

AUSTRALIAN SPELEOLOGICAL FEDERATION  
Inc.

ANNUAL REPORT  
December 2006

2006

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## **AUSTRALIAN SPELEOLOGICAL FEDERATION Inc.**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2006**

**Presented by the President, Jay Anderson,  
Mt Gambier, SA, January 2007**

This year the ASF is at a significant milestone, celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I have been receiving letters & notes from a number of individuals who were involved in the creation of the ASF, and in that first inaugural South Australian conference in 1956. It has been interesting to hear of what those people achieved and how it contributed to the organization that we have here now. The ASF has developed from a lot of a lot of hard work by a large number of dedicated individuals, working as volunteers and as a team – right across Australia! What is exciting is that the ASF is at a significant point in time - an opportune time to reflect on the past and on the future and to consider what changes may be necessary.

A considerable amount of my time over this past year has been spent on karst projects and interacting with other speleological groups in other parts of the world. This opportunity has provided me with insight into the operation of groups similar to the ASF. As an organization our partnerships and links with our International speleological counterparts, and our local environmental groups are extremely important. We can share ideas and learn from each other. As the ASF is developing its professional presence in the environmental conservation arena, having a paid administration person to handle the day-to-day operations is becoming more necessary. This is a concept that some of our International speleological counterparts are managing successfully.

The ASF is in the process of undertaking organizational visioning - with forward planning, strategic goal setting and examining its future aims and objectives. The executive is working to progress our organization into the future. It is our goal to be able to streamline the operation of the organization and to fully focus on our core objectives. In this manner, valuable volunteer time will be better able to undertake the objectives of the ASF, that is to increase knowledge, educate and preserve Australia's karst and caves.

The ASF has achieved much and come so far. The future is through the open door. So, this is an exciting time – reflections of the past and visions into the future!

#### **Brief Summary of Key issues**

Many issues are covered in the reports contained in this Annual Report. This is only a very brief overview of some of those issues and some comments on future progression.

#### **Membership**

The ASF membership fees have remained relatively stable over recent times. However this continues to be the primary source of income for the ASF and the majority of the fees are directed towards insurance (our primary source of expenditure). The development of the ASF membership database has been progressing and once completed a key issue for the future will be the testing of the database. The implementation of this database will assist in the streamlining of ASF administration. There has been a gradual decrease in membership over the last few years and the ASF needs to examine its membership base, and the profile of caving in the community.

### **Environmental Fund**

The opportunity to contribute to The Environmental Fund of the ASF is an avenue that many members are utilising – donations are tax-deductible. Funds can be utilised by local clubs and members to support local projects. I encourage members to share information about the Fund to individuals and community groups.

Many members are aware of the long dispute that occurred over the mining of Mt Etna in Central Queensland. Following several years of negotiation with Central Queensland Speleological Society and more recently the ASF, the ASF has been offered (and agreed to accept) a gift through the ASF Environmental Fund. The proposed gift includes freehold title to land on the eastern slopes of Mt Etna, adjacent to Mt Etna National Park and means that the ASF will own two caves. The ASF Executive has set up a local committee to handle the details and to liaise between the ASF, our Fund Directors and Cement Australia P/L on the details. You will hear more details about this exciting development in the coming months.

### **Conservation Issues**

Each state has a number of significant karst conservation issues that need progression. It would be excellent if each club could commit to dealing with a key issue or project in conjunction with your state conservation co-ordinator who can offer you advice and support. This may present the opportunity to work in partnership with other like-minded environmental or recreational groups.

### **Publications**

The publications “Helictite” and “Caves Australia” continue to be developed and produced at a high standard with thanks to the committed work of ASF members. I encourage people to send in reports, articles and photographs. These journals are an important record of the work that Australian speleologists undertake. The ASF cave conservation book and a publication on Wee Jasper are current projects progressing that are eagerly awaited.

### **Insurance**

The issue of insurance continues to remain a time consuming issue for the executive. This will be discussed further at the Council Meeting in January 2006 and we encourage all delegates to ensure they are fully up to date with their clubs requirements for insurance. The “Insurance Commissioner position is still currently vacant and it is vital that this role be filled.

### **Risk Management Issues**

The risk management policy has been reviewed and members are encouraged to be familiar with the suggested changes that have been submitted.

### **In Conclusion**

It has been another interesting, rewarding and challenging year. Several members of the executive have spent time overseas and the executive has continued to work well together, despite the distances. I'd like to thank all of the ASF members across Australia who volunteer their time in some aspect of the running of the ASF. The news of ASF's first Karst land acquisition is a remarkable achievement that coincides with ASF's 50th Anniversary Year. I look forward to being involved in the ASF of the future and I thank you for your support.

