

President's Report September 2020

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The ACKMA committee has met via Zoom a couple of times since the AGM. Although many show caves around the country are closed, there has been a lot of communications within the ACKMA committee by phone, email, SMS, Facebook chats and Zoom. For your benefit our collective work is summarised. I have played a small part in most of these subjects, I acknowledge the hard work by many different people who have done the heavy lifting on these communications and projects. It is wonderful to have so many passionate people among us helping on different issues. Thank you so very much.

Communications in recent times are summarised for your knowledge:

Quarry proposal Meander-Tasmania

No action based on careful consideration of the Natural Values Protection Plan required of Sibelco to enable the extension of the life of this existing quarry.

Rio Tinto's destruction of caves at Juukan Gorge-WA

Expressed our grave concern of such destruction to federal ministers, the WA premier and ICOMOS in Australia and France.

Re-Imagining Tourism on Kangaroo Island-SA

Supporting the planned development of tourism areas on Kangaroo Island, bringing to the forefront of consideration caves and karst such as Kelly Hill tourist cave.

West Kangaroo Island Management Plan-SA

A submission was provided to contribute to the planning of the park areas on the Western end of Kangaroo Island with strong reference to caves and karst.

Extinct Species Trade Regulations-NZ

Supporting the development of regulations surrounding the trade of bones, feathers and other natural and cultural items. This is in order to protect them from unscrupulous unmonitored trade.

Abattoir proposal at Mole Creek-Tasmania

We did not support the proposal and asked for it to be rejected based on a lack of referencing of previous research and the lack of environmental safeguards.

Koonalda Cave-SA

In abeyance but the indication is that it is tentatively supported for tours in this significant cave with indigenous art and artefacts, subject to further discussions and carrying out our due diligence. Our decision and communication with relevant authorities will happen in due course.

Short term contracts for cave guides-Australasia

Our recommendation is being developed for dissemination to HR team leaders and other interested leaders

throughout Australasia. This is being prepared with great empathy for those staff at show cave sites in casual employment and those part time and permanent staff on short term contracts without job security .

Interaction with ASF

Exchange of communications between ACKMA and ASF Presidents, in support of building our relationship due to our mutual goals in the management and protection of caves and karst.

Ongoing projects

The Australian Cave Animal of the Year is well planned out for the immediate future.

The International Year of Caves and Karst requires thought by each of our tourist cave operators and managers of other caves and karst natural areas as well as the science work being conducted. We need to consider how we present this to the international community. Wellington Caves NSW is listed as the site of an event in May next year although it is difficult to expect many can travel far to join us. We have to consider how we can present internationally on the key subjects.

The Ann Augusteyn Award is being launched for recognition of excellence in cave guiding (see posters later in this edition). The committee is very supportive of this quality award in honour of Ann.

The ACKMA Strategic Plan continues to be developed and is creating positive comment from the committee.

Modernising communications is an objective I set myself after listening to several people within ACKMA. By now you would have received at least one video by email. This is a beginning of that attempt to communicate in a more engaging way in addition to the ACKMA journal. Another —“The Guides' Grotto”— will be aimed at and for cave guides to develop and share skills.

In these difficult times consistently adapting to the risks of COVID-19 is a challenge. Some of our show caves are open, many are closed. This will change as opportunities and challenges come and go. Be careful, stay safe, apply your COVID-19 plan in everything you do. Most importantly keep planning for the future.

I look forward to talking with you more about next year's Guides' School and at presentations on 'Post Bush Fires' and 'Effects of COVID-19' on our industry during our meeting and AGM at Wellington NSW next May. Please now consider your presentation.

I also remind you that at the 2021 AGM our Treasurer and Editor positions will become vacant so please consider which of those roles you may be prepared to take on.