

Four Wise Men. The Keynote Speakers at the Father Tennison Woods Symposium at CAVEPS: L to R – Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith, Dr Mike Augee, Professor Ernie Lundelius (USA) and Professor Rod Wells.



**10TH CONFERENCE ON AUSTRALASIAN
VERTEBRATE EVOLUTION PALAEOLOGY
AND SYSTEMATICS (CAVEPS)
- NARACOORTE CAVES, 29 MARCH-2 APRIL 2005**

–Steven Bourne

Naracoorte Caves hosted the 10th CAVEPS, with over 130 delegates attending, including 20 internationals from the United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand. The five day conference included two days of general sessions, a day dedicated to cave palaeontology and a very popular two day Quaternary Extinctions symposium.

High profile delegates included Prof Tony Barnosky (US), a leading scientist in the extinction debate and his wife Dr Liz Hadley, with experience in cave research, Prof Alan Cooper who has recently moved to Adelaide to lead an ancient DNA laboratory and Prof Richard Tedford who pioneered much of the palaeontological exploration of northern South Australia in his capacity as Curator at the American Natural History Museum.

The New Zealand contingent included Trevor Worthy, a well-known ACKMA member and his partner Jenny Jones attended along with Dr Paul Scofield of the Christchurch Museum. United Kingdom representatives included Prof Moya Smith and husband John from Oxford University.

Four of the five days sessions were held in the Naracoorte Town Hall, approximately 10 kilometres from the Caves Park. The opening sessions were dedicated to tourism, education and management of fossil sites, building on the concept introduced during the Brisbane CAVEPS in 2003. These sessions were open to the public and a few people took advantage of the offer.

The cave palaeontology day was held in the unique setting of Blanche Cave, providing the perfect backdrop for the day's papers. Four keynote addresses set the stage for the day, Prof Ernie Lundelius from USA, Dr Mike Augee who highlighted the early work undertaken at Wellington Caves and Prof Rod Wells who gave an overview of Naracoorte research since the Victoria Fossil Caves discovery. Prof Elery Hamilton Smith provided a keynote address on the life and work of Father Julian Tenison Woods, Naracoorte's first palaeontologist and after whom the day's proceeding was named.

The conference dinner on Thursday evening was attended by the SA Minister for Tourism, Dr Jane Lomax-Smith who captured the

attention of her audience with her knowledge of the states' fossil resources in talk delivered with great humour. She is a passionate supporter of Naracoorte Caves, driving 3½ hours from Adelaide for the dinner and straight back the next morning.

About 80 delegates took the opportunity to visit the Naracoorte Caves NP on Friday evening to view the Wonambi Fossil Centre and Victoria Fossil Cave. Special viewings were offered of the main fossil deposit that certainly opened the eyes of a few palaeontologists!



Dr. Liz Reed (left) showing the Fossil Chamber to delegates. L to R – Waler Boles, Anne Musser, Trevor Worthy, Alan Cooper, Paul Scofield and Linda Deer.

A two day pre conference trip was attended by 12 people who visited sites within the Naracoorte Caves NP and around the

Limestone Coast region. The 6 day post conference trip had 18 full time and 3 part time participants, and visited sites including the Tertiary Limestone at Mannum, megafauna sites at Redbanks CP at Burra and Ediacaran sites in the Flinders Ranges NP. Participants were provided expert interpretation at each of these sites by Dr Brian MacGowran, Prof Rod Wells and Dr Ian Dyson respectively. The trip concluded with a day viewing the fossil collections at the SA Museum in Adelaide.

The conference was an enormous success for Naracoorte Caves. It highlighted the scientific importance of the park and will hopefully attract some interested researchers. All were impressed (and jealous!) with the Wonambi Fossil Centre and some excellent links have been established with other fossil interpretive centres.

The local community of Naracoorte benefited greatly from the conference but also provided great support with excellent sponsorships and service. It will long be remembered for the red wine!! Major contributions were made by many people to deliver a successful event, including Andy Spate who ran the IT for us. He had a very busy time, loading over 100 presentations and even putting Dr Tim Flannery's talk together for him at the last minute! The proceedings of the conference will be published in *Alcheringa* next June, with a few copies of the conference abstracts available from Naracoorte Caves at \$15 plus postage.



CAVEPS Conference Session in Blanche Cave, Naracoorte