

National Rock Garden – Newsletter No. 1

**National
Rock
Garden**

*Celebrating the Geological
Heritage of Australia*

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January 2011

Geological Society of Australia



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Welcome to the Newsletter No.1 of the Geological Society of Australia (GSA) project to build a National Rock Garden on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in the centre of the nation's capital, Canberra.

You may be wondering how you managed to be included in the GSA's email distribution list. Well – it all started at the 2010 Australian Earth Science Convention where the GSA launched its project to create an Australian Geological Heritage Garden and you must have expressed some support for the project either at the convention or subsequently as a result of publicity through the press media and/or at GSA meetings and consultations.

The project has moved forward and, after some discussion and consultation, a name change was suggested that better reflected the national character of the project and its location in the nation's capital alongside many other national institutions. Hence the new name – we hope you like it.

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Celebrating the Geological Heritage of Australia

This name now has to be approved by the Federal Minister and gazetted, like all commemorative works in the national capital.

One thing led to another and the suggestion was made that GSA create a community of supporters for the project and call the group –

Friends of the National Rock Garden

If you do not wish to be included in this support group and receive further Newsletters by email, please send a request to -

rockgarden@gsa.org.au

Anyone is welcome to join the support group, whether or not they are an earth scientist. GSA encourages input and support from public at large, academia, commerce, and the educational, tourist and resource industries.



From the GSA President, Brad Pillans

The National Rock Garden is the single largest project undertaken by the Geological Society of Australia during its 50 year history. What better way to celebrate the geological heritage of Australia, than by establishing a national rock garden in Canberra, to join other “nationals” such as the National Museum, National Library, National Botanic Gardens, National Gallery, National Zoo & Aquarium etc.

Imagine being able to see the iconic rocks that built our nation, all in one location, on a 6 hectare, landscaped site, with large rock specimens (up to 20 tonnes) set among native trees, along meandering pathways. Informative signs will provide information on the rocks and their historical significance, backed up by on-line resources available through the GSA web-site.

Having grown up, during the 1950s and early 1960s, in the small town of Moruya on the NSW South Coast, it is not surprising that I have suggested the Moruya granite as one of the first rocks to be included in the garden. Some 40,000 blocks of Moruya granite were used for the pylons of the Sydney Harbour Bridge – need I say more!

I look forward to your support for this exciting project.

“Who’s running the show?”

During 2010, a Steering Committee was established. Current members of the Steering Committee are –

Chair	Prof. Brad Pillans, Australian National University and GSA President
Members	Dr. Neil Williams, former CEO, Geoscience Australia Dr. Chris Pigram, CEO, Geoscience Australia Dr. Graham Durant, CEO, Questacon Dr Mike Smith, Research Fellow, National Museum of Australia and ANU Dr. Doug Finlayson, GSA (ACT Division) John Bain, GSA (ACT Division)

The project was approved by the GSA Council at its meeting on 4 July 2010. It is anticipated that others may be invited to join the Steering Committee as the project develops.

From the Curator of Rock Specimens, John Bain

How do we select 100 rocks to exhibit in the NRG? We’ve devised a set of selection criteria (see below) and we are seeking suggestions from all interested parties. These suggestions have been trickling in since July, but we’d prefer that the trickle turned to a flood. What rock(s) would you like to see in the NRG to represent your State or region, your industry, or your scientific interests? We need input from more of the wider geoscience community if we are to be sure that the collection will contain the most generally desirable 100 specimens. We want you to feel that this garden will celebrate your science and your interests – that you are a part owner. Please ensure that your suggestions provide appropriate information addressing the selection criteria. If you can guide us to the best place to collect your suggested specimens, or if you can connect us with someone who can or someone to help fund the operation, please get in touch through rockgarden@gsa.org.au

Criteria for rock specimen selection

Specimens must be large (10-20 tonnes), realistically collectable, sufficiently robust for transport and long term survival in the Canberra environment, and they must meet more than one of the following selection criteria (not in any priority order).

