1. Introduction

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World’s Cultural and Natural Heritage (the World Heritage Convention) was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in Paris on 16 November 1972. The World Heritage Convention came into force in 1975. The World Heritage Convention promotes cooperation among nations, in order to identify and protect heritage that is of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and ensure its conservation for current and future generations.

In August 1974, Australia ratified the Convention. The Riversleigh portion of Boodjamulla (Lawn Hill) National Park, together with Naracoorte Caves National Park, were jointly inscribed on the World Heritage List as the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites (Riversleigh/Naracoorte) in 1994 under criteria (viii) and (ix). The OUV is represented by its outstanding natural heritage values, representing major stages in the earth’s history, and outstanding representation of significant ongoing ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development, particularly, of terrestrial and freshwater communities of plants and animals.

Despite being a site listed solely for its natural values, cultural heritage values are recognised as contributing significantly to Riversleigh’s OUV. The Waanyi Native Title Aboriginal Corporation was established to hold in trust and manage Native Title rights and interests on behalf of the Waanyi People. The Waanyi People’s connection to the landscape is maintained through cultural practice on their traditional Homeland.

The Riversleigh component of the Australian Fossil Mammal Sites World Heritage property has produced some of the world’s most outstanding fossils, not only in their preservation, but also in their quantity and diversity. It is the richest fossil mammal deposit in Australia and few, if any, other fossil deposits in the world have so contributed to our knowledge of prehistoric mammal communities.

Management and protection of the World Heritage property is carried out under the provisions of the Nature Conservation Act 1992. Australia’s World Heritage properties are protected under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). World Heritage properties are recognised as a matter of National Environmental Significance under the EPBC Act’s assessment and approval provisions.

The Partnerships Branch within the Department of Environment and Science (DES) plays a critical role in assisting the Australian Government to meet Australia’s obligations to manage and protect the Riversleigh World Heritage property. Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (QPWS) are responsible for the day-to-day management, while the World Heritage Unit provides World Heritage policy, strategic direction and administrative support to World Heritage Advisory Committees.
2. **Purpose of the Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee**

The purpose of the Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee (the Committee) is to provide advice to State and Australian Government Ministers responsible for World Heritage from the viewpoint of the Waanyi Peoples, community, and scientific interests. This includes advice on the review and implementation of plans, strategies and management issues.

The Committee does not formally ‘vote’ on issues, but may indicate to management that recommendations are unanimous, or represent a majority view. When committee members have dissenting or divergent views, the various viewpoints should be identified and conveyed to management. It is the responsibility of the members to ensure the minutes of meetings accurately reflect the Committee’s viewpoint.

The Committee should function as more than just a sounding board on issues. Members should use their best endeavours to identify the aspects of issues that prevent a consensus outcome, understand other points of view and ideally attempt to move issues in the direction of a consensus outcome if possible.

Members, at their discretion, can also function as information providers to their sectors of representation on Riversleigh World Heritage issues. At times there may be a conflict between providing information to the community and respecting the confidentiality of some of the information provided to the Committee. It is the responsibility of members to identify such conflicts and seek direction, either during committee meetings or through the Chair and Executive Officer.

Only the Chair has the authority to make statements on behalf of the Committee.

3. **Membership**

Membership of the Committee reflects various scientific and community interests and expertise relevant to the Riversleigh section. These will include up to 11 representatives chosen from the following sectors: Waanyi Peoples, paleontology (or other research relevant to Riversleigh), outback tourism, local government, tour operators, natural resource management, and local community including neighbours.

It is not intended that members be ‘representative’ in the strict sense of the word. Rather it is intended that members will be broadly across the issues relevant to their sector(s) of representation and thus able to provide informed advice.

The Chair is an independent, non-government person, with no current direct financial or vested political interest in the way in which the Riversleigh World Heritage Area is managed.

Local, Queensland and Australian Government observers may attend meetings with the agreement of the Chair. The Executive Officer will provide administrative and technical support at each of the Committee meetings. Other guests, observers and specialist advisers may be invited to attend and to provide advice.

The Chair of the Committee (or their proxy) may also represent Riversleigh on the Australian World Heritage Advisory Committee (AWHAC), which will consider national and cross-cutting issues relevant to all World Heritage properties in Australia.

Two members representing Waanyi Peoples (one male and one female) may also represent Riversleigh on the Australian World Heritage Indigenous Network (AWHIN).
4. Roles and responsibilities

Chair responsibilities:
  a) Chair meetings in accordance with formal meeting protocols.
  b) Liaise with the Executive Officer as required to develop agendas and approve meeting notes.
  c) Facilitate discussion on the agenda items, seeking consensus on issues and developing recommendations to the Minister.
  d) Facilitate participation of all Committee members in the meeting and encourage members to share and exchange information with each other and the Executive Officer.
  e) Maintain adherence to the Code of Conduct at meetings.
  f) Speak on behalf of the Committee.
  g) Present the Committees advice/recommendations via a Communique to the Queensland and Australian Government ministers responsible for World Heritage within six weeks of each meeting.

