

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- Brian Clark

CHINA!!!! What an experience! The Olympic Games – what an experience! Having just recently returned from three weeks in China with Nick White and Arthur Clarke, where we attended the ISCA Conference (held as a symposium on Show Cave Management in collaboration with various Chinese government institutions), I have since presented a paper on the “re-invention” of Naracoorte Caves at a *Tourism Council of Australia* conference. Which is all just an introduction to the point that Laurie Lawrence was a guest speaker. What a privilege!

If you EVER get the chance to hear this man in action – grab it! To hear first hand, the behind the scenes story of the Olympic Games from his perspective and how those same driving forces can be integrated into our approach to life, business and management of our country itself, was simply amazing. His delivery of his poem ‘*Catherine Astrid Solomae Freeman, - larriken, - ratbag, - barefoot dreamer !*’ was stunning. Tears stung my eyes at the finish, and not just because I had to get up and talk to the same audience after this incredible orator.

The trip to China and the Games are linked in so much as, despite of our national sport of *mowing down the tall poppies* as quick as you wink, we can and usually do, do things pretty well in this country. And that includes our exploitation and conservation of our Show Caves. Laurie told a supposedly true story about a strategy to unnerve an American swimmer which involved an Aussie quietly informing him, as he was about to launch himself for his leg of the relay: ‘Hey (name with-held) I’ve just pissed in your lane!’ The Aussie ducked back out of the Americans lane and left the pool. And Laurie swears that if you time the stroke rate, when the American was on the final leg and approaching the offended area, his stroke rate dropped and Australia took the gold.

True or not, who knows, but it’s a great story. From my position there is an important moral to the story. There is always going to be some one trying to put your stroke rate off when you want or need to implement change. Don’t slow down – just keep your eye on the spare lane – and be prepared to change lanes at short notice!

Now, back to China and the conference. You’ve got a hard act to follow Mick Chalker! The conference and its attendees was not unlike our own, except that we had our own very attractive and very personable personal interpreters for the duration of the conference. Now, I believe we can learn a lot from this. Personal interpreters will prevent a lot of misunderstandings at our next conference. We will know what the Kiwis and the Tasmanians are REALLY saying. And a Police escort, with closure of all side roads for the entire route, whenever the conference went for site inspections, that’s another good idea. No one will get side tracked into interesting but unscheduled caves, or left behind in cosy country pubs. Oh, and a conference clinic – 24 hours a day, another great idea Mick! Just think about it. No lost time to VB flu. Just send them downstairs to the conference clinic for a double shot of Vitamin B in the left buttock and Bobs your uncle! Full attendance guaranteed!!

And as for food, refreshments and entertainment, well, just do your best Mick. Arthur, Nick and I promised we would not talk about this aspect of the conference to anyone. It wouldn’t be fair. Similarly, the caves in China – impossible for words to do justice to some of the most amazing caves and incredible solutions to moving enormous volumes of visitors. But have no fear, piccies are sure to follow in good time. See you all at Wombeyan.