

# LAUNCH OF THE FRIENDS OF WELLINGTON CAVES

- Andy Spate

Andy Spate, Armstrong Osborne and Mike Augee follow the Friends of Wellington Caves into Cathedral Cave.



Following the recent local government elections in New South Wales there have been some changes to the Wellington Caves Advisory Committee.

We now have a new Chair, the recently elected Councillor Dr Mike Augee – the distinguished vertebrate palaeontologist from the University of New South Wales who has semi-retired to Wellington to establish a fossil study centre.

One of Mike's enthusiasms for some years – more than aided and abetted by former Mayor, and long-term supporter of Wellington Caves, Campbell Gregory – has been the creation of a 'Friends of Wellington Caves' support group.

Their enthusiasm came to fruition on Saturday 24 July when 40-50 people from Wellington and surrounds came to the Caves to see a slide presentation underground in Cathedral Cave from Mark Spencer – a caver/diver/photographer who provided the stunning images seen in *Australian*

*Geographic*. The group then divided into three to attend dissertations and explanations from:

- 1) Mike Augee on palaeontological aspects and the use and development of the Phosphate Mine (a cave which contains phosphate deposit, internationally significant vertebrate fossils, and now an important cave-tourism operation)
- 2) Armstrong Osborne on the geological, geomorphological and European cultural heritage aspects of Cathedral Cave and the site generally, and
- 3) Andy Spate and Michael Anlezark (from the Burrendong Arboretum) on karst processes and surface geomorphology, and on vegetation and ecological processes.

Each group of Friends rotated through the three presentations learning about Wellington Caves, their environmental setting and the management issues to be confronted.

Whilst the whole day appears to have been a considerable success, the highlight for most was visiting Mike's palaeontological workshop to learn much about Australia's Quaternary and late Tertiary mammalian fossils.

The attendees have registered their interest with Wellington Shire Council in becoming 'Friends of Wellington Caves' to assist the Caves Advisory Committee, Manager Chris George and his staff and the Council in enhancing the management of the caves reserve.

We hope to increasingly utilize the enthusiasm and energy of the Friends to assist us in better managing and enhancing Wellington Caves for the benefit of the local community and for the better understanding of Australian caves and their values.

