

ACKMA Presidents Report

September 2022

The pandemic restrictions are beginning to ease in Australasia and yet there are COVID variants in our communities. It seems the governments of our region are relying more on the vaccination rates to minimise the rate of deaths in our societies. We all still need to be careful and minimise risk.

Tourism is returning and our cave tourism sites are beginning to recruit and train up all staff as we get back to a new normal. The projects of cave sites continue as a response to previous bushfires, floods and landslips continue across Australia and New Zealand. The Nelson area in New Zealand had significant floods in August 2022. This is the site of our conference in May 2023 so we wish them well in recovery regardless of our impending visit and trust the injection of a conference like ours will be beneficial economically.

The International Year of Caves and Karst was extended to a two-year event 2021 - 2022 due to many international events not being able to occur because of the pandemic. As always but particularly now we strive to educate and promote the themes explore, understand and protect in all our natural and developed cave and karst areas in Australasia. I trust you are all continuing awareness of this in your communications and events.

In August 2022 your ACKMA Committee met again, and some recent issues were discussed:

Wombeyan Caves Minister and Shadow Minister meetings have occurred - ASF liaison continues. The projects are commencing yet concerns do continue.

Green Energy Issues at Arrowsmith WA and Nullarbor WA - ASF liaison continues. ACKMA is supportive of green energy developments, but we need to remain vigilant and constructively help prevent issues conflicting around caves and karst with these developments.

Greenlink Land purchase at Takaka NZ. This is a NZSS project to secure an important catchment in this area of New Zealand. A \$10,000 commitment by ACKMA has been earmarked by your committee.

We discussed the May 2023 ACKMA Conference (21 to 26 May 2023) Nelson and Takaka NZ. This discussion included some of the planning including Zoom account and funding. We encourage as many of you as possible to physically attend this wonderful site in the South Island of New Zealand. We do plan to have an online component however there are significant band width issues and online components may be a great challenge. You do need to see the area if you can make it.

The ACKMA Website and email server is in a better position after a long and challenging resurrection. Rauleigh Web has been and continues to be involved in this important part of our electronically documented and overall corporate image.

Indigenous involvement in cave management was raised by Prof. David Gillieson and ACKMA aims to carefully engage with the correct traditional people of regions we engage with. We aim to be good ambassadors for our traditional people's rights and to work cooperatively on cave and karst issues.

An interview with Chris Bowen MP and the Climate Council has occurred and the delicate nature of landscape was raised, particularly cave and karst areas. This gained interest by others who share similar concerns such as rainforest alliances where they are concerned about large swaths of clearing for wind and solar projects.

A Jenolan Caves communication has occurred regarding projects, interpretation objectives, historic gardens etc. We aim to be better connected and provide assistance where we can. We are yet to secure meetings but will endeavour to do this.

The Australian State of the Environment Report includes caves and karst. Thankfully our landscape is acknowledged in this critical document.

Please remember to promote the International Year of Caves and Karst and the themes explore, understand and protect. Keep on guard against COVID and I trust you all stay well.

Ian Eddison

President

