

# A VISION FOR JENOLAN CAVES

- Mia Thurgate

Environment Minister Pam Allan has unveiled a major refurbishment of the Grand Arch precinct at Jenolan Caves, which will considerably ease traffic congestion and create a more aesthetically-appealing and pedestrian-friendly area. A design team from the *Centennial Park and Moore Park Trust* is assisting the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust in the design process and has, with considerable community consultation, developed a master plan for the work. Priorities include minimizing vehicle congestion in the visitor precinct, improving the quality of visitor amenities and providing interpretative information about the caves.

The Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust anticipates engaging artists to weave images of the creation of the caves and karst processes, and our Aboriginal and European cultural heritage into the landscaping elements of the redevelopment. The redevelopment of the Grand Arch precinct is part of the Trust's broader vision for the protection of the caves and tourism management into the next century. Ultimately, the Trust wishes to remove vehicles from the Grand Arch precinct altogether and provide an alternative method of access to Jenolan Caves. The redevelopment work is proposed to begin later this year, but further stakeholder and community consultation will be necessary. Ted Reedy, General Manager of the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust, has stressed that Main Road 253 (through the Grand Arch) is the

major access to Jenolan Caves and there are no current proposals to close it.

A major study has been undertaken to examine future access issues (the Future Development Study) and six options have been short-listed. They are:

- 1) The status quo, allowing visitors to drive to the cave by the same route, through the Grand Arch, as has been used for many years.
- 2) From east, aerial cable car transport down Binoomea Ridge, landing east of the Grand Arch.
- 3) From west, mini shuttle buses down from Two Mile Hill, access via Titania Road to the west.
- 4) From west, upgrading the existing road to allow all vehicles to bottom (also using Titania Road).
- 5) From west, aerial cable car from Two Mile Hill to bottom, using Titania Road.
- 6) From west, as for Option 5, but using new road following Western Ridge of McKeown's Valley.

There has been wide consultation with the community and stakeholders but no preferred option/s have been announced. Studies have shown that, with the reduction of lead levels in petrol, the current transport arrangements do not pose serious problems for the sheet-web spiders (*Badumna socialis*), in the Grand Arch.