

ACKMA Presidents Report

Ian Eddison

Normal business seems to be occurring following the previous years of closures due to the pandemic. There are however new COVID variants evolving in our societies. We all still need to be careful and minimise risk. I personally began the year with another dose after a cluster in a workplace made the new year look bleak. Please continue to be careful of yourself, your loved ones and colleagues.

Our cave tourism sites have been busy with the training of staff for general business operation and in the lead up to the Easter holiday period. It seems the schools are planning and booking excursions. The scientific world is getting back into research projects in the field as well.

The engineering projects of cave tourist sites continue as a response to previous bushfires, floods and landslips continue across Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand and Waitomo Caves in particular recently copped a cyclonic weather event. Wombeyan Caves planned projects are underway. Abercrombie Caves access repairs are being worked through after a landslip on their entrance road and damage to the causeway. Jenolan Caves are struggling with road access but have limited tours. Jenolan Caves has a huge list of projects to work through. Buchan Caves continue with their redevelopment projects. Kelly Hill Cave in Kangaroo Island also is under redevelopment.

ACKMA has continued liaison with ASF on a number of issues. The damage to significant indigenous art in Koonalda Cave was one and media by ASF certainly raised the lack of security at the site. Another was the continuation of proposed wind, solar and hydrogen on the WA side of the Nullarbor. Another was a Jenolan Caves 'Grand Arch Precinct Plan' which required a lot of time to digest, discuss and formulate constructive response. A Flood Management Survey for Jenolan Caves occurred and both ACKMA and ASF were invited after making contact on the issue and a brief extension was enabled for us to be involved.

The Hills of Gold Wind Farm has had some modification in plans following the submissions such as ACKMA had lodged. Our concern was the amount of vegetation to be cleared and the proximity to Timor Caves NSW and other rocky outcrops being habitat for microbats.

ACKMA has formally commented (neither supported nor rejected) on the Regis Gold Mine proposal at Kings Plains near Blayney NSW. We made the point that the risk to Cliefden Caves is real if poor judgement in management of tailings dams and major rain event occurs. The fact that other gold mines (Cadia) are being managed closer to Cliefden Caves was a part of the advice to us.

LED lighting is an important part of show caves these days, but we are now aware of the problems with certain spectra of light and the depletion of cave fauna. You would note the talks online and articles within our journals. Please make contact if you are considering any new lighting in show caves so you are pointed in the right direction before you make your commitments to infrastructure.

The ACKMA conference in May 2023 at Nelson and Tākaka is now looming, and I trust you are planning how you can make the most of travel to the region. The last two journals have included important details and so will this latest journal so please now plan your trip, register for the conference, and plan how you can make the most of this wonderful part of the world.

I seek cave managers to consider their opportunity to host an ACKMA conference in the coming years. Your site does not have to be completely up to date to showcase it to our members. We do need accommodation for attendees and places to present and discuss current issues. We are working toward a conference venue each year so please contact me to discuss your cave site and which year you would like us to plan toward a conference.

Ian Eddison
President

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



ACKMA 2023 Conference Logo

The ACKMA Conference logo was designed by Aynsley, a student at Tākaka High School. She wrote the following explanation of her design:

"My logo was inspired by the maori kowhaiwhai, the green represents the bush/nature the koru represents the mountains, the black line running through the middle represents a cave with little people crawling through it. The white down the bottom represents the taniwha of waikoropupu springs. And the blue is the beautiful clear water."

Photo taken by Art Teacher Jason and used with Aynsley's permission.

