

EDITORIAL RAMBLINGS

I have received a complaint – albeit second hand. The fact that somebody has even had the temerity to complain about their treatment in the ACKMA journal is incredulous enough, being that I am renowned for my fairness and not ever signaling any member out for *adverse* treatment. However, never let it said that I am not sympathetic to such pleas. Therefore, after her extreme exposure in the last edition, I have magnanimously decided to declare this issue *Robyn McBeath-free*. Naturally, I do await her flowery letter of thanks with interest. Still, as it is very likely I will receive a feast of counter-complaints that her lovely countenance has been expunged from this edition, I may well, of course, over-react in the next (March) Journal. It has been a few editions since we had a centerfold....

The *Naracoorte Conference Organizing Committee Meeting* due for November, has been re-scheduled to late December. Planning and organizing for the Conference is well advanced. Once again, the Program and Booking Form is inserted in this Journal. **Note that registration is due in by 1st February, 1999. DO NOT MISS THIS CONFERENCE**, it will be truly wonderful!

Wow! Was the Official Opening of the new Naracoorte Cave Interpretation Centre a great event! It is unspeakably wonderful (see the article elsewhere in this Journal). I say again, **DO NOT MISS THE NARACOORTE CONFERENCE!** And yes, Brian Clark has done it again, he's got yet more development money – this time \$380,000. It will be spent on putting steps in Cathedral Cave (an important scientific site), further work in the Interpretation Centre, re-vegetation work in the Reserve, and other projects.

I was speaking to Dave Hearn at Wellington Caves, NSW, recently. The Phosphate Mine "Cave" has now been operating, most successfully, for just on two years now. Overall visitation at the caves is up 14% over the past 12 months, which is a positive result. Looking ahead, Dave hopes to see the re-lighting of Cathedral Cave budgeted in the next financial year which, with Gaden Cave updated a few years back, will bring Wellington completely up to today's standards.

Ann Augusteyn, manager of Olsen's Caves, is recently back in Central Queensland after a sojourn to the Eco Tourism Conference held at Margaret River, WA, in late October. She advises that the Conference itself was great value, and she was most impressed with *Caveworks*. However, what really

blew her away was the new high tech self-guiding in Mammoth Cave (described in the last ACKMA Journal). See Ann's brief article elsewhere in this Journal. Back at Olsens, Ann and Ken are putting together the final touches to their own Interpretation Centre which has been open for several months now, prior to its *official opening* planned for March next year. More news as it comes to hand.

Still in Queensland, Lana Little, Chillagoe Caves District Ranger, advises that work has recently been finished to insert a new platform in the *Picnic Chamber* of Royal Arch Cave. It is made of *Coratech*, a fibreglass-type material, consisting of gating and floor mesh, with stainless steel fixing and hardwood beams. Reputed advantages are that it is stable, there is no toxic leeching, and most of all, it is significantly quieter than metal flooring. The platform will be assessed over probably 2-3 years, and if successful (likely given the dry cave environment at Chillagoe), then it will be used for new platforms in the *Royal Arch Chamber*. The next main capital works program will be a shelter at the Trezkin Cave entrance. The project will require very careful engineering, and a capital works application is in for funding for the design works.

Our internationally-rampart karst guru, Elery Hamilton-Smith, has returned from his recent trip to the Kras region of Slovenia, and his report is herein. He was also due to visit Vietnam in December, but this trip has evidently been deferred until January so, with prayer, we may see an article on Vietnamese karsts in the March Journal.

Speaking of overseas excursions, Dave Gillieson was due for a karst jaunt to Indonesia in late November - early December, but unfortunately the less-than-secure political situation and recent rioting in that country has meant a postponement to some future time. The thought of Dave in rioting Indonesia makes the mind boggle, doesn't it!

As for myself, I will be visiting Wombeyan, Jenolan, probably Borenore and maybe Abercrombie in the immediate post-Christmas period this year, and then Yarrangobilly and the Cooleman karst with Dave Gillieson and Andy Spate in early January. Might get to Wee Jasper too, and possibly Buchan on the way there or back. Doubtlessly, the March Journal will contain some resultant words and photos.....!