

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

- Dave Gillieson

Well, this is my first report since the June AGM at Jenolan. I was told this was a job involving very little work, but in fact I have been kept fairly busy with a number of matters arising from the AGM plus some new matters. They tell me it is better to wear out than rust out.

One pleasurable job was writing to the new Life Member and Fellows to advise them of their awards and encouraging them to keep going with all their good work. Our negotiations with the Victorian Office of Fair Trading & Business Affairs continue, and we might have to look at minor changes to the Constitution in the light of changes to the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 which took effect in July 1998.

I very recently received the details of the 3rd International Show Caves Association Congress, which is being held at the Is Zuddas Cave, Santadi, Sardinia from 19-25 October this year. The program looks very like an ACKMA conference with a mix of papers and cave visits, no doubt washed down by plenty of good red. Please contact me if you would like further details.

I was asked to write to the ASF about bolt laddering in caves. In my innocence and newfound zeal I extended this to include most bolt placements in caves and drew down some intemperate comments from ASF and ACKMA members. Lest you think I am being sanctimonious I will confess to having placed bolts in caves and on rockfaces myself, but usually only where there was no alternative short of a very dodgy belay. Ernst Holland and I will continue to explore this issue, which has been raised internationally through the UIS at the last conference in Switzerland. We will try to produce a sensible policy through continuing dialogue with the ASF and other cave users and managers.

We are currently negotiating with Mineral Resources Tasmania to carry out a consultancy on the significance of the magnesite karst in northwest Tasmania. This has arisen from an expressed desire to have ACKMA more involved in karst consultancies in our region, and my letters to the Tasmanian Premier Tony Rundle and the Mines Minister John Beswick. There are two areas involved, one on the edge of the Tarkine Wilderness and the other further south near Savage River. Both sites have karst features and some caves. Magnesite karst is rare globally and we are currently gathering information about possible magnesite karsts in the USA and the Ukraine. We hope to be able to put two ACKMA members in the field in September to assess the sites and provide

independent expert advice to the Tasmanian government.

Robyn McBeath has been working hard putting together material for the ACKMA CD-Rom, sure to be a popular item in people's Christmas stockings. One issue is the inclusion of individual papers from past ACKMA conference proceedings and older cave management proceedings dating back as far as 1972. Many of the older papers are valuable for the perspective they provide on changing ideas about management and cave infrastructure. In all cases copyright is vested in the individual authors. So - if you have any objection to any or all of your papers being on the CD, please let me know as soon as possible. I will of course be writing as well to the institutions that produced the proceedings to seek their approval.

Some very good news in June was the inclusion of the Jenolan Caves in the Blue Mountains World Heritage Nomination. If successful this will further enhance the international standing of our karst heritage with a significant number of caves and karsts already listed. Congratulations to all those whose hard work went into this over a very short time. I have recently been involved in advising the Malaysian National Parks Office on their planned World Heritage Nomination for the Mulu Caves in Sarawak. Elements of the IUCN Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection (produced by ACKMA members) have been incorporated. I will try to ensure that ACKMA members are involved in this significant development. I think that we need to have an ongoing engagement with karst planning in Southeast Asia.

I will also be attending a business meeting of the International Geographic Union karst commission in Spain and Portugal during late August. We will be looking at rocky desertification of karst in the Sierra Morena (sheep grazing) and Alentejo regions. I will also be travelling to Indonesia and China in late November and December to advise on karst management there. The Gunung Sewu karst of Java is under considerable pressure from limestone quarrying interests in conflict with rural water supply and tourism developments. In China there is considerable interest in applying new methods of karst management and rehabilitation to the rocky desertification of the classic tower karst of Guilin. This denudation of the vegetation is principally due to the ongoing use of coal as an energy source, producing acid rain.

So I hope that in future reports I will be able to bring you some impressions of what is going on in both our region and internationally.