



## Update from the Chair – Mary Lou Simpson

### February 2022

It is important to update our readers on the progress being made at the new Nilpena Ediacara National Park (NENP) and to let you know that in the month of January two Flinders Ranges Ediacara Foundation (FREF) directors, Professor Mary Droser and Mary Lou Simpson received prestigious recognition for their good works. Importantly our scientists who do their research at NENP, received impressive grants from NASA and the Commonwealth Government. The winning of these grants will be critical for the UNESCO nomination of certain geological areas of the Flinders Ranges for World Heritage listing for its unparalleled story of the dawn of animal life on Earth. We congratulate all.

### Awards

**Professor Mary Droser**, the 2022 NAS Award in Early Earth and Life Sciences, **the Charles Doolittle Walcott Medal** for her pioneering discoveries and insights on Ediacaran-Paleozoic life that have transformed our understanding of early animals, their communities and their environments.

Please see the below link:

<http://www.nasonline.org/programs/awards/2022-awards/Droser.html>

**Mary Lou Simpson**, an Australia Day **OAM** (Medal in the General Division) for service to conservation and the environment and to the arts.

### Grants

**NASA Exobiology Grant** (October 2021 announcement):

Led by Professor Mary Droser, with Associate Professor Diego Garcia-Bellido and others

Years: Jan 2022 — Dec 2024

Amount: USD \$288,000 (AUD \$403,500)

Concept: Study of the fossilised microbial mats at NENP, which will help us develop an algorithm that may enable remote identification of possible similar fossil mats from images taken in other planets such as Mars.

**Australian Research Council Discovery Grant** (December 2021 announcement):

Led by Associate Professor Diego Garcia-Bellido, with Professor Mary Droser and Professor Jim Gehling AO and others.

Years: April 2022 — Mar 2025

Amount: AUD \$488,000

Concept: Study the faunal turnover (change in species) between the Ediacara member and the newly identified Nilpena member (at NENP and through the Flinders Ranges), believed to be separated by a time gap of unknown duration, and to date both rock units through drill core (so far they've been given an age based on Russian sites).

### Construction works at Nilpena Ediacara National Park

Works are currently underway at NENP, which are being delivered by the South Australian Government with funding support from the Australian Government and FREF. We continue to provide regular progress updates, ahead of the formal opening of the park to visitors expected towards the middle of 2022.

Professor Mary Droser the palaeontologist on the Board of FREF will be supervising the move of the fossil bed, “Alice’s Restaurant Bed” into the Blacksmith’s Shop in March. This huge and exciting move along with the installation of leading-edge audio visuals, will transform the Blacksmith’s Shop into a unique, immersive, educational/interpretative centre. This will be the “jewel in the crown” of the new NENP.

We are very pleased to announce **Flinders Power** who are keen to leave a legacy in the Flinders Ranges is a Principal Supporter of the construction of the Blacksmith’s Shop.

## Events

### **Celebrating the Opening of the Nilpena Ediacara National Park – SAVE THE DATES**

#### **June 25 and 26**

New symphonic work inspired by Ediacara - *Earth Plays; Ediacaran Fields*, Town Hall. The Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, ASO, under the baton of Benjamin Northey will be premiering a work by the acclaimed Australian composer, Cathy Milliken. Concert goers will have an opportunity to tour the Ediacaran Gallery at the South Australian Museum with Associate Professor Diego Garcia-Bellido. Bookings through the ASO are now open.

#### **July 8**

A cocktail gathering with “a touch of Ediacara” will take place at the South Australian Museum. Join “the great and good of Adelaide” for a night to remember.

## Donations to DEW

We are very grateful for our donors who continue to support the work of the Foundation. In January your Foundation donated \$205,000 to the Department of Environment and Water for the ongoing restoration of the Blacksmith’s Shop. I encourage you to view the latest images of the work being done on the Blacksmith’s Shop in the Photo Gallery of the website.

## Memorandum of Understanding

A further commitment to philanthropic support to protect South Australia’s Ediacaran fossils was “set in stone” in the latter half of last year with the signing of a new agreement. Minister for Environment and Water, David Speirs and the Chair signed the updated agreement in the Ediacara Gallery at the South Australian Museum.

The agreement will support the ongoing protection and management of the Ediacaran fossils at the NENP. Key to the agreement’s success will be ongoing development, research, tourism and education at the NENP.

Minister Speirs said the fossil site is arguably the richest and most researched Ediacaran fossil site in the world. The partnership between the South Australian Government and FREF is creating a long-term asset for all South Australians.

## Education and Learning

The Foundation’s mission and purpose is to conserve the Ediacara fossils of the Flinders Ranges in perpetuity, and to ensure everyone can benefit from the knowledge they embody. To this end, one of FREF’s most important functions is education and learning.

The Foundation is extremely delighted to report that Seymour College in Glen Osmond has introduced the study of Ediacara into the Year Eight Science Curriculum. Associate Professor Diego Garcia-Bellido and the Chair visited the school a few weeks ago and 80 students and their science teachers were very enthused with Diego's illustrated lecture. The school will be programming Ediacara into other year levels.

Mt Gambier High School hopes to introduce Ediacara into its science curriculum and we are keen for other schools to follow.

Mary Droser and the Chair are developing on-site programs for school-age children in the area of NENP. We are looking forward to hosting such groups soon after the official opening.

### **New Board Member**

Craig Thomas joined the Board in September, and he has a diverse experience base having worked as Executive in numerous industries. He holds a degree in Economics, an MBA and is a postgraduate of Marketing. With the above including his role as convenor for walking events in South Australia including the Flinders Ranges, he is a great asset to the Foundation.

### **Our Website**

Belinda Goedecke our Finance/Technology director is doing a great job of continually updating our website. I urge you to view the PHOTO GALLERY and NEWS.