

President's Report

Ian Eddison

The ACKMA committee has met via Zoom several further times since the last Journal.

A submission from ACKMA on 'Short Term Contracts' surrounding employment of guides in show caves was prepared thanks to Deb Carden's efforts. This has been emailed to Prime Minister Ardern of New Zealand and Prime Minister Morrison of Australia after being revised following the committee's review of it. A copy of the submission is reproduced following this report.

Generally speaking, ACKMA encourages temporary positions to be filled by regular staff rather than engage employees on short term contracts. This would give such presently temporary staff more security with full benefits equal to that of permanent staff. ACKMA has drawn attention to the economic value of the cave tourism sector and that it requires support in these difficult times. Caves tourism will take some time to recover to normal capacity.

Kangaroo Island in SA is gaining good post-bushfire planning through two areas. These are Flinders Chase Reimagining and a Management Plan for the western end of the island's national park. David Gillieson is actively involved in both. Brett Dalziel is also involved in his role within SA Parks for Kangaroo Island which gives us hope for Kelly Hill Cave and other karst features on the island.

A revised "Best practice guidelines for show caves" is being drafted by Andy Spate and David Gillieson. They invite input (including from those managers who can contribute from recent experience). This project is an extension and update of past guidelines.

The ACKMA strategic management plan is being worked on by Jodie Anderson. Please get in touch with her if you have contributions to make to the plan.

For several months the ACKMA Guides Community Group on Facebook has had an online 'chat room' called the 'Guides Grotto' to meet and discuss guide related topics. Facebook users please look for this group and the announcements to join in. Please encourage other guides to participate and share knowledge and skills. I especially want to acknowledge Jackie Perry and Teagan Symons of Yarrangobilly Caves for their enthusiasm and drive on this project.

ACKMA and ASF are inviting all creative arts people of Australasia who also happen to love caves to celebrate the International Year of Caves and Karst in 2021. Write a story, rhyme, poem or song. Sketch, paint, sculpt, take a photograph or make a video. The medium is your choice. You may focus on one creative piece or a series throughout the 2021 year. The theme is Caves and Karst in Australasia.

ACKMA and ASF will showcase your creativity as part of our celebration of the International Year of Caves and



Karst 2021. More to come on how to submit your work. Simply let your creative juices flow for now.

The Invasive Species Council has been in touch regarding a 'Reclaim Kosci' campaign addressing feral animals, particularly horses, within Kosciuszko National Park. ACKMA will be considering its position on impacts on karst areas. ACKMA will provide a submission on a draft management plan to be released for comment by the NSW Environment Minister. This call for comment is likely to happen in March 2021.

As I prepare this report, I am heartened that COVID-19 restrictions are easing. Despite the occasional spike in infections, borders have largely re-opened and more caves are beginning to receive visitors. I caution not to become complacent; maintain your personal hygiene; and observe COVID Plans in show caves.

Wellington Caves has been open since July 2020 and has had numerous inspections by NSW Health staff as well as by local Police. My understanding is that, if you personally breach your approved COVID Plan, you can be fined as well as your operation being fined and closed. Please be careful as you do not want to cause the further spread of COVID-19 or attract poor publicity and adverse comments for your site.

I again 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.

I wish you a great Christmas and festive season. I hope 2021 will be good for you and yours.