

# ACKMA INTERPRETATION WORKSHOP

## 2 May 2009

– Dan Cove

On Saturday 2 May, immediately preceding the ACKMA conference, an open workshop was held at the *CaveWorks* theatre to examine current best practice thinking and practical applications of on-site interpretive guiding. There were twenty attendees at the workshop, with the majority being local cave guides and DEC employees, though there were also attendees from other Australian and international tourist cave sites.

There were four major presentations:

- Guiding theory and underlying objectives
- Thematic interpretation
- Theatrical interpretation, and
- Practical approaches to guiding.

The topics were presented by Dan Cove, Sasa Kennedy, David Hay and Geoff Kell. These presentations both examined theoretical areas, but also highlighted the greatly differing approaches that experienced guides can bring to their approaches to tours. In addition to these formal presentations, the workshop included practical sessions on how to create themes, examining alternate approaches to interpretation beyond the 'guided tour' format, and a general discussion. The discussion examined both the subjects presented, but also drew on individuals' experiences and

looked at issues, problems and challenges currently faced by guides.

The level of involvement and participation from all attendees was tremendous, with all agreeing that the day had been a productive learning experience. In general discussion it was agreed that a greater level of dialogue between practitioners was desirable, and to this end it was suggested that an online forum be established to facilitate a continuing discussion and permit dissemination of new approaches to interpretive guiding.

This forum will be organised between Dan Cove and Rauleigh Webb as an adjunct to the ACKMA website. A series of notes resulting from the workshop will also be produced and distributed to all attendees.

It was pleasing to note that the workshop showed ACKMA to be at the forefront of current approaches to cave and karst interpretation specifically, but also towards interpretation generally. It is hoped that the establishment of the Forum, and subsequent workshops, will further develop and share skills amongst ACKMA members, but also ultimately allow the exporting of knowledge to a broader spectrum of guides.

