A new chapter

The Ediacara fossils of Nilpena are a truly unique and mysterious part of our planet’s story.

When I first experienced these extraordinary fossils a number of years ago, I was immediately struck by the rarity and captivating nature of what I was experiencing.

Like so many others, that fascination has led me to wanting to do all I can to protect and share this incredible heritage that we have right here in South Australia.

I am proud that we are conserving Nilpena forever as a national park, and that it will be the centrepiece of the South Australian government’s pursuit of World Heritage listing for the Flinders Ranges.

I am excited by the tourism potential that can flow from sharing this incredible heritage with people from all over the world. This will benefit future generations as they discover more of our world’s natural history and our local communities as we sustain our regions into the future.

My government is delighted to be forming a partnership with the Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation. For Nilpena, it is a new chapter in showing how we can work with philanthropy in creating and managing a national park, and bringing its wonders to visitors, school children and our community.

We have an opportunity to do something special together, and I encourage you to be part of this exciting future.

Hon. Steven Marshall MP
PREMIER OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
14/03/2019
Introducing the Foundation

My goal in establishing the Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation is to make a practical contribution to an extraordinary part of South Australia’s heritage that is renowned worldwide – the Ediacaran fossils.

Anyone who has seen these fossils can only be awestruck by this evidence of the earliest animal life on Earth, and its exceptional state of preservation across half a billion years of our planet. Moments in time are forever captured in the rocks of the Flinders Ranges.

The Foundation is dedicated to protecting and conserving these fossils, and ensuring they are well managed for current and future generations to experience and learn from them.

We also want to ensure that the fossils continue to be the subject of research that ensures South Australia is at the forefront of science in this field. Our fossil record is not only unique in having so many species, and such an extraordinary record of the ecology of the marine environment from this distant past; it provides unparalleled insight into how animal life evolved in a changing environment on planet Earth. This is why NASA has supported research in the Flinders Ranges for many years.

The Foundation has an ambitious goal to work closely with land managers, researchers, institutions, and the traditional owners and broader community of the Flinders Ranges, to ensure that our Ediacaran legacy is a source of pride and opportunity.

Ensuring the fossils are accessible, well managed and inspiring the next generation of future scientists is an important part of our goal.

The fossils also have an artistic legacy - they are a thing of rare beauty and have inspired internationally renowned musicians and artists.

This prospectus provides a brief introduction to our vision. We have been humbled by the support we have received so far from people who have provided generous donations for purchasing the world’s greatest Ediacaran fossil site at Nilpena. This site, which has been so well managed by Ross and Jane Fargher, will now be protected as a national park; its future is secured. But this achievement is only the beginning.

We hope that you will be inspired to contribute to creating a new legacy for the Flinders Ranges, our state, and our planet.

Mary Lou Simpson
Chair, Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation
The Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation

The Foundation is a non-profit organisation conserving South Australia’s Ediacaran fossils and sharing their significance with the world. Created in 2019, our Board has experts in palaeontology, scientific research, strategic marketing, media, business innovation, finance, and law.

We will deliver our role through in situ conservation and research, and supporting education and tourism to make the fossils and their significance accessible for all. We will work with government and a range of partners to create a long-term asset for the Flinders Ranges, and support the protection of this fossil heritage in perpetuity.

The impetus for creating the Foundation was the urgency to protect the world’s single greatest fossil record of Ediacaran fossils at Nilpena Station. The Foundation is embarking on an ambitious program at Nilpena as the first stage in achieving its goals.

This prospectus invites you to be part of our exciting vision.
Ediacaran fossils and why they matter

The Flinders Ranges are one of Australia’s great landscapes. Within these ancient rocks are fossils that tell us much about how the planet and life have evolved.

The Ediacara Hills in the Flinders Ranges are where these fossils were first discovered and recognised by Reg Sprigg in 1946. They are now known from areas as diverse as Russia, China and Africa, but without the exceptional diversity and state of preservation as found in South Australia.

Darwin’s famous dilemma about the earliest life was solved through their discovery. Ongoing research funded by NASA seeks to learn about how life evolves on a planet through the fossil record at Nilpena.

