

ACKMA Strategic Plan 2023 - Some Preliminary Results

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Here are some preliminary results from the surveys sent out to members by both Jodie and David.

Why have ACKMA?

Some responses from 2019 survey by Jodie Strickland

- Creates a network
- Develop and share best practice
- Share information and resources
- Advocate for cave & karst conservation & protection
- Provide support and advice
- Provide training and development

Some challenges

Responses from 2019 survey:

- Building membership
- Relevance
- Out-dated technology
- Ageing membership
- Attracting younger members
- Environmental knowledge of managers
- Membership engagement
- Commercialism vs sustainability

Some opportunities

Responses from 2019 survey:

- Guide training
- Online resources
- Use of technology
- Younger members
- Advocacy
- Caver relations

Why am I in ACKMA?

Responses so far in 2023, from survey by David Gillieson:

- Networking
- Shared interests
- Experience other sites
- To learn
- Best practice in cave management
- Conservation & protection
- Information & resources

What does ACKMA do well?

- Journal
- Conferences
- Networking
- Exchange of knowledge and ideas
- Expert advice on cave and karst conservation issues
- “The enthusiasm of some people for their subject is a joy to see”

What does ACKMA do poorly?

- Reaching out to cave guides and rangers
- Engaging with the general membership other than at conferences
- Connecting to cave managers
- Publicity - a lot of people outside of the cave tourism sites are unaware of ACKMA and what it does
- Members should be actively promoting ACKMA as a go to point for everything related to cave and karst environmental protection

Some challenges in 2023

- Membership
- Attracting new members
- Attracting younger members
- Ageing members – succession planning
- Improving sustainability in show cave operations
- Increasing environmental knowledge of show cave managers

Use of technology – communications

- Website
- Publications
- Social media
- Communications

Some ideas from members:

- Website forum for guides to interact and support each other
- Microsoft Teams group so that we can chat directly with our members
- More on line talks or presentations
- Regular email updates
- conferences
- Need to restore conferences after 4 year break due to pandemic

- All respondents chose: Combination online and in person

“We need to recognise that getting to conferences can be expensive and that time management is an issue for many members. This is especially true for part-time and casual guides. Hybrid conferences provide an option for those people”

“Online conferences are of course much cheaper but takes away from the personal aspect of attending a conference, meeting new people and renewing old acquaintances, online = boring”

Guide training

- Clearly a need for more guide training, but time may constrain attendance
- Opportunity for either training modules delivered online, or a 2 day course in conjunction with conference
- Savannah Guides organisation can deliver relevant modules which are nationally accredited with TAFE in Australia
- Costs will have to be reasonable
- May be possible to develop a cave guiding module

What can we do?

Ranking by respondents in decreasing order of importance:

- Advocacy for cave and karst conservation, including responding to development proposals
- Training opportunities for guides and managers
- Environmental management
- Effective communications
- Increasing membership
- Advocacy for employment conditions for cave guides and managers
- Coping with natural hazards and pandemics

Some goals for ACKMA...

Connection

To the broader cave community

Increase the standard of show cave guiding

Learning & education

Sustainability

Support all show cave sites to be commercially and environmentally sustainable

Conservation

Be a source of knowledge and expertise

Advocacy – lobby and influence

Promote research and uptake of science

Community

Building networks

Professional development

Provide support & advice

Opportunities

- Better communications with members
- Attract a new generation of cave guides and rangers
- Build links with Savannah Guides, Australasian Bat Society and Interpretation Australia
- Working more with ASF and NZSS
- Restore conferences every two years
- A greater role in advising governments

From the discussion at ACKMA Tākaka Conference

- We need to engage with the geological societies over geoheritage issues in both Australia and New Zealand
- There is a strong Australian bias in the responses so far, we need to engage effectively with New Zealand members
- We need to have aspirational goals to attract people to ACKMA, so they'll feel they are missing out if they are not a member
- Shorter conferences to attract younger members and time-poor people
- We must get the support of managers so that staff can attend and be supported
- Sponsorship of conferences to reduce registration costs
- Make conferences more affordable
- Use professional video conferencing firm, if online conferences are the way to go