

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

– Steve Bourne

L to R: ACKMA Life Member, Rauleigh Webb; ACKMA Fellow and Immediate Past President, Robyn McBeath; and Steve Bourne
– ACKMA Conference 2009.



Most cave sites are now enduring the slower winter period. From past experience though, this also tends to be the time for maintenance and getting everything in order before visitation picks up again with the onset of warm weather.

David Head of Weidmuller, who many will know through his showcasing of LED lighting at ACKMA conferences, is heading to South Australia to demonstrate his products at several cave sites.

The technology and products he has developed with Jenolan will be spreading further afield. The fibre optic system installed in Kelly Hill is not performing as it should due to a manufacturing problem.

If anyone is considering using this technology it would be worth contacting Nick Heath to discuss the issues with the product.

After visiting the Nullarbor for the first time in May, I was back there again in July! Koonalda Cave was the focus of the visit and a report of this trip appears elsewhere in this journal.

It seems a few other 'cave people' have been on the move as well and I thank the Jenolan crew for hosting Julie from Naracoorte. Rob Ellis and his wife Carol from Kangaroo Island visited Brian Clark in Mulu, reporting a wonderful experience.

As I write this there are only 230 sleeps before I land in Miri, but who's counting?? When this ACKMA AGM 'Weekend' at Mulu was first proposed, we thought 25-30 might be a good result.

It seems most members are holding to their promise (threat?) to attend and I believe bookings are over 65 already (as of early August)!! I suggest if you want a bed to get your booking in quickly or you may end up in the hollow log with the python Brian has reserved for me.

Although most ACKMA members prefer their caves to be air-filled rather than water-filled, you may be interested in a project commencing at Piccaninnie Ponds near Mount Gambier in South Australia.

Cave divers are placing data loggers at various depths to measure water quality from several effluxes in the system, including at a depth of 100 metres. A continuous stream of data will be relayed to the offices of the Department for Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation via radio telemetry. This interesting project will reveal water quality at the end of the system in the region and provide information on the health and potential impacts on this important subterranean wetland. Work is continuing to have the Ponds added to the Ramsar List as a site of international significance.

Naracoorte Caves reached an important milestone on 3 August. It marked forty years since a much slimmer Grant Gartrell squeezed his way into the Fossil Chamber in Victoria Fossil Cave and made possibly the most important cave fossil discovery ever.

I know he was much slimmer because the report states the entry point was just 25 cm high!! Thanks Grant, without that Naracoorte would be a whole lot different today. Grant's enthusiasm is still high and I have been working with him to find a solution to how cavers might be able to access Town Cave in Curramulka (Yorke Peninsula, South Australia) in the future.

The cave entrance is on council-controlled Crown Land and has become unstable. In today's risk-averse society it has been deemed unsafe (which it is!) – see the photo below...

We are hoping that an arrangement might be possible to protect council from liability as land holders and stabilise the entrance to enable access once again.

I hope all is well in your caves and visitors come flooding in with the onset of spring.



Photo: Graham Pilkington