

JENOLAN gets the GOLD!

Dan Cove

The 2011 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards were announced at a gala dinner at the Cairns Convention Centre on 2 March. It was a great night for Australian show-caves generally, as both Jenolan and Jewel Cave, Margaret River, were contending for the title of Australia's best tourist attraction – the first time that two show-cave systems have reached this level of recognition and achievement. In addition, Jenolan was a finalist in the category of "Cultural/Heritage Tourism". Competition was naturally fierce for all categories, with the Australian Tourism Awards finalists being the winners from each State and Territory. A small delegation from Jenolan dusted off tuxedos and posh frocks and made the trip north for the big night.

In what turned out to be an amazing evening, Jenolan Caves became the only tourist attraction in the country to win two gold awards, picking up both "Best Tourist Attraction" and "Cultural/Heritage Tourism". This was the first time that Jenolan has achieved success on the national awards stage, following on from the record haul of two gold and two silver awards at the NSW Tourism Awards last November.

This success was the culmination of an enormous amount of hard work on the part of all staff. The world's most extraordinary natural attraction by itself is not what wins an award, it is the great people that transform the visitor experience that do this and Jenolan is truly fortunate to have so dedicated and professional a staff. The judges for the awards made particular note of the continuing spirit of innovation and reinvention evident in the product offering and approaches of staff to presentation of tours and activities.

In a case of "no rest for the wicked", life continues to be hectic at Jenolan. With the receipt of grant funding from the NSW Government, we are now working on the development of new interpretive product. A new version of the self-guided audio tour of the Nettle Cave will focus upon the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage of the area and the Dreamtime creation stories of the Gundungarra people, including incorporating elements of the story told in the Gunundgurra dialect. The three main surface walks are also being transformed into themed walks exploring respectively the geological heritage, Aboriginal Cultural heritage and the European Cultural Heritage/engineering history. These will incorporate new signage, and development of a new smart-phone app with GPS triggered commentary and images.



Dan Cove and Peter Austen are all smiles after success at the Australian Tourism Awards