

Artwork by Waanyi Elder, Mr Len Cubby.



unesco

Australian Fossil Mammal
Sites (Riversleigh / Naracoorte)
World Heritage Area since 1994

Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee

Terms of Reference

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World's Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in Paris on 16 November 1972. The World Heritage Convention came into force in 1975. The World Heritage Convention promotes cooperation among nations, in order to identify and protect heritage that is of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and ensure its conservation for current and future generations.

In August 1974, Australia ratified the World Heritage Convention. The Riversleigh portion of Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) National Park, together with Naracoorte Caves National Park, were jointly inscribed on the World Heritage List as the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh/Naracoorte) in 1994 under criteria (viii) and (ix). The OUV is represented by its outstanding natural heritage values, representing major stages in the earth's history, and outstanding representation of significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development, particularly, of terrestrial and freshwater communities of plants and animals.

Despite being a site listed solely for its natural values, cultural heritage values are recognised as contributing significantly to Riversleigh's OUV. The Waanyi Native Title Aboriginal Corporation was established to hold in trust and manage Native Title rights and interests on behalf of the Waanyi Peoples. The Waanyi People's connection to the landscape is maintained through cultural practice on their traditional Homeland.

The Riversleigh component of the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites World Heritage property has produced some of the world's most outstanding fossils, not only in their preservation, but also in their quantity and diversity. It is the richest fossil mammal deposit in Australia and few, if any, other fossil deposits in the world have so contributed to our knowledge of prehistoric mammal communities.

Management and protection of the World Heritage property is carried out under the provisions of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*. Australia's World Heritage properties are protected under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). World Heritage properties are recognised as a matter of National Environmental Significance under the EPBC Act's assessment and approval provisions

Purpose of the Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee

The purpose of the Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee (the Committee) is to provide expert advice to ensure that Australia continues to meet its obligations under the World Heritage Convention to protect, conserve and present this World Heritage property. This advice is to be communicated to the Queensland and Australian Government Ministers responsible for World Heritage in the form of:

- a communique prepared after each meeting of the Committee; and
- written communication from the Chair on an as required basis.

Only the Chair has the authority to make statements on behalf of the Committee.

Scope and responsibility of the Committee

The development of expert advice that encompasses a broad range of opinion based on evidence, experience and understanding of the issues that may impact on the management and protection of the Riversleigh World Heritage Area is the primary focus for the Committee.

The operational management and protection of the World Heritage property is carried out under the provisions of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and is the responsibility of Department of Environment and Science (DES) and First Nations partners, and not the Committee.

However, in developing and providing expert advice, the Committee may consider plans, strategies and management issues which are the responsibility of DES or any agency, as it determines.

Stakeholder engagement

The Committee will develop a stakeholder engagement framework, which will support Committee discussion, information gathering and exchange external to the Committee to strengthen analysis of issues while framing member input and advice.

Within this framework, members can also provide information to their sectors of representation on Riversleigh World Heritage issues. At times there may be a conflict between providing information to the community and respecting the confidentiality of some of the information provided to the Committee. It is the responsibility of members to identify such conflicts and seek direction, either during Committee meetings or through the Chair and Executive Officer.

Membership

Membership of the Committee is to support its purpose to provide advice on the management and protection of this World Heritage property. Membership will reflect First Nations cultural expertise, scientific and community interests and expertise relevant to the Riversleigh section.

Member interest and expertise will broadly be reflected by up to a total of 14 representatives as follows:

- The Chair is an independent, non-government person, with no current direct financial or vested political interest in the way in which the Riversleigh World Heritage Area is managed.
- Two members with First Nations cultural expertise – two Waanyi Peoples (one male and one female).
- Up to six members with Scientific expertise – e.g., palaeontology and/or other relevant to Riversleigh).
- Up to six members with Community interest/expertise – e.g., outback tourism, local government, tour operators, natural resource management, and local community including neighbours.

Gender Balance

The Committee is to consist of at least 50 percent women.

Appointment of Chair and Members

Chair

The Chair will be selected:

- a) after a publicly advertised expressions of interest process;
- b) a mandatory search of the Queensland Register of Nominees; and
- c) with the agreement of both the Queensland and Australian Government Ministers responsible for World Heritage.

The Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage will communicate the Chair's selection via a letter of appointment.

The Queensland Minister, with the agreement of the Australian Government Minister responsible for World Heritage, may appoint an acting Chair in the event of an unforeseen vacancy in the role of Chair (without meeting a) and b) requirements).

Members

The members will be selected:

- a) after a publicly advertised expressions of interest process;
- b) a mandatory search of the Queensland Register of Nominees; and
- c) at the discretion of the Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage.

Committee members are appointed by the Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage via a letter of appointment.

Term of Appointment

The Chair and Committee members are appointed for a three-year period commencing on the date advised in the letter of appointment.

The Chair and Committee members may resign at any time and are eligible for reappointment in another term.

Termination of Appointment

In the case of the Chair, termination of membership shall be by both the Queensland and Australian Government Ministers responsible for World Heritage.

Other than by resignation or lapse of membership, termination of membership of the Committee shall be by the Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage.

Grounds for termination of appointment may include:

- a) unauthorised representation of the Committee;
- b) misconduct and inappropriate behaviour;

- c) misuse of any information provided in confidence for the operation, deliberation and decision-making process of the Committee;
- d) breach of confidentiality or of the Code of Conduct¹; and
- e) other reason at the discretion of the Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage.