Jay Anderson

## **ENVIRONMENTAL FUND REPORT 2006**

### **John Dunkley**

Most of the Fund's activities in 2006 related to developments at Mt Etna.

For some years ASF & CQSS have been engaged in discussions with Cement Australia about the future of the company's freehold properties at Mt Etna in Central Queensland. In February 2006 ASF received a letter from Cement Australia indicating that it sees ASF as a most suitable future manager of this land, and proposing discussion about transferring title to the direct ownership of ASF on conditions of use and management to be agreed. The properties were inspected by Peter Berrill, John Dunkley and CQSS members to assess the commitment required and a report was prepared for the ASF Executive and the Fund.

As a result the ASF Executive established the Mt Etna Land Management Committee (MELMAC) to liaise between ASF, CQSS, the Gift Fund and the Company. The Fund Directors subsequently agreed in principle to acceptance of a donation offered by Cement Australia as a deductible gift under relevant provisions of the taxation legislation. The intention is that, subject to conditions agreed upon by ASF, the Fund and Cement Australia, title to the land and property would be vested in ASF shortly after the current mining leases are surrendered. The target date is 1 January 2008, but at the Company's initiative ASF agreed to accept management responsibility for some operations prior to that, the cost to be covered by the Company. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) acceptable to the ASF Executive and to the Fund Directors, and in principle to the Company, has been prepared. This is currently before the Company's Board of Directors for final consideration.

Assuming that the final agreement is in accordance with the draft MOU now before the Company's Board, it is clear that some fund-raising will be required in the short term.

The only other significant action by the Fund this year was to formally approve payment of the first grant made to a member society, to supplement an environmental project at Timor Caves (NSW) being funded primarily by a government organisation and carried out by that member society. Facilitating such smaller-scale projects is one of the Fund's objectives, and the Fund is now in a stronger position to receive proposals.

### **Recommendations**

1. That the ASF Council endorse the actions of the ASF Executive, MELMAC and the ASF Environmental Fund in relation to Mt Etna, and further approve the continuation of negotiations with Cement Australia.
2. That a workshop on methods of fund-raising be held in conjunction with the ASF Conference at Mt Gambier, and that the ASF Council be asked to endorse fund-raising by the Fund specifically in aid of the Mt Etna project.

Peter Berrill, John Dunkley, Nick White  
Management Committee, for the Fund Directors

## **ASF TREASURER – Annual Report 2006**

### **Grace Matts**

To be presented at ASF Council AGM, Mt Gambier, January 2007.

## **CONSERVATION COMMISSION REPORTS 2006**

### **NATIONAL CONVENOR**

**Nicholas White**

I have been distracted this year. I have assisted, supported, initiated action and moves in the items listed below. These have tended to be individual “wildfire” things or planned long-term matters. It remains that I have not networked on conservation matters with people in South Australia and Tasmania. From my perspective State land management agencies are under-resourced and poorly skilled in karst and earth science disciplines. This is to the detriment of karst management. This was a matter brought to the attention of the Senate (see below).

We pride ourselves on our Codes of Conduct (Minimum Impact Caving Code and Code of Ethics and Conservation). Are these Codes adequate and effective or are they just platitudes to which we pay lip service and which sound nice but which we do not question too closely! Do the Codes need strengthening, need reviewing or should they be promoted more?

### **Mt Etna, Queensland**

The most significant initiative this year is the negotiations with Cement Australia for the gifting of former quarry land on Mt Etna to ASF Inc. There will be many challenges and opportunities for ASF once these negotiations are complete and the properties are managed by us. This is detailed elsewhere in this report.

### **“Inquiry into Australia’s national parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas” – Senate Environment, Communications Information Technology and the Arts Reference Committee.**

A submission was made in February by ASF to this inquiry. In this submission we outlined important recent Federal – State interactions concerning karst areas where Federal capacity has materially assisted State areas. These were funds provided to acquire adjacent lands to enlarge karst parks and reserves (Naracoorte Caves National Park and Mole Creek National Park). We emphasised the importance of the EPBC Act (1999) to the protection cave biodiversity. We commented on inadequate resourcing of many of the State Management Agencies charged with protecting lands containing caves. We stressed that the resourcing issues were not just of funding but were also of the lack of adequate training in earth sciences and karst to understand the areas staff were charged with managing. The opportunity was taken to comment on the management of Christmas Island and the question of continued phosphate mining. We were scathing of management planning processes particularly in Western Australia and Victoria.

