

# SIXTEEN LEGS



Remember the Sixteen Legs exhibition at the ACKMA Conference at Naracoorte Caves in 2015? Sixteen Legs is an inter-linked suite of educational projects focussed on the world of Antipodean caves and cave biology. There is an education pack available including books and lessons linked to the Australian Curriculum for both primary and secondary schools. There is the documentary which I have still not seen, but from the trailers shown at Naracoorte and the reviews, is

an outstanding piece of work. The *Enter the Cave Exhibition* is still available to show at your cave site or perhaps a town near you.

**For further information, a sample lesson, ordering details and general enquiries please contact: Katrina Wills on 0439 840 758 or [sixteenlegs@bigpond.com](mailto:sixteenlegs@bigpond.com).**



## Cliefden Caves

Cliefden Caves, New South Wales, are a step closer to receiving formal protection with the New South Wales Heritage Council recommending the Cliefden Caves Area be listed for its Natural and Cultural Landscape values. The ASF has done a tremendous amount of work and we hope this is rewarded with the heritage listing of the area.

***The three most important things for bats when they are looking for a cave?***

***Echolocation, echolocation, echolocation***

*(thank you to John Cleese for this one)*

*An aerial view of Bat Cave, Naracoorte*

*Photo: Steve Bourne*

## CAVE GUIDE TRAINING SURVEY

**Andy Spate, Dave Gillieson, Scott Melton, Jodie Anderson, Cathie Plowman and Ann Augusteyn**

A small group within ACKMA – Andy Spate, Dave Gillieson, Scott Melton, Jodie Anderson, Cathie Plowman and Ann Augusteyn – has been discussing the adequacy of cave guiding following the highly successful guiding school at Capricorn Caves in 2016. Unfortunately schools such as this do not reach out to all ACKMA people or to other guides across Australia and New Zealand. Nor do we know what training is given to guides. Or what they might want. ACKMA regards itself as a professional body – thus we should push for professional and well trained guides talking about caves and karst across Australia and New Zealand – and beyond.

We shortly will be asking all ACKMA members to respond to a survey asking cave guides and managers what training is currently provided and what they would like to be delivered. We will be reaching out to others working in show cave operations.

The ACKMA Committee has endorsed the survey and it will be administered by Committee members Ann, Scott and Jodie.

ACKMA's aim is to develop 'tool boxes' for cave guide professional development. It may investigate and perhaps implement more formal certification for cave guides – such certification may well be available from a NSW TAFE or similar sources. Some show cave operations already require such certification for their guides.

As an incentive to complete the survey ACKMA will be offering free conference registration to the Margaret River WA ACKMA conference 2018 to one person drawn at random from those who participated in the survey.

We expect the survey will be administered by hard copy in the Journal and electronically using 'Survey Monkey' or a similar program. We urge all members to take part in this survey and urge you to invite non-ACKMA members in your workplace to participate as well.

*Editor's note: The Cave Guide Training Survey will be published in the September ACKMA Journal.*

National Day of Caves and Karst

The National Caves Association, which represents more than 80 show caves in the United States, Bermuda and Barbados, declared June 6 as National Day of Caves and Karst to increase awareness of the roles both play in our lives and the environment. It listed 5 reasons to encourage people to visit at least one cave over the summer break. These are summarised below - perhaps ACKMA could run a similar campaign??

1. See things they’ve never seen before.  
No two caves are alike.

2. Spend quality time with family.  
Some of the best family memories are made during summer vacations and staycations. Exploring caves with kids not only means quality time together, it can spark an interest in science and nature that will last a lifetime. Bonding opportunities exist as well when family members share a challenge such as going deep underground for an adventurous wild tour.

3. Cave tours are educational.  
Most guided tours teach guests about the history of that particular cave and the surrounding area, as well as its geology, the positive impacts of bats and the importance of cave conservation. *(well they should!- Ed.)*

4. Spending time in nature has many benefits.  
Multiple studies show that nature boosts our mental and physical well-being. Benefits, particularly when paired with exercise, include restored mental energy, better vision in children, improved concentration, sharper thinking and creativity. Spending time in natural spaces has been linked to increased energy, improved cognition, reduced anger and stress, lower blood pressure and slower heart rates.

5. Caves are fun.  
These aren’t your grandfather’s cave tours. Options for exploring and spending time in caverns are increasing each year.

TRIPADVISOR  
Andy Spate

Having an idle afternoon at Te Anau when I should have been doing other things, I have looked at all the TripAdvisor comments for those sites in Australia that I know of with cave and karst tourism values. These data were found on 21 May 2017. I did not read all the 8937 reviews! But, it would be interesting to do so. Issues with staff seem to be a recurring theme where there were not-so-good reviews. Because of the huge variability in sample sites (=number of reviews for each site) any statistical conclusions should not be drawn.

I emphasise very strongly that these are TripAdvisor reviews – they are unstructured and complainants are more than likely to be those that submit reviews. But the results seem to indicate the opposite – we seem to be doing well in presenting our caves. Nothing in these data suggest that we are doing much wrong – contrarily we are going well. Presented for your information.

