

# **\$3 MILLION FOR NARACOORTE CAVES!!!**

- Kent Henderson.

On Wednesday 26 June, a government media release was issued announcing that \$3 million had been allocated to upgrade facilities at the *Naracoorte Caves World Heritage Site*. Later that day I received a phone call from a jubilant Brian Clark with the good tidings! He was still temporarily sober at that stage, but the party was about start...!!

I nearly fell off my seat at the news! Clarkie had done it again. Frankly if a phoned me tomorrow to tell me he had funding for a 5 star hotel, I'd almost believe him...!! \$1.5 m is Commonwealth-funded from the Federal Regional Development Program, over \$1m from the S.A. State Government and the balance from Tourist South East, Flinders University and the Naracoorte District Council.

Okay, that's where the money has come from, but where is it going? Firstly, the existing Interpretation Centre will be totally replaced/refurbished into a scientific laboratory/storage/teaching theatre complex. The current adjacent kiosk/ticket area (over the present Alexandra Cave Entrance) will be redeveloped into the District Office/administration area, staff facilities, and a conference room.

In addition, a new Visitor's Interpretation Centre will be built approx. 70 metres from the current Alexandra Cave exit, featuring a ticketing area and museum/display area/kiosk. Upon this being achieved,

the Alexandra Tour route will be reversed, with the current exit becoming the cave entrance, and the present entrance becoming the exit. Substantial new car parks will also be constructed.

Naracoorte has also purchased a 200 ha property along the left side of the road about halfway between the current Visitors Centre and Victoria Fossil Cave. This gives the caves above ground title over Starburst Cave and the balance of Victoria Fossil Cave. The house on the property will be re-developed for researcher's accommodation, and substantial dormitory accommodation built onto it for students.

Blanche Cave will not miss out on the funds either. A portable stage will be constructed, together with permanent sound and lighting, allow the historic first chamber of the cave to be regularly used for cultural events.

Work on the whole project is to start almost immediately, and completion is planned within two years. Undoubtedly, the whole development, on top of that of the new Wet Cave self guided development and Bat Cave Teleview Centre, will make Naracoorte Caves a world class facility. That 5 Star Hotel? A casino perhaps? Nothing would surprise me where Brian Clark is concerned!! Bring on the 1999 ACKMA Conference at Naracoorte!!!