- **Significant educational value and public/tourist interest** – The public interest and education is of major importance. The National Rock Garden is for all Australians and must be seen as a globally unique public amenity and a ‘must do’ on the tourist agenda for any visit to Canberra, the nation’s capital. It must be a pleasant and interesting place to visit.
- **Nationally iconic** – Specimens should be readily identified by most Australians with a nationally significant location, or cultural, industrial, economic or scientific heritage.
- **Story line/history** – Specimens should have a fascinating story to tell vis-a-vis Australian social history, scientific interest, industrial/economic importance or indigenous cultural tradition.
- **Interest/appearance** – Specimens should have an intrinsically interesting rock type, shape, colour or texture, e.g. orbicular granite, columnar basalt, banded iron formation. The collection must include a balance of rock types, age, fossils (forams to dinosaur footprints), resources (gold to iron ore and industrials), and structures, covering the length and breadth of the continent, and they must have significant differences in appearance or story line.



Moruya granite



War Memorial, Martin Place, Sydney



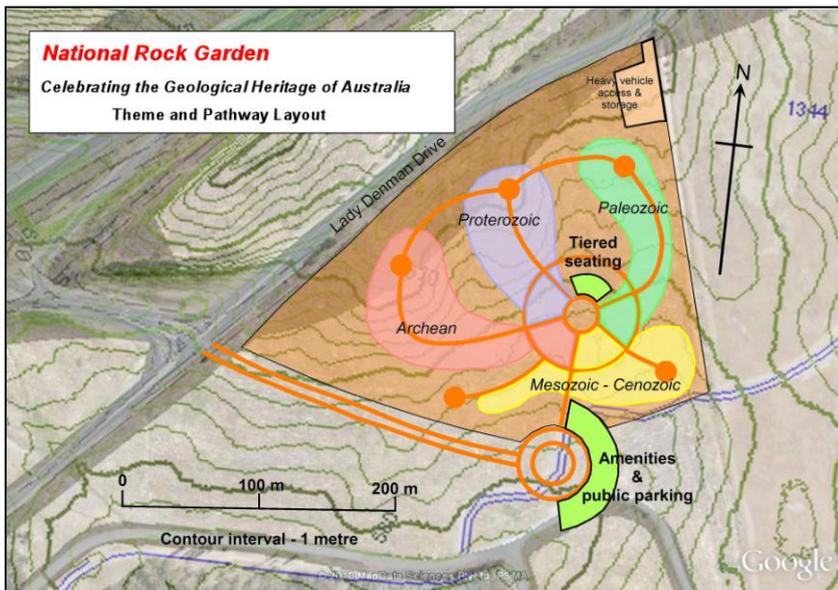
The issues for 2011

Landscape architecture

Ideas on the layout of the National Rock Garden have been actively considered over the last six months and a conceptual model has been tabled that reflects the age of the continental rocks across Australia, their distribution and topography of the site. Consideration must also be given to the practicalities of emplacing large rock samples at various locations using heavy-lift machinery and the routine servicing and management of the Rock Garden.

Consideration is being given to a University of Canberra student design competition for a layout concepts. The overall objective is to create an outstanding recreational and education facility that will serve the Australian community for many, many years into the future.

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Funding

Construction of the National Rock Garden will require significant capital expenditure. The GSA is now actively seeking funding sources in both the public and private sectors to secure commitments that will enable engineering and construction to be commenced during 2011.

The GSA is in the process of setting up a trust fund for the construction and ongoing management of the site that will

have tax deductibility benefits for sponsors and donors, large and small.

Feedback and further information

The Geological Society welcomes feedback and suggestions on the development of the National Rock Garden. Correspondence may be sent to the GSA Office in Sydney at -

rockgarden@gsa.org.au

Newsletter – compiled and edited by:

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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.

Newsletters will also be posted on the GSA website at www.gsa.org.au

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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.