

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

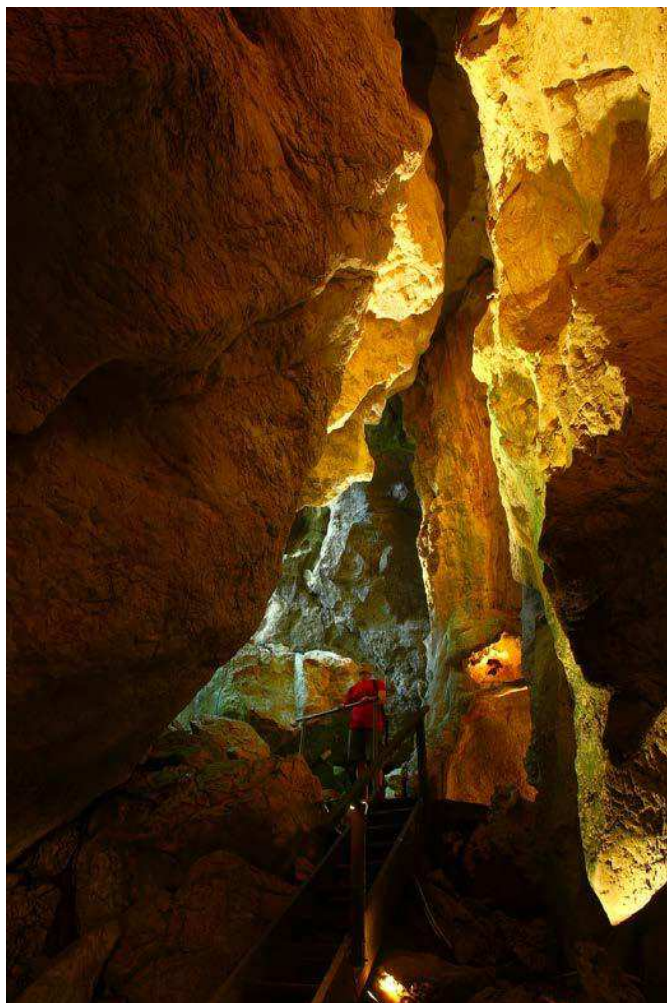
Dan Cove

Where on Earth does the time go? Mere moments it would seem since the ACKMA family gathered at Naracoorte for the splendid Conference in May I find myself staring at the close of another year and worrying about my complete lack of any plan for Christmas shopping!

The closing of the year is always a time to reflect, and 2015 has been challenging for ACKMA with, as always, both highs and lows. The passing of Elery Hamilton-Smith was an event that touched every member of the Association, but also (as I believe would have pleased Elery) also a moment that prompted many ACKMA members to seriously reflect upon the basis and purpose of the Association. This reflection overwhelmingly noted the importance of ACKMA as an advocate for conservation, management and for the furthering of our collective understanding of our fragile cave and karst systems. And so, it is fitting to remember as we look towards 2016 to consider that the aims and objectives of ACKMA remain as relevant now as when the Association was conceived.

The fantastic Conference at Naracoorte must rank as a genuine highlight of 2015. An ACKMA Conference is always a special time but this year was one of the most engaging in my experience, to say nothing of the wonderful surprise wedding of Andy Spate and Kirsty Dixon. Looking ahead, I would imagine that many members are already keenly anticipating the AGM at Capricorn Caves in May of 2016. Having seen Anne Augusteyn's draft for the AGM program, I can certainly assure all members that it will be a wonderful and memorable AGM weekend. I am also excited by the program for the Guides' School to be held at Capricorn immediately preceding the AGM weekend. This school promises to be a genuine opportunity for the cave guides of Australasia to develop their skills. Cave guiding is an important profession, and at its best represents one of the surest ways to create new advocates for ongoing cave conservation. The Guide School is an important professional development opportunity and I would encourage all show cave managers to support as many of their staff as practical to attend this School.

On behalf of the ACKMA Executive Committee, I would like to offer all ACKMA members all the very best wishes for Christmas and for a happy and healthy new year. There is no doubt that 2016 will again be an eventful and progressive year for our Association, and I look forward to continuing to work with the Executive and membership in furthering the objectives of our Association.



*Get ready for Rockhampton 2016!  
Above: Capricorn Caves.  
Photo: Heidi Vandermeer  
Below: ACKMA members at Mt Etna 2008  
Photo: Steve Bourne*