The submission was backed up by verbal evidence in June and Nicholas White (ASF) and Elery Hamilton-Smith (ACKMA) jointly gave evidence. We reiterated the need for more adequate funding and particularly the need for karst trained professionals to be employed. It was another

chance to push the barrow concerning graffiti at Loch Ard Gorge, Port Campbell National Park, Victoria.

As yet a final report has not been produced.

### **Geoparks**

UNESCO supports and sponsors a “Global Network of National Geoparks”. A Geopark is “an area with a geological heritage of significance, with a coherent and strong management structure and where a sustainable economic development strategy is in place.” Geoparks provide the framework for linking areas based on their geological heritage, encouraging tourism and providing employment in the service sector. <<http://www.unesco.org/science/earth/geoparks.shtml>>

The ASF has supported the first application from Australia. This is for the “Kanawinka Geopark “ which embraces the Victorian Western District and the Lower South East area of South Australia and their Volcanoes Discovery Trail which has significant volcanic caves on private land and public land including some in National Parks. There are also significant limestone karst areas included in the proposed Geopark.

There are other areas in Australia that might benefit from such community initiatives which link the values of geological heritage, education, tourism and local employment. The area around Mt Etna is one such area that has a very rich and diverse geological heritage with much more variety than just the cave and biodiversity values of Mt Etna and Limestone Ridge. It may be that ASF, with its interests on Mt Etna, can provide the initiative for investigating the potential for a Geopark in the area.

### **NSW**

In NSW, there have been significant changes to the management of karst with the areas administered under the Jenolan Reserves Trust now being transferred to the National Parks and Wildlife Service. A new specialist unit, the “Karst Conservation Unit” has been set up within the Department of Environment and Conservation. The Minister is to be advised by a newly constituted Karst Management Advisory Committee serviced by the Karst Conservation Unit. These changes are significant and ASF has an important role in working towards more effective and better karst management. These changes are detailed more fully in the NSW Speleological Council’s report.

### **Leeuwin Naturaliste National, Park Blue Gum Plantation and EPBC Act, Western Australia**

In WA, in the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park (LNNP) there are four “Aquatic Root Mat Community in Caves of the Leeuwin Naturaliste Ridge”. These are a “Threatened Ecological Community” (TEC) that are listed under the EPBC Act (1999) as endangered. A recovery plan is in place and the Department of Environment and Conservation (previously CALM) has a specialist recovery team that meets to address issues. There was a recent proposal on land adjacent to the LNNP that could be classified as a threat. Despite the existence of the TEC in the LNNP, we were advised that the Department did not have sufficient resources to provide appropriate written advice when requested by the Shire of Augusta Margaret River during 2005. It also appears that verbal advice about the TEC was received too late in the process for the Shire to include the existence of the TEC in the planning process. As a result of this, and a combination of other Environmental Agencies lack of awareness of the TEC, the Shire approved a proposal for a “blue gum” Eucalyptus Plantation directly adjacent to the LNNP and in an area likely to provide a threat to the TEC.

Due to a combination of factors, the proposal is now not likely to proceed, however the issues of the need for thorough interagency consultation and communication, including communication with

speleological groups, remain as necessary to ensure the objectives and management of the State's National Parks is appropriate and reflects their State and Federal obligations. The excuse that there is insufficient staff time for such work indicates serious under resourcing but not an adequate reason.

### **Yanchep National Park, Western Australia**

The listed Root Mat Communities in this Park are under serious threat from lowered water tables. The lowering of the water table is from a combination of drought and the encroaching urbanisation. There was also a serious case of Crystal Cave being broken into and vandalism to formations this year.

### **Nullarbor, Western Australia, South Australia**

During the year ASF made representations to the WA Government that the Nullarbor should be considered for World Heritage listing. This point was also made to managers of the SA Nullarbor National Park. During verbal evidence to the Senate inquiry this was discussed. WA has now funded some work to examine the geological and biological significance of the caves of the Nullarbor.

My perspective on further protection of the Nullarbor in WA is that there is now a willingness to consider the question, which was not the case for many years. The States and Federal government are also more receptive to considering World Heritage listing for the Nullarbor.

### **Conservation Publications**

As discussed elsewhere the book on Cave Conservation History in Australia although delayed is being actively worked on and there are many enthusiastic contributors working on it. The proposed publication "Living with Karst" remains on the drawing board. There is a synopsis available but we are currently short of publishing funds and an editor.