The first geological time division in over 100 years – the Ediacaran – was created in 2005 with its reference point in the Flinders Ranges, the only one for the southern hemisphere.

The State Fossil Emblem is the unique Spriggina – and fittingly, the emblem of the Foundation – one of the most significant of Ediacaran fossils, and only known from here.

The South Australian government is pursuing World Heritage Listing for this record of early life in the Flinders Ranges. The Foundation is proud to be supporting this bid.
Protecting Nilpena

The most urgent need, and the Foundation’s first priority, is securing the future of Nilpena’s globally significant fossil deposit. This will be a precursor to supporting the conservation, research and interpretation of fossils throughout the Flinders Ranges.

Nilpena is unique in that palaeontologists have been able to excavate a series of 40 fossiliferous beds that preserved snapshots of the seafloor as animal life unfolded. There is no other place in the world where this has been done for fossils of any age.

What is more extraordinary is the fossil beds preserve marine communities with tens of species in situ - they preserve “snapshots” of the ancient seafloor along with evidence for the oldest animals, the earliest mobility, sexual reproduction, scavenging, and complex ecosystems.

The Foundation has partnered with the South Australian government to purchase part of Nilpena to become a national park. The support of individual donors in responding to the Foundation’s call for support has been outstanding.

Securing the future protection of the site is only the first step. Good management is necessary to ensure the site is secure and not subject to looting, and that there is investment to ensure orderly access for research and sustainable access for visitors.

The Foundation is now developing a long-term partnership with government to manage the Nilpena fossils, centered on the station’s historic woolshed precinct.
Creating the Nilpena precinct

As part of an integrated strategy for the protection of the Nilpena site, the Foundation will be restoring an historic pastoral building – the Blacksmith’s Shop – at Nilpena to become an immersive interpretive centre for the display of one of the most important fossil beds found. This fossil bed, known as Alice’s Restaurant Bed, is outstanding in revealing the relationships between Ediacaran fossils and their ancient marine environment.

The Blacksmith's Shop will provide access for visitors who cannot now view the fossils in the field, provide for interpretation free of weather constraints, and create facilities for school groups and others to have hands-on experiences, including field palaeontology techniques.

The works will include converting the main room of the building to house Alice's Restaurant Bed, a second room into an immersive educational space, and an outdoor area.

The Foundation is excited by this project to create a new asset for the Flinders Ranges. We are seeking to raise $500,000 by June 2020 to deliver this exciting project.
Your support is needed

Philanthropy is crucial for the success of Nilpena.

The Foundation is seeking support from philanthropic partners, corporate, and individual donors. Contributing to this vision for Nilpena can be tailored to individual needs, together with a suite of bespoke recognition benefits.

Targeted fundraising campaigns will also be developed for delivering the vision at Nilpena. Our first goal is to raise $500,000 for the creating an immersive interpretive centre at Nilpena.

All donations over $2 are tax deductible.

More information

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ediacarafoundation.org
Nilpena is home to one of the best fossil localities of any age and any type in the world. The fact that it records the unfolding of animal life on planet Earth just makes it all the more extraordinary and critically important.

Dr Mary Droser, University of California Riverside

The fossil beds of Nilpena rank among the world’s top two or three archives of early animal life. This location has already illuminated major milestones in evolution—from the earliest skeletons to the first invasion by burrowers beneath the seafloor. Other ecological revelations may record an extinction of early animals tied to falling levels of dissolved oxygen in seawater—a condition afflicting our warming oceans today.

Dr Timothy Lyons, Director of the Alternative Earths Team of the NASA Astrobiology Institute

Such relationships between life and its co-evolving environment are primary considerations in NASA’s search for life beyond our planet. The protection of this extraordinary location is a precious gift to future generations of devoted scientists, curious children, and anyone else wondering about past, future, and distant life.
There are few places in the world that have the capacity to change our whole view of Earth’s history. Nilpena is pre-eminent among them. This site should become a place of pilgrimage to all those interested in how our planet came to be as it is.

It is already renowned among the geological community but insuring its future will bring it to a much wider audience around the world. We also have a duty to protect a site of such extraordinary importance from degradation.

Richard Fortey, award-winning writer and broadcaster