

EDITORIAL

Steve Bourne

A large portion of this journal covers the wonderful week in Te Anau, New Zealand, for the Guides Workshop and ACKMA AGM. I won't elaborate too much here, except to highlight the event attracted 60 members which is a great turnout to a location that does take some effort to reach.

The AGM saw the re-election of Dale Calnin as president, with Neil Collinson remaining NZ vice president. Andy Spate returns to the committee after a brief absence, although he did assume the role of executive officer in the lead up to the meeting. John Brush has taken this role on with Tony Culberg accepting the role of treasurer. Scott Melton and Ann Augusteyn have been returned as committee members joined by Jodie Anderson. Dan Cove, Tim Moulds and Deborah Craven-Carden, who stepped in as interim treasurer when Cath Loder relinquished the position mid-term, have stepped down and were duly thanked for their contributions at the meeting. There were no changes to the journal publication and website management with Steve Bourne and Rauleigh Webb retaining these responsibilities.

Dave Smith's contribution to ACKMA was recognised with Life Membership awarded - a small piece outlines some of his efforts in this journal.

The next ACKMA Conference will held in Margaret River, Western Australia with the date now set for 6-11 May 2018, after Mark Delane kindly offered to host the event. I have been speaking with members of the Indonesian caving world regarding the possibility of holding a Mulu-style AGM of 2010 in that country. Lots of work to do yet to see if its feasible but it would make for an interesting experience.



*Lake Cave, Margaret River. The next ACKMA conference will be held at Margaret River in 2018.
Photo: Steve Bourne*

As well as from reports on Te Anau happenings, this journal includes articles from Scott Melton, Miles Pierce and a republishing of an article from the online scientific communication *"The Conversation"*. My partner Liz Reed and her colleagues have been awarded a sizable Australian Research Council (ARC) grant of \$669,000 as part of a project worth about \$2M at Naracoorte Caves. The media release read as follows:

Naracoorte Caves to be focus of \$2M research project

A University of Adelaide-led research project will focus on the rich fossil history of Naracoorte Caves and cement its place

on the world science stage. Announced today, the project has been awarded \$669,000 by the Australian Government through the Australian Research Council (ARC)'s Linkage Projects scheme which promotes collaborative projects between universities, industry, government and other partners.

Further cash and in-kind support is being provided by the Naracoorte Lucindale Council, the South Australian Department for Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR), the South Australian Museum, Terre à Terre, Wrattontully Wine Regions Association and the DST Group, bringing the total value of the project to about \$2 million. Researchers from the University of Melbourne and the University of Queensland will also share their expertise.

The project, led by Dr Lee Arnold and Dr Liz Reed in the University's Environment Institute and School of Physical Sciences, will provide a unique window into a key period of global climate change, animal extinctions and evolution of the modern Australian environment at the World Heritage-listed Naracoorte Caves. *"The Naracoorte Caves have preserved records of the local climate, flora and fauna for more than half a million years,"* says Co-lead Chief Investigator Dr Reed. *"Although scientists have been investigating these deposits for over 40 years, new multi-disciplinary studies and technological advances are now allowing us to look at these records in new ways. We have literally just scratched the surface."*

The project will integrate all aspects of the cave deposits, employing new approaches in geochronology, palaeontology and geochemistry to produce comprehensive ancient ecological and climate histories.

"This project will have significant implications for understanding megafauna extinctions and will inform future conservation and climate change adaptation strategies," says Co-lead Chief Investigator Dr Arnold. *"It will also transform the scientific profile of Naracoorte Caves, ensuring socioeconomic benefits to regional communities through education, ecotourism and knowledge marketing."*

The time span and exceptional preservation of the fossils make the Naracoorte deposits significant on a global scale.

Naracoorte Lucindale Council Chief Executive Officer Dr Helen Macdonald says: *"This is fantastic news and a potential economic game changer for the community of Naracoorte. The value of the partnership to the Naracoorte Lucindale Council is the ongoing interest the research work will create in the World Heritage-listed megafauna fossil site, and the opportunity it provides for the community to create a science tourism hub."*

DEWNR Group Executive Director Science Sandy Carruthers says DEWNR had actively sought to partner with this team of internationally recognised experts whose objectives align with the state government's strategies to address climate change and biodiversity conservation. *"The project will greatly advance our scientific understanding of the fossil sites at the World Heritage Naracoorte Caves and will provide benefits to both the broader community and visitors to the site,"* she says.