### **Actions from Recommendations Endorsed by the January 2006 Council Meeting**

1. *That a review of legislation in all States and Territories of Australia under which caves are reserved be conducted to assess the adequacy of mechanisms to address new developments such as changes in usage (adventure races). (Such a review could be much more expansive than this but we need a starting perspective on legislative adequacy for cave protection).*

This action was not worked on and the Commission would welcome someone prepared to undertake the review.

2. *Prepare and maintain a list of Government Advisory and Management Committees which provide advice on cave and karst areas in Australia. Maintain a list of members on these Committees. As a policy position ASF and its member societies should endeavour to be represented on each and every relevant committee.*

This depends on State based legislation and the willingness of State instrumentalities to involve the non-government sector in participating in management processes. Detailed above is ASF representation on the new NSW Karst Advisory Committee.

## **CONSERVATION**

**Victorian Convenor – Nicholas White**

During the year political pressure was applied to get Action Statements prepared for the vulnerable cave dwelling bats, Eastern Bentwing bat, Southern Bentwing Bat and Eastern Horseshoe Bat all of which are listed as Vulnerable under the State legislation. A promise was extracted that draft plans would be drafted but this appears to glacial rather than timely and they are again overdue (13 years and counting!).

Starlight Cave, W-5 near Warrnambool is a maternity cave for the Southern Bentwing Bat. It is on private property on the coast. It recently came up for auction as the result of a subdivision. I immediately started action to see if it could be acquired by the State or by community interests. There was sympathy at State level but this all occurred whilst the Government was in caretaker mode so no policy decision was able to be made. In the event the Trust for Nature undertook to bid for the property and to use their revolving fund to do this. The property was sold to a private bidder for \$835,000 which was above the capacity of the Trust.

The result is that we might have been better served if the Action Plans for the bats were available. Also if the bats had a cross listing under the Federal EPBC Act (1999) the case for State and or Federal intervention or monetary support might have been stronger. If the new owners are amenable the best outcome would be an agreed Conservation Covenant which is provided for in State legislation and allows for some rate relief but failing this the planning controls operative under the State and the City of Warrnambool Planning Schemes will need to be watched carefully so that there is an adequate buffer from developments that might adversely affect the bats.

## **CONSERVATION**

### **Queensland Convenor – Peter Berrill**

I have only been working on one issue this year and of course that is Mt. Etna. I haven't had time for other state issues and I haven't had any requests for help from others within Queensland. That's not to say that there are not issues to attend to.

My report will concentrate on issues at Mt. Etna, combining my dual roles as Qld Conservation Convenor and Chairman of the "Mt. Etna Land Management Advisory Committee" (MELMAC). At the January Council meeting 2006 held at Bankstown I was given a mandate by the Executive to discuss with Cement Australia issues relating to post mining land tenure at Mt. Etna. On my return to Rockhampton I promptly arranged a meeting with Cement Australia manager Chris White. We met on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2006 and within one hour we came to an in-principle agreement that is unprecedented environmentally in Australia.

Cement Australia agreed in principle to hand over to ASF, through it's Gift Fund, the land known as the Eastern Quarry, the brick house adjacent to the Eastern Quarry and will be making a financial donation to the Fund to assist in rehabilitation.

Following this meeting MELMAC was established and negotiations began. We engaged the services of a solicitor and have drafted a "Memorandum of Understanding" (MOU) between ASF and Cement Australia. This document has been sent to Cement Australia and is waiting approval from their Board of Directors. A preliminary notice has been sent out within ASF to notify supporters but the arrangement has not been made public and until both sides sign the MOU it is commercial in confidence.

Throughout the year there hasn't been one week where MELMAC members have not been working on the MOU and other aspects of the land deal. MELMAC members John Dunkley and Nick White have travelled to Rockhampton for meetings with Cement Australia and to inspect the properties.

There has been an enormous amount of work put into this project during the past twelve months by many people and as Chairman I thank them all for their contributions. But in particular, I feel the need to thank John Dunkley for his extra ordinary effort and assistance. Without him we would not have made the progress that was needed to arrive at this point in time.

There is still much to do but for the moment we have to sit tight and wait for the decision from the Board of Cement Australia.

There are a number of recommendations MELMAC will be making to the Council/ Executive. I was informed that the Directors would be meeting in late November and so have scheduled a MELMAC meeting for the 13<sup>th</sup> December to formalise the recommendations for the future ongoing management of the project. Some of these could be dependent on the decision of the Board.

I don't foresee any major problems with the MOU and consequently have been doing some forward planning for the ongoing management. A report on this and the recommendations from MELMAC cannot at this time be included in this report and will be tabled on the day of the Council Meeting.

