



## **Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee #4 – Communique**

### **12 September 2023**

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

The fourth meeting of the Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee (RWHAC) was held at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, which provided members the first opportunity to inspect the laboratories and collection stores where processing, preparation, research and storage of Riversleigh fossils has been conducted for more than four decades.

#### First Nations Partnerships

- RWHAC congratulated the Queensland Government and the Waanyi Native Title Aboriginal Corporation on the recent handback of the first tranche of 79,707 hectares of Boodjamulla National Park, including the Riversleigh World Heritage Area, to the Waanyi people.
- RWHAC was briefed on the outcomes of the first round of Traditional Owner consultations as part of the Australian Heritage Grant funded, Riversleigh Fossil Dreaming Project. Dreaming stories associated with the World Heritage site are being documented prior to translating into augmented reality in phase 2 of the project.
- RWHAC was briefed on other grant-funded projects including cultural mapping, establishing a cultural database, consolidating Waanyi language as a precursor to developing a Waanyi dictionary, and governance and capacity building.

#### Protection and Conservation of World Heritage Values

- RWHAC endorsed the *Climate Change and Riversleigh Snapshot* report in principle, subject to feedback from the Cooperative Management Council (CMC).
- RWHAC strongly supported QPWS initiatives to undertake post-flood surveys to identify exposed fossils and cultural sites, identify potential deposits at risk, and establish baseline areas for longitudinal monitoring of climate-influenced changes.
- RWHAC was briefed on the outcomes of the recent Queensland Audit Office review of the Queensland Museum's (QM) cultural and natural history collections. The approximately 8,000 Riversleigh specimens registered to the QM and located at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) are subject to audit. UNSW is actively working with QM to audit the material and work on a strategy which will see the staged return of the registered material.
- RWHAC visited the UNSW Riversleigh collection stores and processing laboratory. Funding is urgently required to rehouse processed fossils and, in some cases, published and type material (type being the individual name-bearing specimen used to represent a species), in appropriate archival storage media. QM will apply for Australian Heritage Grant funding for this rehousing and the associated 3D scanning of these World Heritage specimens. Alternative funding will be sought to prioritise acid processing of the 80+ tonnes of fossiliferous limestone in the UNSW bulk collection store.

## Identification, Interpretation and Presentation of World Heritage Values

- RWHAC congratulated the QPWS Rangers for their work in cleaning up D-Site and its infrastructure to enable re-opening to the public in early September, while noting that the remainder of Boodjamulla National Park remains closed following the devastating flooding in March 2023.
- RWHAC congratulated Tourism and Events Queensland for the establishment of Dinosaur Experiences Australia, the network of prehistoric natural history experiences in Outback Queensland, and committed to supporting the preparation of Riversleigh content.
- RWHAC endorsed the draft *Riversleigh Research Priorities 2023-2030* in principle, subject to feedback from the CMC. This document identifies four broad themes –
  1. ongoing research into the fossil record and its place in the evolutionary record of the Australian continent and the world;
  2. research into the cultural values of the Riversleigh World Heritage Area within the broader Boodjamulla cultural landscape;
  3. research that establishes the data and develops the tools necessary to manage the values of the property effectively in the face of challenges posed by a changing climate; and
  4. research into innovative and sustainable heritage interpretation and appreciation of the natural and cultural values of the Riversleigh World Heritage Area.
- RWHAC is investigating possible avenues to fund several priority projects that have been identified from these research areas.
- Subject to CMC Feedback, RWHAC endorsed the draft *RWHAC Three-Year Plan 2022-2025*, which identifies key priorities for the RWHAC's current term and outlines the strategic advice to support and inform management obligations of the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites – Riversleigh Section.
- RWHAC was briefed on the current DES project to develop and deliver consistent, culturally appropriate signage across Queensland's terrestrial World Heritage properties that promotes the World Heritage brand.
- The *RWHAC Three-Year Plan 2022-2025*, *Riversleigh Research Priorities 2023-2030* and *Climate Change and Riversleigh Snapshot* will be provided to the Minister in the near future.

The next RWHAC meeting will be held online and is currently scheduled for 4 December 2023.



UNSW bulk collection store – unprocessed



Some of the UNSW type specimens requiring archival storage