

Update from the Chair March 2026

Big news – our World Heritage bid is accepted!

The Australian Government's nomination of the Flinders Ranges as a location worthy of highly prized World Heritage status has taken a vital step forward, with UNESCO's World Heritage Committee accepting our long-planned submission for formal assessment. A specialist UNESCO team is expected to visit our shores this year to inspect all seven sites included in the bid. A decision on the listing could be made as early as 2027.



This welcome news was announced at the South Australian Museum's Ediacara Gallery on February 28 by the Federal Minister for the Environment, Senator The Hon Murray Watt and SA Minister for the Environment, Lucy Hood MP. Minister Watt noted that a future World Heritage listing would mean protection under our national environment law, and international recognition at the highest level.

As your FREF Board Chair, I was invited to attend the announcement, along with Charles Jackson, representing the Adnyamathanha community and Jason Irving from the South Australian Department for Environment and Water.

"The submission of the Flinders Ranges World Heritage nomination marks a defining moment for this remarkable region. The Ediacaran fossils preserved at Nilpena capture one of the most

important chapters in the history of life on Earth – and it is deeply encouraging to see growing recognition of this globally significant site.

"World Heritage nomination is a fiercely competitive process, and the acceptance of our bid by UNESCO demonstrates what can happen when science, conservation, community and philanthropic passion come together. This is a proud moment for all of our supporters who are helping to protect a place that has fundamentally reshaped our understanding of how life evolved on this planet."

"A few weeks before this exciting announcement, I delivered a talk at the World Heritage listed Naracoorte Caves, discussing why the Nilpena Ediacara National Park is the focal point for Australia's World Heritage bid. I focused on the fact that World Heritage status requires sites listed to be of 'Outstanding Universal Value'. The Ediacaran fossil beds at Nilpena have made an unequalled contribution to our global scientific knowledge, holding crucial evidence on our evolutionary processes that have impacted our entire planet."

The area nominated for World Heritage listing spans more than 58,000 hectares and comprises significant sections of the Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park, Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park, Nilpena Ediacara National Park, nearby pastoral leases, and the Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary.

UNESCO requires World Heritage bids to be supported and consented to by all relevant First Nations communities. Last June, the Adnyamathanha Common Law Holders provided their consent.

Our 368-page submission, complete with close to 4,000 pages of supporting materials, represents a decade-long body of work highlighting the region's geological and palaeontological significance, while noting the deep and ongoing spiritual connection and cultural significance of the landscape to

the Adnyamathanha community. This comes alongside some wonderful promotion of the region, with the Flinders Ranges being named a top destination in the Lonely Planet's Best in Travel List for 2026 – the sole Australian region to feature.

Park news

National Parks and Wildlife Ranger Kym Geue

As we approach the March 15 opening of Nilpena Ediacara National Park for the visitor season, I can report that over the last few weeks we have received more than 125mm of rain, making a total of 142mm for the year so far. Compare that with less than 100mm for the entirety of 2025!

This significant weather event saw all the creeks flowing – filling the claypans and pushing water onto the floodplains. While the deluge means we have some urgent road maintenance to do, the fossil fields have held up well, protected by the fossil bed stabilisation works that have been funded by FREF supporters. The broader National Park will look amazing this year!

The Geological Timeline Walk is now near completion, with only the new signs to be installed; the new Fossil Bench is near completion; Nilpena Homestead will begin its transformation into the Park headquarters in April/May, and the Shearers Quarters will have some new doors and upgraded floors put in later this year, improvements sure to be appreciated by our resident researchers.

Draft Park Management Plan

Recently the Foundation made a formal submission to the South Australian Government, providing comment on the new Draft Management Plan for Nilpena Ediacara National Park. The plan describes the importance of the park and the Governments approach to its protection, while also focusing on support for ongoing research, visitor access and experience. The plan balances the need to ensure the protection of the internationally significant Ediacaran fossil fields, while enabling carefully managed tourism, education and scientific research.

In our submission, we strongly supported the plan's intentions, particularly the proposed fossil protection zoning, the focus on research and interpretation, and the partnership model between government, scientists and philanthropic supporters that has helped establish and enhance the Park since its creation.

Spriggina Turns 80 This Year

It is fitting that the Foundation plans to celebrate this significant event with members of the Sprigg Family at Government House in the middle of the year. You will be kept informed of arrangements.

Please support our Education and Research projects

With acceptance of the World Heritage nomination, every one of you should take pride in the fact that as a donor you have made a valued contribution to this process, with your ongoing commitment and generous support for our conservation, education and research projects.

Your contributions towards our teacher scholarships, which will run again in 2026, along with two planned FREF supported school visits is highly valued, along with your ongoing support for our park projects, fossil field conservation and research is equally important.

We are looking forward to a busy and successful year ahead, and as always, we invite you to make a tax-deductible gift via our website [donate here](#)

