

Meet Ian Eddison, ACKMA President

Ian had a retail career, an advertising career and continues to enjoy his renewed caves' career.

From humble beginnings, Ian was dissuaded from finishing high school (completing Year 10 equivalent), encouraged to get work and bring in a wage to the household. His after school and holiday work in a department store led to a three-year retail management course and he completed this, along with TAFE at the same time. Ian's retail work included supervisory (from 18 years of age) and department management at Walton's and Myer, as well as store manager of Lowes Menswear stores.

His business understanding of consumers and market segments led him into sales in the advertising industry. Ian worked for Radio 2WS; the Sydney Morning Herald and also the Australian Jewish Press. Ian then worked with a specialist industrial advertising agency, McMonigal & Associates (account manager and media manager), attracting clients and managing their marketing of products from hot sprue bushings, rheostats - switchgear, hardware fittings and railway rolling stock.



He completed many short courses over the years and has a distinction in media planning.

Ian's love of the environment and scouting led him into volunteering in his spare time with his local council and NPWS in the Blue Mountains. In turn, this led to TAFE courses in bushland regeneration and an advanced certificate course in outdoor guiding. He was drawn away from the big lights of Sydney, gave up the entertainment allowance and company vehicle for casual work as a bush regenerator and cave guide. This period of time leads his wife, Anita (cave guide at Jenolan Caves), to refer to it as his mid-life crisis. Anita and Ian met in kindergarten in 1965, were engaged at 18 and married at the age of 21. They moved to Jenolan Caves with their children, Mitchell and Elise, in 1997 and have been involved in caves since. Ian began as a casual guide at Jenolan Caves in December 1996, was made a permanent team member in March the following year and remained until June 2011. Ian continued his study relevant to tourism and has many tourism-related certificate courses under his belt. In his time at Jenolan Caves, Ian wrote a paper * on the Historic Gardens of Jenolan Caves in order to assist management with the background detail to fight for grant funding. He self-published The Flora and Fauna of the Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve in order to provide quick reference species lists of the reserve for staff and management. As a keen bush regenerator, Ian held the role of Chairperson of Lithgow Oberon Landcare Association and represented Jenolan Caves and Landcare on the Steering Committee with NPWS and the CMA (catchment management authority), to target Jenolan's Sycamore Maple infestation.

After leaving Jenolan Caves, Ian juggled a few temporary positions, focused on supporting his father in his ailing years. He renovated a home in Bathurst. He considered himself retired by 2014. Remaining an ACKMA member, (Anita continued guiding at Jenolan Caves) some casual cave-guiding work at Wellington Caves in 2017 enticed him to work in caves again. Ian is now a permanent team member at Wellington Caves as the caves engagement officer. This also led to Ian being involved in Landcare again. He is on the committee of The Central Tablelands Landcare and is Vice Chair of Mid-Macquarie Landcare. Ian's work at Wellington Caves is varied, including planning interpretation, training team members, risk management, engaging with the scientific community - and Ian still regularly conducts cave tours.

*** EDITOR'S NOTE: Ian's paper will appear in the September Journal**

President's Report June 2020—the year ahead for ACKMA

Ian Eddison

With all of the show caves in Australasia being closed due to COVID-19, the coming year (June 2020-May 2021) for ACKMA looked like we all could just hang up a sign, “Gone Caving”. But it turns out, of course, there is much work to be done!

First, to look back not far, to see the impact of drought, fire, flood, landslips and rock fall on different cave sites in Australasia. My wife Anita and I saw the new calendar year in with cave friends and, over that lovely evening, we got word that a little cottage at Jenolan had burnt down. This was where our friend at dinner had moved into as a new 1960s cottage when he was a toddler and, coincidentally, where we lived in the late 1990s. We quickly learned of the suffering of other cave friends and sites through different disasters. Some are suffering one incident after another and another. Little did any of us know that very soon a worldwide pandemic would affect us all.

Second, I have been included in ACKMA committee communications of late and I can assure you that those people behind the scenes of this organisation have been very diligent in putting forward their contributions. The new committee has changed little but the prospective additional input from new faces will be helpful and refreshing but the main strength is people who will continue to help.

Tim Moore, who has offered very kindly to continue for this year as editor, is a big blessing and Andy Spate may be standing down as president but is committed to continue gallantly to lead the way on environmental fronts associated with caves and karst through Australasia. I am sure you join me in being grateful and thankful for the work of Tim and Andy. All the committee, past, continued and new are your champions and we are in good hands into the new year.

So, what does the coming year hold for us?

We need to prepare for our part in promoting the International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK) in 2021. It is an exciting opportunity to spotlight the many unique aspects of our caves and karst areas.

We are aware of and have concerns for two development applications under consideration. These are for a limestone quarry and for an abattoir on different karst areas, which will require due consideration of the possible impacts and our submissions in relation to those applications.

We all need to consider the structure of our tourism operations, staffing and meeting the demands of our respective markets in a safe manner for everyone due to COVID-19. I admired the team at Capricorn Caves who devised regular private tours in order to make the tour numbers small and keep the tourism flow before they had to shut down. It is time for managers of tourist caves to consider how they will operate in the future. Keeping our valued, highly trained staff safe and sharing the natural wonders

of our caves with the public in a safe manner is the prime focus for each of these operations. We should never have, but now certainly must not just “*Rack ‘em*”, “*stack ‘em*” ‘*n*’ “*stick ‘em*” in the hole! Managers of cave tour sites are forced to rethink how we conduct business in light of the threat of COVID-19, or any other contagious health risk, exacerbated by confining people.

All staff members need to think about how they can safely interpret caves and karst to the public and how the workplace can do this in the safest manner possible. The lessons are that teams of people in other industries have lost people, their staff, because they were in close proximity with each other, sharing surfaces and equipment. Even in our leisure pursuit of caving we must share those times together safely at some distance.

There are business lessons to be learned from the recent past. Theme park tourism operators as well as volcano speleology have had their guests suffer horrifically. Their staff and their businesses suffer as well. Astute managers may well have a ‘Business Disaster Plan’ in place which includes the threat of fire, flood, cyclone, earthquake, tragic accident or other regional factors that can cause an effect on their business. A business disaster plan is more about the business coping and recovering. Consider the demise of Virgin Australia most recently. It didn’t take long before it went into voluntary administration. Did they have a business disaster recovery plan that includes a planned response to the impact of a worldwide pandemic? Do you? Well, that needs to be included in future and, for now, managers of tourist cave sites need to plan how to minimise risk of exposure to such contagious diseases.

Despite the tragic circumstances of COVID-19 on our communities, our staff and businesses, there have been advantages. The caves have had a break from our impact upon them. I am sure some of you considered this. It was pointed out by our IT guru and Webmaster Rauleigh Webb that an opportunity existed to record the natural climatic conditions of our caves and their chambers during this shutdown in order to have a recorded benchmark free of any visitation. This idea has been enthusiastically endorsed by many and is something we should all consider for the cave sites where we are involved. I love the idea of turning a negative into a positive. What a way forward into the coming year!

I am humbled to have been asked to be your president. Thank you for your endorsement. I wish you all good health, fresh ideas in promoting caves and karst as well as productive science and sustainable business through the coming year.