Duties and functions

Chair responsibilities

- a) Chair meetings in accordance with formal meeting protocols.
- b) Liaise with the Executive Officer as required to develop agendas and approve meeting notes.
- c) Facilitate discussion on the agenda items, seeking consensus on issues and providing advice to the Ministers.
- d) Facilitate participation of all Committee members in the meeting and encourage members to share and exchange information with each other and the Executive Officer.
- e) Maintain adherence to the Code of Conduct¹ at meetings.
- f) Speak on behalf of the Committee.
- g) Present the Committee's advice via a Communique to the Ministers within six weeks of each meeting.
- h) Represent (or proxy) Riversleigh on the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC), which will consider national and cross-cutting issues relevant to all World Heritage properties in Australia.

Note 1: Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service

Committee Member responsibilities

- a) Attend and participate in Committee meetings and ongoing deliberations.
- b) Direct their expertise and experience towards advancing the views of their respective sector or community interest and provide appropriate advice in relation to the management of the World Heritage Area.
- c) Provide up-to-date advice at meetings when requested on issues identified on the agenda.
- d) Work cooperatively and endeavour to reach a consensus view on issues discussed where possible.
- e) Convey outcomes from the Committee meetings to their respective sector(s) and/or stakeholder group as appropriate.
- f) Follow up on Committee actions appropriately.
- g) Behave professionally, adhere to the Code of Conduct, maintain confidentiality and declare any perceived or actual conflicts of interest.
- h) Defer to the Chair, as the only authorised spokesperson, on issues concerning the operations, deliberations and decisions of the Committee.
- i) Two members representing Waanyi Peoples (one male and one female) may also represent Riversleigh on the Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network (AWHIN).

Meetings

Meeting Attendance

Although no minimum time commitments are set, it is expected that members will attach a priority to attending and participating in Committee meetings. It is also expected that members will allocate appropriate preparation time for the reading of agenda papers and responding to issues where the Committee's advice is sought. If a Committee member is unable to attend a meeting, they may seek approval from the Chair for a proxy to represent their interests at the meeting. This request should be in writing (email) and should explain the reasons for non-attendance and identify their preferred proxy.

Membership on the Committee may lapse if a member fails to attend two consecutive meetings without valid reasons communicated to the Chair and/or the Director, responsible for World Heritage management, DES. If the Chair is not present at a Committee meeting, the members present will elect one of their members to preside at the meeting.

All out of pocket travel expenses incurred by Committee members to attend meetings is reimbursed. In recognition of the additional workload required of the Chair, a payment is made per meeting. All reimbursements and payments are made in accordance with the *Remuneration procedures for part-time chairs and members of Queensland government bodies*.

Time and place of meetings

The Committee shall meet up to four times each year. An indicative, annual schedule of meetings will be made available at the first meeting of the Committee with specific dates and times decided in consultation with the Chair and members of the Committee in advance of each meeting. Meetings may be held anywhere that is a

convenient location and can include Mount Isa, Riversleigh, other North Queensland locations, Brisbane, virtually or by teleconference.

Quorum

A quorum for a meeting shall be a simple majority of members, including at least one member with First Nations cultural expertise.

Attendance of guests at Committee meetings

Local, Queensland and Australian Government **observers** and **advisers** may attend meetings with the agreement of the Chair. The Executive Officer will provide administrative and technical support at each of the Committee meetings. Other guests, observers and specialist advisers may be invited to attend and to provide advice.

Secretariat Support

DES will provide independent secretariat support to the Committee. DES plays a critical role in assisting the Australian Government to meet Australia's obligations to manage and protect the Riversleigh World Heritage property. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) is responsible for the day-to-day management, while the World Heritage Unit provides World Heritage policy, strategic direction and administrative support to World Heritage Advisory Committees.

Executive Officer responsibilities (role continues under the Intergovernmental agreement - *Project Agreement for World Heritage Management*)

- Coordinate Committee meetings, provide administrative support, including the processing of payments, disseminating information to members and other relevant stakeholders.
- Liaise with the Chair to develop agendas, meeting papers, take meeting notes, assist in the implementation of actions where necessary and ensure Communiqués of the Committee are presented to relevant stakeholders promptly.
- Provide relevant information to assist the members in their current deliberations.
- Assist the Committee to operate in accordance with the principles and requirements of legislation, policies, strategies, and guidelines appropriate to the Riversleigh World Heritage Area.
- Assist the Committee to maintain a focus on meeting the Terms of Reference.
- Process Committee reimbursements, where possible, within four weeks of when the expense incurred. Invited guests, observers and specialist advisers attend at their own cost unless otherwise approved by the Director, responsible for World Heritage management, DES.

Example Stakeholder Engagement framework

1. Stakeholder Identification – the Committee has a list of stakeholders (broad/specific) that members may consult.
2. Topic identification – the Committee has a list of topics/themes that members may discuss.
3. Issue prioritisation – within topics/themes, the Committee agrees on which should be prioritised for member engagement with stakeholders.
4. Stakeholder views – members are empowered and encouraged to seek stakeholder views and provide information as endorsed by the Committee.

The purpose of stakeholder engagement is to support the provision of expert advice to ensure that Australia continues to meet its obligations under the World Heritage Convention to protect, conserve and present the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites - Riversleigh World Heritage Area.

TERMS OF REFERENCE ENDS