's health, education and justice for more than 45 years. He is the first Indigenous person to be elected to the academy.

Most recently, Tom was announced as ACT Senior Australian of the Year for 2023.

Congratulations, Tom, on another well-deserved award.

Right: Tom Calma was one of three Indigenous Australians, along with Lowitja O'Donoghue and Galarrwuy Yunupingu, honoured by Australia Post in the 2017 Legends Commemorative Stamp 'Indigenous leaders' series to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1967 referendum. Image courtesy Australia Post.





Left to right: Professor Tom Calma AO FAA, Dr Shamaruh Mirza (ACT Local Hero of the Yea<mark>r) and Kofi</mark> Owusu-Ansah (ACT Young Australian of the Year). Image courtesy ACT Government/Salty Dingo.



NRG successful with two ACT Government grants for an Indigenous Welcome Feature

Brad Pillans, Director, and Marita Bradshaw, National Rock Garden Steering Committee

The Ngunnawal people are recognised by the ACT Government as the Traditional Custodians of the land in and around Canberra, including the new location of the National Rock Garden within the National Arboretum (see: https://www.act.gov.au/ngunnawal-country). Accordingly, the NRG Steering Committee has been engaging with several local Elders regarding procedures and ceremonies which may be appropriate for the introduction of rock specimens onto their land.

A specific collaboration has been the development of a design for an Indigenous Welcome Feature at the entrance to the Rock Garden. Together with the Indigenous Elders, we were successful in applying for an ACT Government Environment grant to fund the design of the Welcome Feature, including transport and placement of rocks that will be part of the display.

In further collaboration with Elders, we were also successful in applying for an ACT Heritage grant to provide signage and online content to complement the entrance Welcome Feature. An important part of the online content will be delivered via the Canberra Tracks App, which uses augmented reality technology to enhance visitor experience beyond what is available from standard signs on Canberra self-drive heritage trails.

The total amount of the two ACT Government grants is \$25,000. The cooperative strategy between our Steering Committee and the Traditional Custodians of the land is an exciting achievement for the NRG project.



Brad Pillans with Rebecca Vassarotti MLA, at the ACT Heritage awards ceremony in All Saints Church.
Image courtesy ACT Government.

The awards ceremony to announce successful ACT Heritage grants was held in the historic All Saints Anglican church, which started life as a Gothic Revival style railway station at Rookwood Cemetery in Sydney, before it was moved to Canberra in the 1950s. Rebecca Vassarotti MLA, the ACT Minister for Heritage, presented the awards, after which we had the opportunity to speak with her and her very helpful staffer, Jak O'Brien. In the following weeks, Jak was able to put us in touch with Brian Bathgate, Assistant Director of Land Management in the Transport Canberra & City Services Directorate of ACT Government, who provided us with details of the procedure for seeking permission to acquire rocks from a roadside verge.

We have our eye on some large rounded boulders (tors) that might be suitable for inclusion in the Ngunnawal Welcome Feature.

These recent events are encouraging as they demonstrate increased awareness of the goals of our project amongst ACT politicians and government departments.





WE NEED YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Although work by committee members and friends of the National Rock Garden is voluntary, we nevertheless incur the regular costs of an incorporated entity. We therefore seek donations from individuals who recognise the importance of geoscience and geoscience education to the future of Australia.

The signing of the contract with the ACT Government for the re-location of the National Rock Garden into the very prominent Forest 13 block at the National Arboretum Canberra provides security of tenure for the Rock Garden and enables us to move more rocks into the ACT. We will incur substantial costs, including for transport and delivery of rock specimens, preparation of specimens for display, creation of descriptive plaques for the rocks, and maintenance of the NRG site. We will be encouraging corporate contributions for the transportation of larger rocks from interstate. Our immediate task is completing the landscape design process, including submission of a Works Application for approval by the National Capital Authority.

Please make a tax deductible donation:

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Email: <u>brad.pillans@anu.edu.au</u>

Cheques can also be made out to the National Rock Garden Trust and sent to the address above.



Feedback and further information

We welcome feedback and suggestions on the development of the National Rock Garden and would love to hear from you! Email us at: brad.pillans@anu.edu.au or michelle.cooper@ga.gov.au.

Tax deductible

The National Rock Garden is a registered charity and all donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Making a donation to the National Rock Garden is a great way to reduce your tax and feel good too! To donate, please complete the form on the previous page or visit https://www.nationalrockgarden.com.au/support/.

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Newsletter compiled and edited by Michelle Cooper.

