

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

– Steve Bourne

I trust that all sites have had a busy holiday season and there are smiles on cave managers across Australia and New Zealand. It has been quite a productive time at Naracoorte and Tantanoola, however our other South Australian cave site, Kelly Hill Caves had a tough start to the season.

Those who attended the 2006 ACKMA AGM will recall the wonderful scenery of Kangaroo Island, the spectacular bush and wildlife and pristine coastlines. Well unfortunately most of it was scorched by bushfires prior to Christmas, with most of the Flinders Chase National Park and Cape Gantheume Conservation Park (the area around Seal Bay) lost to the fires. All up, nearly 20% of the island was burnt.

The Kelly Hill Caves area was spared but the fires burnt right up to the Flinders Chase and Seal Bay visitor centres. This halted tourism for a period and now the island is in a rebuilding phase.

There has been a change in the ACKMA 2009 conference committee with Jayme Hatcher stepping down as convenor with Anne Wood stepping into the breach. I am sure Anne will do a great job with her committee and I thank Jayme for her work in the initial stages. The conference is just over twelve months away so make sure you have it heavily inked (not pencilled!) in your diaries.

ACKMA identity Nick White recently brought Iranian PhD student Sedigh Ghorbani to Naracoorte for a short visit. It was fascinating to learn more about a country most of us will never visit and issues he is trying to deal with. The karst area in the north of the country borders Afghanistan and Turkmenistan – getting maps of the karst area and cave locations is difficult!??

The lack of understanding and protection of karst water resources was a concern for Sedigh and he found the Limestone Coast region an excellent area in which to learn. I was also able to arrange some Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation staff including Saad Mustafa to assist. This happened to be a master stroke because Saad is also Kurdish like Sedigh.

I recently attended a workshop in Sydney on *Rainfall records and climate variability beyond the measured record*. It was an excellent workshop put together by ANSTO staff Ed Hodges and Henk Heijnis and brought together climate change and weather researchers, those involved in water management for capital cities and cave managers. A review of the day is provided elsewhere in the journal.

Naracoorte is hosting student Elaine Mun for eight weeks on an internship as part of her studies. Elaine is undertaking a Masters in Heritage Management, a degree focussed on World Heritage management and supported by UNESCO. Collaboration between Australian and European universities developed the degree and Elaine is off to Germany to continue her studies. I

find these opportunities to host students like Sedigh and Elaine most rewarding.

Last year we had Shizhen from China who Buchan conference attendees met. Shizhen has secured the job working in karst she was seeking. She even managed to find time to enjoy a wedding ceremony with husband Shui in December. Warmest congratulations to them both!



Above and below: Scenes from wedding of Shizhen and Shui



This report is being written just prior to Naracoorte and Tantanoola staff heading off to Jenolan for the Cave and Karst Presenter's Conference. I am jealous that I won't be attending; the program is excellent with a great balance of workshops, guest speakers and networking.

This concept is one I am a strong advocate for – training and re-training of interpretive staff, guides, hosts or whatever title we give these most important staff is too easily dropped off the agenda when budgets become tight. Thank you to the Jenolan team for hosting this year's event and your efforts to ensure its undoubted success.

Kent has been active in assisting AGM Weekend convenor Anne Augusteyn organising the AGM weekend in Rockhampton. For once in my life I was first registered, and it wasn't that difficult!!

I am sure it will be a great weekend and I look forward to seeing many of you there in May.