A recommendation that I can make ahead of any decision is that whatever course of management we undertake for the Quarry and the house we are going to have to do some fund raising for the house to bring it up to a liveable standard.

With the approval of the Council I intend to run a workshop on fundraising for the Gift Fund, not only for this project but ongoing in general.

I would welcome the opportunity to further discuss this issue and answer any questions from the floor of the Council Meeting and recommend that suitable time be allocated in the Council Meeting for discussion and resolutions for the management of this most significant achievement for ASF.

## **CONSERVATION**

### **Western Australia Co-convenor – Jay Anderson, Peter Armstrong and Eve Taylor**

There have been some small and positive changes in several karst areas. The highlights include:

- Continued involvement of ASF representatives in community consultation on the NRM Rangelands Nullarbor region.
- Notification of funding for a project on the Nullarbor karst.
- A number of projects involving ASF volunteers in karst areas.
- Significant progress on karst policy.
- An increase in requests for karst assessments.

The main areas that stand out in need of progression are the:

- Continued vulnerability of the coastal karst areas of Perth (due to human development)
- Long expired management plans for three of the key karst areas in the State.
- The status of the subterranean fauna in the State's "Threatened Ecological Community".

During 2006, two State Government Department's combined to form DEC (Department of Environment and Conservation) – the Department of Conservation (CALM) and the Department of Environment (DoE). Although this caused some delays due to internal organization, it is hoped that there will be improvements in natural resource management resulting from the merge.

One significant karst issue required urgent consideration, interagency collaboration and legal advice. This was in relation to a perceived threat to the LNNP Threatened Ecological Community when a proposal for a gum tree plantation was proposed. Although there was a successful outcome, it highlights the need for excellent networks/communication and the importance of legal advice in conservation and karst management issues.

Several members of the ASF were involved in the Senate Inquiry into Australia's National Parks, conservation reserves and marine protected areas. A submission on WA karst management issues was submitted and utilised by representatives who attended the face to face hearing in Melbourne.

We would like to reiterate the importance of management of karst areas and the necessary required specialist knowledge. It is important that land managers and Government agencies seek involvement and consultation from speleologists whenever there are major decisions being made regarding karst areas. This should be seen as a priority and as part of the important public consultation process. The challenge is for both speleologists and land managers to work together in partnership – to ensure that our karst areas in this state are managed appropriately. There is significant opportunity for future partnerships between organizations with similar environmental objectives in relation to the management of karst areas in WA. There is an opportunity for ASF members to work with landowners regarding planning for environmental protection at the local level. The Conservation Commission is working with local State Environmental groups to determine a strategy for communication and liaison so that speleological expertise can be utilized in proposals that involve any potential impacts or effects on karst, limestone or subterranean fauna. This is also an excellent opportunity to work together on the various policy settings for karst and subterranean protection. The Conservation Commission will continue involvement in public education, through community displays, participation in community events and presentations. Ultimately rather than volunteers being highly involved in karst management, the State Government needs to fund Karst Management at a State level. We look forward to reporting on progress towards this in the future.

### ***1. South of Perth:***

#### **1A Cave Management in the Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park (L.N.N.P.)**

The Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park Management plan (1989-1999) has not been finalised or renewed. There is an issues paper on this areas management issues and a draft plan is being compiled. However, to date, no draft management plan has been released for public comments.

There are four “Aquatic Root Mat Community in Caves of the Leeuwin Naturaliste Ridge”. These are a “Threatened Ecological Community” (TEC) that are listed under the EPBC Act as endangered. A recovery plan is in place and DEC has a specialist recovery team that meets to address issues. The specific current status of all of the TEC in the LNNP is unknown, however it is understood that the groundwater levels in the karst system are at the lowest recorded levels since the 1950's. Over the last several years, most of the known aquatic root mat habitat and TEC have dried up or declined significantly. This is an issue that will require management actions.

The Cave Management Advisory Committee (CMAC.) continues to meet bi-monthly to advise the DEC on cave management issues. This is a local advisory committee only and the process continues to work really well and various projects have been carried out with speleological members during the past year. There have been several CMAC field trips to assess caves – either for impacts, to upgrade trackmarking or to assess the potential for a cave classification change.

