

NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR KARST VALUES WORKSHOP

– Andy Spate

Earlier this year the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage (DEH) convened a workshop to “provide background information for the Australian Heritage Council in their consideration of both current and future National Heritage List nominations that have karst values”. The need for this review arises from a new approach to the listing of items of natural (and cultural) heritage introduced by the Commonwealth government has.

The new National Heritage List will replace, from a Commonwealth perspective, the Register of the National Estate. The latter will still be a useful instrument, especially from a State viewpoint, for the consideration of heritage values.



At the Workshop – Mia Thurgate, Ian Household, Dave Gillieson, and Andy Spate.
Photo: Ken Grimes

A number of karstic boffins were contacted to provide input, namely Armstrong Osborne, Julia James, Dave Gillieson, Ken Grimes, Mia Thurgate, Bill Humphreys, Ian Household, Elerly Hamilton-Smith and myself. All except Julia and Elerly met with DEH people and Dr Denis Saunders (a member of the Australian Heritage Council) on 20 and 21 April.

We were not invited as members of ACKMA, ASF or our own organisations but as ‘experts’ with barrows to push! Interestingly the workshop had **no** disputes but general support for each other’s respective barrows.

We were not to consider areas already listed as World Heritage and there was a month or so of

emailing compounded by me in Korea, Elerly in Sarawak and Ian bouncing around Antarctic seas to draw up a list of sites for further consideration.

Position papers were prepared for:

- Yarrangobilly
- Cooleman
- Wee Jasper
- Jenolan
- Wombeyan
- Wellington
- Mount Eccles (lava caves)
- Cape Bridgewater
- Limestone Coast – cenotes
- Limestone Coast – springs
- Nullarbor
- Leeuwin-Naturalist generally
- Strongs and Jewel Caves (and Ruddocks cave)
- Gregory karst
- Calcrete aquifers
- Cape Range
- Kimberley
- Chillagoe
- Hastings
- Junee-Florentine
- Mole Creek
- Christmas Island

A number of other sites discussed at the workshop – as you would imagine!

The papers and discussions will be amalgamated by DEH personnel and Mia into a report to the Council. Presumably this will be available to all. It should be a valuable resource document although – like all good science things it will say that we need more research!

We boffins were most impressed by the interest shown by the DEH staff in the subject and their interest in getting better knowledge of this aspect of Australia’s natural resources.

One outcome might be that DEH will support a further workshop to consider better the fascinating pseudokarst features of this continent.



"Look, Grog... Me invent road-rage!"

