

Inspiring Australia Grant 2012-2013.

Jim Gehling (South Australian Museum) Chris Matthews and his partner Damia Ettakadoumi (Straight-up Science) were successful in being awarded an "Inspiring Australia Grant" of \$90,000 to run a training project entitled: "Hidden National Treasure: The Ediacara Fossils and Geology of the Flinders Ranges in South Australia" for tour operators and natural history custodians in the northern South Australia. Entry was competitive with all expenses for accommodation and catering paid by the grant. To be eligible, participants had to identify as living in remote areas, being under-employed, with limited opportunities for doing training of hands-on educational courses local, and or being of indigenous background. Final selection was based on a personal statement of intent and potential to utilize the skills and experience gained

The first part of the course involved tuition in communications, first aid, report writing and legal responsibilities for tourism explainers. The second part was a week of intensive fieldwork where participants where engaged in hands on examination of earth science materials both in class and in the field. Exercises involved interpretations of the geological foundations of landforms, soils and native vegetation that are so important to local landholders and tourists. The Brachina Gorge Geological Trail in the Flinders Ranges National Park was utilized to allow students to understand the importance of the Ediacaran Global Stratotype. A trial excavation at an Ediacara fossil site was successful in demonstrating the need to conserve these durable fossil beds in the field for future research and geotourism interests. Participants completed the course by making presentations on geological topics pertinent to their local area.