South Australian Museum Senior Research Scientist Dr Mark Hutchinson says: *"With this funding the Museum will work alongside its research partners to increase understanding of South Australia's globally significant natural heritage. The Museum outreach program will then take this new understanding out of our laboratories and into the hearts and minds of regional and remote communities in South Australia."*

While in New Zealand, I spent some time discussing visitor numbers with various cave managers, and the pressure that high and increasing numbers places on the cave system and the capacity of the responsible agency to deliver a quality product. Scott Melton provides some insight into the busy days at Jenolan Caves and I hope future journals may include some discussion from other sites. I have visited Postojna Cave in Slovenia on two trips to Europe when the cave visitor numbers were 500-600,000 per year. Last year they passed one million visitors on 1 November! I can't imagine what that is like to manage on a daily basis and what this may be doing to the cave.

At possibly the other end of the spectrum, Mile Pierce's article covers the use of solar energy to light Federal Cave at Buchan Caves, Victoria - environmentally friendly and catering for low visitor numbers. I do like the concept of lighting caves with the sun!

The ASF continues to work on protocols to ensure white-nose syndrome that affects bats is kept out of Australia with the upcoming Speleology Congress. The latest piece of information is reprinted here as a ready reference for cave managers and those involved with pre and post congress excursions.

Australia Post is profiling four magnificent Australian caves in its newest stamp issue: Cliefden Caves, in New South Wales; Weebubbe Cave, in Western Australia; Undara Lava Tube, in Queensland; and Kubla Khan Cave in Tasmania. These have been added to cave-related items that proliferate in our house and sit proudly alongside the Slovenian bat stamps that bear my photos. I trust Australian Post paid the photographers, or at least sought their permission, for the use of these great images on these stamps. The first day covers with Kubla Khan photos look very nice. The Australia Post website has some brief information of the series as per below.

Cliefden Caves are located along the Belubula River in New South Wales. Cliefden is one of the most significant cave systems on private land in NSW. It is the site of the first discovery of limestone on mainland Australia, in 1815 and houses an abundance of fossil deposits. The stamp features



the golden stalactites and stalagmites of the Clown Room in Cliefden Main Cave.

Weebubbe Cave is located near Eucla in Western Australia and is a culturally significant site to the Mirning people. It was formed millions of years ago and is the deepest cave in the Nullarbor. The lakes of this underground cave have incredibly clear water.

Undara Lava Tube, situated in Undara Volcanic National Park, south-west of Cairns, Queensland, is one of the longest lava tube cave systems in the world and the longest in Australia. A hollow tube was formed from a single flow of molten lava, around 190,000 years ago. Surviving segments of the tube form caves and arches, including Mikoshi Cave which is pictured on the stamp. Access is by guided tour.

Kubla Khan Cave is part of the Mole Creek Karst National Park, north of Cradle Mountain, Tasmania. Kubla Khan Cave and its formations are named after the Samuel Taylor Coleridge poem of the same name. More than two kilometres in length, Kubla Khan's incredible features include the Silk Shop shawl formations, one of which is visible on the stamp.

ACKMA Awards

Andy Spate and Tony Culberg

At the recent AGM at Te Anau, New Zealand, Andy moved to reactivate and formalize the ACKMA Awards so that members are made more aware of what they reward and the selection criteria.

1. The former annual award for the best contribution in the ACKMA Journal for the preceding year be resurrected and named the **Elery Hamilton-Smith Award**. The award will be judged by the Publications Officer and one other Member of the Association nominated by the Committee. It is suggested that the Award will be by paper certificate unless the Committee otherwise determines. It was noted that any articles contributed to the Journal by members of the judging panel would be automatically excluded from consideration.
2. The support of students or other worthy persons for their attendance. The level of support to be determined by the full Committee with the money coming from ACKMA's Life Members' Fund. The Award will be termed the **Ken Grimes Award** in recognition of his long-term contribution to better understanding of caves and karst.

The recipient will be required to make a presentation to the conference as a condition of attaining the award. The Committee will call for nominations for the award not less than six (6) months before the date of the commencement of the Conference. Nominations will be considered by sub-committee comprising 2 or 3 committee members and the conference convener. There need not necessarily be an award at each conference.

So get writing, people, for the first Awards! Let's see some contributions from those who have not written before. And let's hear the news from your work site, please. For the second, please think about students, researchers or other valuable people who might be helped to attend a conference for both their benefit and ours. Any suggestions should be sent to the ACKMA President.