More recently a karst issue required consideration, regarding a proposed plantation of “blue gum” Eucalyptus (Leeuwin Naturaliste area). The proposal was on land adjacent to the LNNP that could be classified as a threat to the karst values, particularly the TEC. As a result of several factors, and a lack of awareness of the TEC, the Shire approved the proposal. Due to a combination of factors, the proposal did not go ahead. The Environmental Defender’s Office (EDO) provided much appreciated legal advice and participated in a meeting with the Conservation Council of WA (CCWA). The EDO was able to contact the other party’s lawyers and progress a DEH referral (regarding the Threatened Ecological Community in the area) which precipitated a withdrawal. Although this was a successful outcome, it highlights the need for thorough interagency consultation and communication, including communication with speleological groups – the need for excellent networks/communication and the importance of legal advice in conservation and karst management issues. During February a special meeting was held in Margaret River and it is hoped for improved future liaison on karst management issues.

There was a large fire in the National Park during April 2006. The wildfire occurred in the LNNP about 12km south of Margaret River. The fire, which escaped from a prescribed burn, affected 1500 ha of forest. In particular the Mammoth cave doline suffered significant damage to infrastructure. Significant areas of LNNP forest have been burnt in the last few years and it will be interesting to see if there are any subsequent effects on groundwater levels in the karst system.

### **1B Wallcliffe Cave – Shire of Augusta/Margaret River**

The plans regarding a change in land tenure from the Shire to the State Government has not progressed. A management plan for this cave is still outstanding.

### **1C Karst in the Mandurah/Peel Region**

As reported previously, there is no management of the karst system adjacent to the Dawesville Estuary. The caves in this area are of a variety of tenure, either on private property or in areas of bushland. Further work needs to be undertaken in this area, including public education. The status of many caves in relation to land development in the area is unclear. This needs to be determined as a matter of priority.

Many organizations are realising that speleologists have knowledge and skills needed to survey and quantify the values contained in karst areas. Organisations such as mining companies, real estate developers and local Government land managers are more and more identifying the need for speleological involvement in karst assessment. This change has come about due to a variety of factors including the raising profile of karst in WA by the karst workshops (see point 4) and through developing environmental networks. This is a positive action, which is excellent to report that consultation and liaison on karst issues is occurring. However, the State Government needs to acknowledge the need for a specialist statewide karst position within DEC.

## ***2. To the East:***

### **2A The Nullarbor**

The Nullarbor Karst includes thousands of caves and surface karst features, a range of cave adapted and often unique organisms, unique and unusual minerals and speleothems and subterranean wetlands. This karst area exists under a range of tenures. It is a large, significant karst area, where visitation impacts on the karst system are difficult to assess. This area of karst in WA continues to receive extensive trips and expeditions – both from organised speleological groups, recreation groups and cave divers. It is clear to many speleologists that the Nullarbor is an area that

desperately needs appropriate management. There is still no “on-ground” management of the caves and karst, and as such, there is no monitoring of impacts or conditions.

The DEC and other key stakeholders are involved in the project which is aimed at protecting the biodiversity and geodiversity of the Nullarbor Karst. The WA Speleological Groups continue involvement in the Natural Resource Management (NRM) group for the Nullarbor. There has been extensive involvement of the ASF in the planning process. This has involved considerable liaison between various ASF members with knowledge, skills and experience of the Nullarbor and of karst management. Following on from the 2005 meetings, during 2006 an ASF representative has been involved in workshops/meetings for the Rangelands NRM Biodiversity Project Development – Nullarbor project – a Teleconference (24 January) and a Meeting (14 September).

The ultimate goal is to produce Interim Management Guidelines. To achieve this, a number of milestones need to be met including the compilation of all currently known information on the biological and other values of, and known threats to, the karst via a desktop survey. The desktop survey will be overseen by the Nullarbor Karst Project Steering Group, which comprises members from the DEC, Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group, Speleological group representatives and other stakeholders. This project is funded jointly by the Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group and the DEC. During October the project was finalised and a tender document was released. It is envisaged that a consultant will be employed to undertake the project. We await an outcome and an update on how the ASF and local WA based speleological groups can continue to be involved in this process.

Cocklebidy cave is currently closed due to safety issues identified in a geotechnical engineers report. The land manager responsible is also in the process of developing some interpretation signage at this site.

There has been some progress on the need for World Heritage Listing for the Nullarbor (see the ASF National report – this was discussed during verbal evidence to the Senate inquiry). There will need to be significant effort made in recommending the World Heritage Listing for the Nullarbor and contact between both the W.A. State government and the S.A. State government. This area will need considerable work to research what occurred in the previous nomination and to collate information regarding recent karst documentation by numerous speleological groups. This is an important opportunity for ACKMA and ASF to partner together in raising the awareness of the Nullarbor and in discussing karst values with the Government.

## **2B South Coast Management Plan**

There has been no progress on the Regional management plan (1992-2002).

