



# Editorial Ramblings

Wow! Wasn't the 2008 ACKMA Annual General Meeting Weekend at Capricorn Caves a stunning success! A full report is herein. What, you missed it? Fear not, the **18th ACKMA Conference** is coming up at Margaret River in Western Australia next year. Put the dates, **3-9 May 2008**, in your diary now! The Registration Form will be inserted in the September ACKMA Journal. See YOU there!

Let's get the bad news out of the way first. It is with very great regret that I advise that Ken Augusteyn died on Monday 10 March, after a long illness. Ken, and his wife, Ann, of course, have owned and operated Capricorn Caves near Rockhampton for nearly twenty years. Ken, together with Ann, has long been a great supporter of ACKMA. He will be greatly missed.

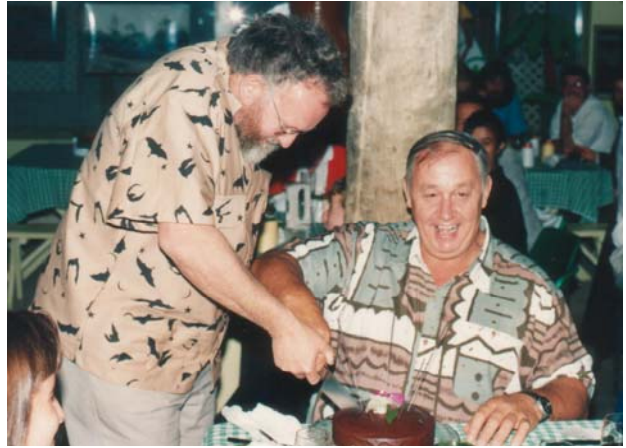
Ken's funeral was held at the Rockhampton Crematorium and ACKMA Fellow Dianne Vavryn attended to represent ACKMA. I am sure the many of you who knew Ken will join me in passing on our deepest sympathy to Ann and her family.

Indeed, Ann is bearing up quite well under the circumstances, and having ACKMA on her patch for our recent AGM Weekend was a great tonic. Her election as a Fellow of ACKMA didn't do her any harm either!

The first image, below, is of Ken and Ann at the 10th ACKMA Conference in Rockhampton in 2003. Somehow a (considerably younger...) Andy Spate has come between them!



Ken with his birthday cake at the same Conference, and yes, that's Andy getting a helping....



Some more unfortunate news... Well known ACKMA member, and Manager of Te Anau Caves in New Zealand, Neil Collinson, was involved in a bad car accident on 27 January. It was head on smash with a campervan that crossed the centerline when he was heading down to the south coast. He was in hospital for some time but is now home, though still with both legs out of action. Evidentially, it was a very close call, and he was very lucky not to be killed. He has had a left leg and knee reconstruction, after operations to his right leg which included plating of a compound break of his femur and also a smashed heel.

Fortunately, his head and spine are OK (thanks to airbags). Neil expects it will be at least more than several months before he can return to work. His youngest daughter Greer and her friend were also in the smash, but fortunately they received only minor injuries. I am sure all members will join me in wishing Neil a full and speedy recovery.

Now, the great news – Buchan! ACKMA Fellow Dale Calnin reports 'It's all happening!' He has a tidy \$600,000 *in his pocket*, with the promise of much more to follow. Royal Cave is currently closed for effectively a full re-light. All 240v fittings in both Royal and Fairy Caves are to be removed, and the caves re-lit substantially in LEDs, although some 32v fittings will stay. Royal will be closed for eight weeks, and then Fairy will be done – with both back 'on-line' by September. All emergency/track lighting in both caves will be replaced with LEDs. The Royal re-lighting will substantially follow Neil Kell's lighting plan. In addition, a large amount of hand railing will be replaced with stainless steel.

But wait, there's more! – Replacement of Fairy Creek Bridge (\$80K); Upgrade of Swimming Pool amenities (\$80K); Heritage Rock Wall Restoration – two retaining walls (\$50K); Construction of the main Picnic BBQ Pavilion (\$20K); Stability Assessment and Restoration of Entrance Archway (\$12K); and Upgrade of Royal Cave car park and exit track (\$15K). Stunning stuff! Dale reckons he was too busy to come to our Rocky AGM – a very poor excuse. Anyway, there will undoubtedly be a paper at our Margaret River Conference next year!

Pseudoscorpion – from a southwest WA cave.  
Photo: Ross Anderson.



**THE 19TH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF SUBTERRANEAN BIOLOGY** will convene in Fremantle, Western Australia from 21-26 September 2008 under the auspices of the International Society for Subterranean Biology. These symposia are the principle global forum connecting researchers working on both the terrestrial and aquatic components of subterranean biology.

Australia's subterranean fauna is amongst the more diverse globally, a far cry from little more than a decade ago when it was considered impoverished. Recent studies have revealed classes, orders and families of animals new to Australia and the Southern Hemisphere. Diversity is particularly high in the rangelands and the arid zone, a distribution that coincides with major resource projects for which subterranean fauna has become a significant environmental issue. This research was initiated by the Western Australian Museum, the host institution for the conference, and developed in collaboration with a national and global network of scientists.

Details of the conference can be found at <http://www.issb2008.org.au/> along with registration forms and a call for papers.

**REGISTRATION IS OPEN.** The Abstract Submission Deadline is **1st July**.

It was great to see ACKMA Fellow Lana Little at our recent AGM Weekend at Capricorn Caves – she drove, with one of her staff for company, about twelve hours from Chillagoe to be present! (...and twelve hours back...). That's dedication for you! She reports that considerable work is being done at Chillagoe Caves, with a bank of funds being steadily built up for re-lighting. Work was halted in February for some weeks after a major flood, as

seen in the two photos below of *The Madonna* in Donna Cave – normally viewed by visitors well above eye level...



Chris Bradley, ASF's ACKMA liaison Officer, advised me recently that he had received 'the best bit of spam I've had in a while'. The email offered him 'One million dollars from an eighteen year old deaf person – who said 'I got your email via a deceased member of the Australian Cave and Karst Management Association'.

Says Chris, 'How can a deceased member have given them my email...?' So a warning to all members, please do not give out your email address when you are dead (and possibly be a bit more careful when you are alive...).

And finally, Andy Spate has insisted I publish the cartoon below, under caption *Prominent ACKMA Identity addresses the Annual General Meeting*. I have NO idea to whom he refers....



