



FLINDERS
RANGES
EDIACARA
FOUNDATION

**Update from the Chair – Mary Lou Simpson
August 2021**

It is important to update our readers with the good news coming out of the Nilpena Site and the work being done by Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation (FREF) including fundraising projects. These projects equate with FREF's main functions: conservation of the fossil beds, community outreach and education and learning.

In recognition of the importance of the Nilpena Ediacara fossils, the South Australian Government recently announced that the fossils are protected as part of the new Nilpena Ediacara National Park.

FREF was instrumental in getting the national park declared; our supporters have been part of creating Australia's newest national park.

Last month a very good article describing why the Nilpena Site needed to be made into a national park was published in the science magazine Cosmos –

<https://cosmosmagazine.com/history/palaeontology/behind-the-scenes-new-national-park-offers-an-exclusive-window-into-life-at-the-dawn-of-time-free/>

Here there is a link to FREF's website which we are regularly updating.

<https://ediacarafoundation.org>

Construction works at both the fossil sites and pastoral heritage precinct are now well underway, and we will provide regular progress updates, ahead of the formal opening of the park to visitors expected towards the middle of 2022.

Professor Mary Droser, a foundation Board member is the consultant palaeontologist for design and construction of the fossil site and access. She recently spent 6 weeks at the Nilpena Site supervising construction of walking trails, carparks, signage and viewing platforms. Importantly, Mary and her team have been preparing one of the iconic fossil beds to be moved into the heritage listed Blacksmith's Shop next year. I visited the site while Mary was there and saw the trails being carefully laid down between the fossil beds. These secure trails will have pram and wheelchair access.

FREF's mission and purpose is to conserve the Ediacara fossils of the Flinders Ranges in perpetuity, and to ensure everyone benefits from the knowledge they embody. To this end, one of FREF's most important functions is education and learning and a workshop was held at the South Australian Museum in June. The participants included tertiary educational leaders, secondary teachers active and retired and those influential in the world of artistic representation. Some schools are now incorporating the study of Ediacara into their curriculums, not only in the sciences but in cultural areas as well. One palaeontologist who participated remarked - "It was so inspiring to see how Ediacaran fossils have influenced so many different people, and what potential there is for our next generation. The enthusiasm in the room was so great to see."

As the Premier of South Australia, the Hon. Steven Marshall MP has often stated, "My government is delighted to have formed a partnership with Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation and we need to ensure the fossils can inspire children to learn about science and our natural world."