

PRESIDENTS REPORT

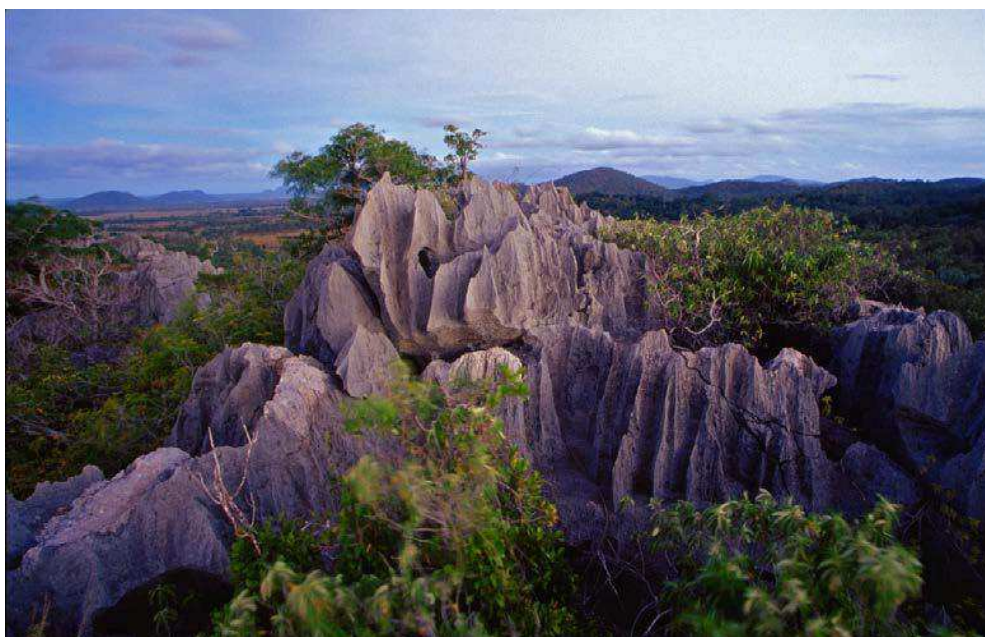
With less than two months to go as I write this report until the ACKMA AGM at Capricorn Caves, I hope that there are many finalised travel plans amongst readers and that we shall see a good turn out of members for the AGM weekend. It has been pleasing in recent years to see the AGM weekend increasingly resembling a 'mini-conference', and I am certain that 2016 will be no exception. Not that added incentive should be required to attend a gathering of the ACKMA family, however the splendid work that has been undertaken at Capricorn Caves recently deserves to be showcased, and will be a genuine treat for attendees. Ann and the team have been setting a very high bar in recent years for Australasian show cave sites to aspire to, and it will be a pleasure to have the opportunity to see all the recent developments over the AGM weekend.

In addition to the AGM weekend, the Guides School will be a real opportunity for professional development for those engaged in interpretation of show caves. I have always maintained that cave guiding is a professional undertaking that should be undertaken by professional staff. These staff should understand that they have the opportunity to shape and influence the future behaviour of their visitors. There is a significant inherent responsibility in this, and for those who are serious about their profession, the Guides School will offer new approaches to delivering meaningful take home messages, and look closely at the "toolbox" from which a guide may draw creativity and strategies for public engagement. I strongly encourage any cave guide who might be considering attending to leap at the opportunity the Guides School represents, and must

equally encourage site managers to consider providing support to staff to attend the workshop and the subsequent AGM weekend.

The upcoming AGM will also be the time to elect a new Executive team to continue to move ACKMA forward as an active and relevant association, and I would again encourage members to consider nominating for a Committee position, or approaching a fellow member to stand. New voices and new ideas on the Committee are vital, and with so many ACKMA members having differing backgrounds and areas of expertise it is important that there be a reflective and meritorious Committee. This AGM will be my last as President, and I can genuinely state that it has been an honour to serve in this capacity and to work with so great a group as has made up the Executive over the past three years.

I have no doubt that the year ahead will be every bit as challenging as the last. ACKMA continues to be an important voice for cave and karst management, providing professional input into such contemporary issues as the ongoing threat to Cliefden Caves, or in providing a submission to the draft Plan of Management for Paparoa National Park (with sincere appreciation to Mary Traves in particular for her energy on the latter activity). There remain serious issues, and serious challenges to effective and progressive cave and karst management across Australia and New Zealand. ACKMA remains the foremost organisation to engage and contribute to those issues relevant to its primary charter.



*Capricorn karst.
Photo: Supplied by Capricorn Caves*