

# EDITORIAL

Steve Bourne

This journal reaches you after September due to a combination of factors. Pleasingly, I had a good amount of material to work with for the journal, but a major meltdown of my computer has meant preparing it on a 12 inch laptop, somewhat different from a 24 inch screen! And in a new version of the software to learn as well. Although I use multiple backups, not one contained all of the contents of the computer. My partner Liz salvaged the ACKMA journal material before the computer ceased to function at all. It is currently keeping a local IT person busy copying the 51,000 image photo library. I estimate about 40,000 are backed up to various drives, but again, not in a single place. Guess who has learnt his lesson with computers and backup storage. Just to add a further complication, my back also suffered a meltdown and I spent a week in hospital on a veritable cocktail of medication. The side effects of these are disappearing and I seem to be able to concentrate and actually remember what I am doing!

There is some movement in management in Australian caves. Deborah Carden has moved on from Naracoorte and Tantanoola Caves with Nick McIntyre appointed as an interim manager. I have been advised the full time ongoing position will be advertised before the end of the year. This journal contains an article on Deborah's time at Naracoorte.

I also understand the position of Director of Jenolan Caves has been filled with Jodie Anderson, ex-Wellington Caves commencing work there in early November. I wish Jodie all the best in this role but am somewhat that she won't complete the exciting projects at Wellington Caves. But the vacancy has created an opportunity for someone else!

ACKMA members John Brush and Marjorie Coggan visited Naracoorte and provided some staff training in cave cleaning techniques. Nick McIntyre has provided a short report on this visit. I managed to catch up with John and Marjorie while they were in Naracoorte and enjoyed a meal with them.

The major event in caves and karst since the June journal was of course the 2017 Speleological Congress held at Penrith in July. Many ACKMA members attended; unfortunately I was not one of them due to work commitments. My partner Liz Reed attended as a keynote speaker and made a couple of nice book purchases. One of these was *Caves: Exploring New Zealand's subterranean wilderness*, by Marcus Thomas and Neil



Silverwood. ACKMA's newest Life Member Dave Smith had previously put me in contact with Neil, who in turn kindly provided me with a good number of his images for use in the journal. One graces the front cover of this issue. The photography in this book is simply world-class, and the stories of exploration quite compelling. I will review it more fully for a future journal. This journal contains a number of reports of the congress itself and excursions held pre and post congress.

Liz Reed and I hosted a group of 8 at Naracoorte, commencing the trip with visits to the South Australian Museum and Adelaide University laboratories where Liz works. We spend two days at Naracoorte with a dinner in Schultz's Cave, where we took ACKMA members at the 2015 Naracoorte Conference. Treasury Wines who manage the vineyard, had held a dinner for their executives the previous evening so the cave was set up with white table clothes, LED candles and a fine selection of wines. The caterer was engaged for the second night and we enjoyed a simply outstanding evening. We visited sinkholes and volcanics around Mount Gambier and then travelled the Great Ocean Road to reach the Melbourne Airport by 6pm to catch flights. A few nervous moments through peak hour Melbourne traffic but we reached the airport at the desired hour.

Andy Spate hosted an "arm chair" tour of the karst of eastern Australia, while John Brush and other members of the Canberra Speleological Society hosted a group recreational caving at Yarrangobilly Caves. Janine McKinnon took a pre conference vertical caving trip in Southern Tasmania, which unfortunately resulted in a fall and rescue. Appropriate safety measures were in place and the rescue was achieved efficiently, with the injured caver in hospital within 13 hours of the fall. It is possible (probable?) that all caving areas are not as well organised as this situation was managed. Tony Culberg has prepared a short survey, which will appear in the next journal. I hope everyone can provide responses so we can assess just how well prepared we are. The two rescues in Tasmania this year have highlighted the need for some additional equipment and crowd funding for this is promoted inside the back cover, adjacent to Janine's rescue report.

Many ACKMA members have been to the Shades of Death Cave, at Buchan, Victoria. Nicholas White reports that Rimstone Co-operative has purchased the cave, with plans for both recreational caving and public access.

Capricorn Caves seems to go from strength to strength. Ann Augusteyn's report on the fossil day held there with the support of Scoot Hocknull and Rochelle Lawrence shows just what be achieved with good partnerships between research and presentation. People love fossils and Capricorn has developed some great products in its ever expanding offering. Just as this journal was being completed, Ann emailed me to say they had won a Queensland Tourism Industry Council Award for Innovation, as joint runners-up with Australian Age of Dinosaurs (AAOD).

Scott and Rochelle published an article in the AAOD magazine. Dave Elliott, the driver behind the AAOD and publisher of the magazine has been kind enough to allow me to reproduce the article in the ACKMA journal. His request was that I retain the formatting from their journal, hence the article is different to the regular ACKMA format.