### **3. North of Perth:**

#### **3A Yanchep National Park:**

The Yanchep National Park Management plan (1989-1999) is long expired and needs considerable revising. There has been little further progress on this and the draft management plan is still in preparation.

The Yanchep National Park Caves Advisory Committee meets bi-monthly to discuss local karst issues. It is still recommended that this area needs a specific “cave manager” as a matter of priority. There is a need for an integrated approach to management in the area. Speleologists continue to work closely with Park staff: providing advice on cave and karst management issues and assisting

with local projects. The plans to alter the lighting in Crystal Cave, to remove the lampenflora and to upgrade the infrastructure need progressing.

The “Aquatic Root Mat Community in Caves of the Swan Coastal Plain” are a listed species under the EPBC Act. This is listed as a “Threatened Ecological Community” that is endangered. The listed Root Mat Communities are under serious threat from lowered water tables. The lowering of the water table is from a combination of climate, altered hydrology and encroaching urbanisation. A recovery plan is in place and DEC has a specialist recovery team that meets to address issues.

The main concern is the situation for the cave fauna in the stream caves. A partnership of State Government Agencies are involved in artificially maintaining water to certain areas in attempts to maintain the subterranean stygofauna habitats. The current status of the threatened species and the communities that are remaining is unclear. The National Park still needs a dedicated scientific officer to oversee and monitor the adaptive research that is occurring in the National Park. There is a need for specific monitoring and implementation of plans. The WA Government needs to address these issues as a matter of priority. It is still our opinion that the Government needs to hasten their plans to reduce the Pine Tree Plantations in the east. We reiterate that this should be a priority as the catchment to the east is significant to the karst hydrology.

The WASG “Sharing Australia’s Stories” project was successfully finalised (see 2005 report for more information). This involved a Grant from the Commonwealth Government (Department of Environment and Heritage) to install thematic and informative interpretative signs/displays along Boomerang Gorge walk trail at Yanchep National Park - telling a story of karst processes

This project involved a partnership between the following community volunteer groups – Western Australian Speleological Group (WASG), Speleological Research Group Western Australia (SRGWA), Yanchep Caves Advisory Committee (DEC Advisory Group) and the Yanchep National Park Volunteer Group.

During February 2006, serious damage occurred to speleothems at Crystal Cave in Yanchep National Park, due to a break-in to the cave. Local speleologists were involved in the assessment of damage. Advice was provided to investigators regarding the significance of the speleothems. The rehabilitation of the site will occur in conjunction with local speleologists.

### **3B Carabooda Area:**

No further progress has occurred on the issue of the planned road in the Alkimos Area (as reported in the 2005 report) and the task to address this issue is ongoing. It remains of great concern that there is a road planned to go straight over a number of significant caves. This needs more time to progress than is currently available to those volunteers who are progressing this issue.

It is our aim to develop a program of seminars, brochures and public education. Additionally, it would be excellent to meet with local landowners to discuss karst management issues and to consider issues involved in “living on karst”. There is an opportunity to progress this important issue, however a source of funding would need to be sought.

The WA speleological groups have had several information requests regarding karst areas in the north of Perth. This has involved significant time input of speleological volunteers. There is an opportunity for ASF members to work with a landowners, company’s and local Government regarding planning and development issues at the local level. However, the State Government needs to acknowledge the need for a specialist statewide karst position within DEC. We look forward to reporting on progress towards this issue in the future.

### **3C Two Rocks & Wanneroo Area:**

The City of Wanneroo contains significant karst areas. The City has an Interim Rural Strategy that is due for review. This document has a small section on karst. Significant progress has been made on developing a co-ordinated approach (involving liaison between the City of Wanneroo and Speleological Groups) regarding areas under development in karst regions. The City of Wanneroo Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) continue to meet bimonthly. The committee plays an important role and can assist in raising the profile of karst in the area. The City of Wanneroo is in the process of reviewing the Local Environmental Strategy. The plan to “develop a caves and karstic features policy” was progressed during 2006. Thru speleological representation on the City of Wanneroo EAC, the opportunity to provide education on karst issues has occurred. During the year, a small subcommittee, including speleologists, has met to provide input on developing a karst policy. This will be progressed further during 2007.

Development subdivisions continue to occur. Speleologists can be involved in karst assessments – visiting a site and making an assessment of the karst features present. A report can then be given both to the landowner and the local Government to assist in the best response required in the situation. Over the past year, the number of requests for karst assessment have increased. Speleologists are now receiving regular, often monthly requests. This shows a great need in the community and an opportunity for the State Government to support our ‘future vision for karst management in WA. These requests involve a significant amount of volunteer time to resolve. It would be more appropriate for State supported and delegated role to fulfil these tasks and this is part of the vision for future karst management for WA.

