

ACKMA Presidents Report

Ian Eddison

Dear ACKMA members,

As the 2022 calendar year comes to a close, I can report to you that your committee have been very active. We met online in October and November. Several other meetings have been attended by members of the committee to remain aware of and contribute to major developments as outlined in this report.

There are new COVID variants evolving and rising in our societies. We all still need to be careful and minimise risk.

Our cave tourism sites have been busy with school excursions and are recruiting and training staff for the next holiday period.

The International Year of Caves and Karst is now ending. This was extended to a two-year event 2021 – 2022 with many international events being unable to occur because of the pandemic. The theme: explore, understand, and protect, has been reflective of what we do in all our natural and developed cave and karst areas. I trust you all participated in or observed online through the International Year of Caves and Karst website the various projects globally as well as added interpretation of this through your own communications and events.

The ACKMA Website and email server is in a better position after a long and challenging resurrection by Webmaster Rauleigh Webb. Thank you Rauleigh.

The engineering projects at cave sites continue as a response to previous bushfires, floods and landslips continue across Australia and New Zealand.

Wombeyan Caves projects are underway. Abercrombie Caves are dealing with a new landslip on their entrance road. Jenolan Caves are struggling with road access but do hope to open for Christmas holidays. Buchan Caves continue with their redevelopment projects.

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

The Western Australia Government last year announced in July 2021 a proposed major green hydrogen project on WA's remote south-eastern coast at Eucla. Some of your committee have attended various meetings online and continue to work towards the protection of the caves and karst under threat due to the size and scale of the project. The consortium behind the project, dubbed the Western Green Energy Hub, is made up of InterContinental Energy, CWP Global and Mirning Green Energy Limited. Rather than impacting the environment under the guise of the development of 'Green Energy', ACKMA and the ASF feel there is much to be said about the national and world heritage values of the region and it requires protection.

It gives me great pleasure to announce ACKMA has contributed to the 'Greenlink' land purchase at Takaka NZ. See a report later in the Journal. This is a NZSS project to secure an important catchment in this area of New Zealand. A \$10,000 NZ commitment by ACKMA has been made. You will hear more on this from our New Zealand members, and it is part of our base region in our conference in 2023.

Kirsty had hoped that this journal issue would be devoted to New Zealand as we gear up for our May 2023 ACKMA conference at Nelson and Takaka. However, not much information reached our Editor. You are urged to plan to attend this wonderful site in the South Island of New Zealand. We do plan to have an online component however there are significant bandwidth issues and online components may be a great challenge. You do need to see the area if you can make it. From our past experience, Anita and I recommend this area to you and encourage you to consider a New Zealand holiday around the conference.

I wish you and your families a lovely Christmas and New Year.

Ian Eddison

President

I pay my respects to the traditional custodians of the land where I live, work and engage in.

