



## **Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee #3 – Communique**

**23 March 2023**

*The Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee acknowledges and respects the strong connections that Waanyi people have with Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) National Park, which includes the Riversleigh World Heritage Area, dating back at least 37,000 years.*

The third meeting of the Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee (RWHAC) was held in Townsville. The resignation of Ms Tanya Sewter as Co-Chair of the Waanyi Cooperative Management Council and member of RWHAC was noted and her outstanding leadership acknowledged.

### First Nations Partnerships

- RWHAC congratulated the Waanyi Cooperative Management Committee (CMC) on their successful receipt of Australian Heritage Grant funding of \$212,000 for their Riversleigh Fossil Dreaming project.
- RWHAC congratulated Minister Scanlon and the Department for developing the ground-breaking Queensland First Nations World Heritage Strategy. RWHAC acknowledged the existing strong partnership between the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Waanyi in the development and implementation of the co-designed Boodjamulla Management Plan. It is anticipated that the Riversleigh Fossil Dreaming project will be an avenue to amplify and support Waanyi voices in World Heritage matters.
- Boodjamulla Project Coordinator Mr Ross Browning provided an overview of the terms of reference and process involved in the transfer to Waanyi and lease back of Boodjamulla National Park as well as the transfer arrangements for the adjacent resource reserves. It was noted that all commercial interests, intellectual property rights and permits will rest with Waanyi once the transfers are completed.

### Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Values

- Dr Espen Knutsen from the Museum of Tropical Queensland/James Cook University presented on the importance of Riversleigh fossils in the context of both giant and tiny vertebrate fossils discovered in Queensland over deep time. He discussed recent technological advances in palaeontological fieldwork and analytical techniques, in particular 3D modelling of the landscape using drones. This has implications for accurate recording of the more than 300 identified fossil sites in the Riversleigh World Heritage area.
- QPWS staff provided an update on the extensive devastation to infrastructure and the natural environment at the Boodjamulla National Park Ranger Station and nearby Adels Grove following extensive rainfall, including 580mm in 24 hours. Damage to the World Heritage Area can not be assessed until roads reopen and staff return to the Park. The scheduled Site Marker project for June has been cancelled as no accommodation is available in the region and the road conditions could potentially still be unsafe.

- RWHAC congratulated the Mount Isa City Council on its recent completion of the Outback at Isa Masterplan and the introduction of two new fossil-sorting experiences at the Riversleigh Fossil Discovery Centre.

### New Initiatives

- RWHAC workshopped elements of the draft three-year RWHAC Business Plan. It was agreed that two working groups would be established - a Research Priorities working group and a Climate Change working group, each to report to the next RWHAC meeting with recommendations of priority projects and potential funding requirements.
- RWHAC recommended that the next meeting be scheduled for late August/early September 2023 to enable committee members in educational institutions to meet their teaching obligations. RWHAC members have not previously had an opportunity to inspect the research facilities and fossil collection store at the University of New South Wales, where much of the Riversleigh material is being held. A Sydney meeting at this time could enable RWHAC members to separately attend elements of the ICOMOS General Assembly.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

- RWHAC recommends, subject to funding and approval, that its next meeting be held in Sydney adjacent to the commencement or conclusion of the 2023 ICOMOS General Assembly, which would enable members to also inspect the Riversleigh fossil collections at the University of New South Wales.