Committee Member responsibilities:
  a) Attend and participate in Committee meetings and ongoing deliberations.
  b) Direct their expertise and experience towards advancing the views of their respective sector or community interest and make appropriate recommendations in relation to the management of the World Heritage Area.
  c) Provide up-to--date advice at meetings when requested on issues identified on the agenda.
  d) Work cooperatively and endeavour to reach a consensus view on issues discussed where possible.
  e) Convey outcomes from the Committee meetings to their respective sector(s) and/or stakeholder group as appropriate.
  f) Follow up on Committee actions appropriately.
  g) Behave professionally, adhere to the Code of Conduct, maintain confidentiality and declare any perceived or actual conflicts of interest.
  h) Defer to the Chair, as the only authorised spokesperson, on issues concerning the operations, deliberations and decisions of the Committee.

Executive Officer responsibilities:
  a) Coordinate committee meetings, provide administrative support, including the processing of payments, disseminating information to members and other relevant stakeholders.
  b) Liaise with the Chair to develop agendas, meeting papers, take meeting notes, assist in the implementation of actions where necessary and ensure Communiques of the Committee are presented to relevant stakeholders promptly.
  c) Provide relevant background information to assist the members in their current deliberations.
  d) Assist the Committee to operate in accordance with the principles and requirements of legislation, policies, strategies and guidelines appropriate to the Riversleigh World Heritage Area.
  e) Assist the Committee to maintain a focus on meeting the Terms of Reference.

5. Appointment of Members

Committee members shall be appointed by the Queensland Minister who is responsible for World Heritage. The Chair will be selected with the agreement of both the Queensland and Australian Government Ministers responsible for World Heritage.

Expressions of interest for new Committee members and the Chair will be publicly advertised. A mandatory search of the Queensland Register of Nominees will also be conducted.
Nominations will be encouraged from individuals who can provide multiple levels of advice to the Committee or from nominees who might offer a high level of advice from one or more relevant sectors. Similarly, individuals nominating for the Committee will be encouraged to seek endorsements from as many relevant organisations as possible.

Committee member selection will be mindful of the Committee’s corporate memory and may give additional consideration to ensuring some continuity of membership between the outgoing and incoming committees. Consideration will also be given to gender balance, the inclusion of youth and other equity issues within the Committee.

6. Term of Appointment

The Chair and Committee members are appointed for a three-year period commencing on the date advised in the letter of appointment.

The Chair and Committee members may resign at any time and are eligible for reappointment in another term.

Appointments to the Committee will ideally balance the introduction of new members with retention of the Committee’s corporate memory.

7. Meeting Attendance

Although no minimum time commitments are set, it is expected that members will attach a priority to attending and participating in all Committee meetings. It is also expected that members will allocate appropriate preparation time for the reading of agenda papers and responding to issues where the Committee’s advice is sought.

If a Committee member is unable to attend a meeting, they may seek approval from the Chair for a proxy to represent their interests at the meeting. This request should be in writing (email) and should explain the reasons for non-attendance and identify their preferred proxy.

Membership on the committee may lapse if a member fails to attend two consecutive meetings without valid reasons acceptable to the Chair and/or the Director, responsible for World Heritage management, Department of Environment and Science.

If the Chair is not present at a Committee meeting, the members present will elect one of their members to preside at the meeting.

As the membership of the Riversleigh World Heritage Advisory Committee is on an honorary basis, the Queensland and Australian Governments are appreciative of the time commitments made by members. All out of pocket travel expenses incurred by Committee members to attend meetings is reimbursed. In recognition of the additional workload required of the Chair, a payment is made per meeting. All reimbursements and payments are made in accordance with the Remuneration procedures for part-time chairs and members of Queensland government bodies.

The Executive Officer shall process Committee reimbursements, where possible, within four weeks of when the expense incurred. Invited guests, observers and specialist advisers attend at their own cost unless otherwise approved by the Director, responsible for World Heritage management, Department of Environment and Science.
8. **Termination**

Other than, by resignation or lapse of membership, termination of membership of the Committee shall be by the Queensland Minister responsible for World Heritage.

Grounds for termination may include:
- Unauthorised representation of the Committee
- Misconduct and inappropriate behaviour
- Misuse of any information provided in confidence for the operation, deliberation and decision-making process of the Committee
- Breach of confidentiality or of the Code of Conduct
- Other reason at the discretion of the Minister responsible for World Heritage.

In the case of the Chair, termination of membership shall be by both the Queensland and Australian Government Ministers responsible for World Heritage.

9. **Meeting location and frequency**

The Committee shall meet up to four times each year. An indicative, annual schedule of meetings will be made available at the first meeting of the committee with specific dates and times decided in consultation with the Chair and members of the committee in advance of each meeting.

A quorum shall be a simple majority of members. Meetings may be located anywhere that is a convenient location and can include Brisbane, North Queensland, Mount Isa, and Riversleigh or held by phone, Zoom or any other preferred online medium.