

8 July 2010

Let there be rock...and plenty of it!

The national capital may not be known for its love of serious rock but that is all about to change when the shores of Lake Burley Griffin become home to a new rock garden.

Officially known as the Australian Geological Heritage Garden, and unofficially known as the 'Rock Garden', this Australian first was launched at the *Australian Earth Sciences Convention* in Canberra.

Professor Brad Pillans, incoming President of the Geological Society of Australia said the humble Aussie rock has been a key contributor to the country's prosperity and deserved to be celebrated in a big way.

"We expect to have up to 100 specimens of the country's most iconic rocks and each specimen will be 10 – 15 tonnes," he added. "So each specimen will be about the size of a small car, but much heavier - the weight of two to three African elephants."

Mr Gary Rake, Chief Executive of the National Capital Authority said the Rock Garden will be located on the north-western shores of Lake Burley Griffin, becoming part of a 'natural history corridor' adjacent to Lindsay Pryor National Arboretum, the new National Arboretum Canberra and the environmentally significant Yarramundi Grasslands.

"There'll be nothing like the Rock Garden anywhere else in Australia. It will provide people with another reason to visit Canberra and offer something quite different to our most popular tourist attractions, which are primarily man-made," he added.

Prof Pillans is equally optimistic about the project, saying the Rock Garden will provide an opportunity to reach out and encourage more Australians to appreciate the amazing geology of Australia.

"Australia is one of the most geologically diverse countries in the world and we have used that to our advantage. However, most Australians probably don't fully understand how important rocks are to our way of life," he explained.

"We depend on rocks and minerals economically and that is expected to continue," said Prof Pillans. "Rocks are major tourist attractions in their own right – examples are Uluru, Jenolan Caves and the Three Sisters – but as building stones, sand and other construction materials they've also been used in the construction of Australian icons as well as our own family homes."

The Garden will also include trees and shrubs from each state and territory, but being primarily rocks, this will be one of the few extremely low maintenance gardens.

The Rock Garden will develop in stages over several years with stage one anticipated to be open in approximately 18 months with some specimens and landscaping in place.

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“Australians will have an opportunity to be involved with the Rock Garden so watch this space for future announcements,” said Prof Pillans.

Ends

Issued on behalf of the Geological Society of Australia by Connection Communications. For further information or to arrange an interview with Prof Brad Pillans or Mr Gary Rake, please call Maria Padua on 0419 200 935.