It is our goal to have several landowner education sessions and workshops – discussing the area’s geological development, and what it means to “Live on karst”. Ultimately it is planned to publish a landowners brochure/booklet outlining these issues in a manner that is educational and non confrontational. To assist in this education, and to provide a visual aspect to learning it is envisaged that a 3D karst model be developed – showing the physical interaction between the surface and the subsurface in karst – specifically in this area. This can then be used in education and displays.

### **3D Speleological Involvement with Government -Local Community Consultation & karst management advice:**

Several members of Speleological Groups continue to regularly attend local community consultation groups to ensure that karst issues are considered and raised in ongoing decision-making regarding the northern groundwater mound that is a karst catchment area. This is important as the Local and State Government have no specific karst professionals employed.

Speleological groups are developing greater liaison with the Environmental Protection Authority, to ensure further caves and karst areas are not impacted. During February a Presentation was made to the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) section of the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). This was well received and it is envisaged that contact with this agency will be developed and improved in the future. There is a huge task of acting to protect the karst areas as the current development and impact of Perth’s expanding population pressures on the karst. Speleologists had considerable involvement in drafting the new EPA Policy document “Environmental Guidance for Planning and Development” (2006) (an update of the 1997 “Guidelines for Environment and Planning”).

### **3E Coastal Karst – Lancelin to Geraldton - including Jurien/Cervantes:**

The discussions with National Park/State Government regarding the management of Drover’s Cave has been on hold due to a number of issues, and will continue to be progressed.

The northward growth of Perth will impact on the coast and associated karst features. The management plans for this area do not appear to have considered the existence of caves or karst features. At this stage, a large amount of bushland has not been assessed for karst features. Further work needs to be done in this area.

Liaison is occurring with DEC regarding karst in the Northern Agricultural Region. A project is being undertaken to locate previously undiscovered areas of high conservation value. Caves and their associated biodiversity are one type of natural asset being considered and it is likely that a biodiversity project will be proposed to examine the "Hidden Treasures" of this area.

### **3F Cape Range:**

The Cape Range National Park Management plan (1987-1997) has been in the process of review for some time. This year the draft management plan was released for public comment and local speleologists made submissions. It is understood that the Final Management Plan is currently under preparation. Speleologists have been involved in the consultation process and the draft release was excellent news.

The 2005 report outlined the specific details of the two listed Threatened Ecological Communities in this karst area - The "Cape Range Remipede Community" and the "Cameron's Cave Troglitic Community". Speleologists were successful in obtaining funding (during 2005) for a project to address local threats to the karst system (The WA Speleological Group - \$22,260). This grant was approved under the Threatened Species Network Community Grants Program. The project will be undertaken by local ASF members in conjunction with relevant experts and State Government DEC personnel.

Additionally, as noted in previous reports, the A.S.F. case regarding proposed mining leases on the Cape Range has not yet been concluded (although finalised in the Wardens Court in Perth (11/2000)). The Government (Minister for Mines) has STILL to make the final decision regarding the granting of the mining leases. The A.S.F. will continue to request the removal of the strategic limestone mining purpose from the proposed 5(h) reserve. The Government advisory committee for this area, still needs speleological representation/expertise.

Speleologists continue to raise the importance of the World Heritage nomination to the Government. The A.S.F. has continued to advocate that the Cape Range is a significant karst area that needs such protection and recognition. It has taken the Government several years to progress the plans to nominate the Cape Range for World Heritage Status. A special Government committee made recommendations on the proposed boundary's however it is understood that this has not been resolved.

### **3G The Kimberley – FAR north:**

It is still considered that the caves and karst of the Kimberley are of considerable international significance. There has been no progress on karst management for this region. The area's current land management regime does not adequately provide for the reservation and protection of important karst features. This area needs appropriate karst management, in particular an "integrated management" focus (Please refer to the 2005 report for more information). The National Heritage List may be an appropriate mechanism for recognising the "outstanding" values of the area.

### **3H Christmas Island**

There are a number of outstanding actions in relation to karst management in this area. Speleological Groups are in liaison with the managers on a number of issues. During May a team of speleologists participated in the Christmas Island Subterranean Fauna Project (\$40,000 granted from the Federal Government) to assist in documenting the island's subterranean fauna.

There was a proposal regarding mining on Christmas Island (Christmas Island Phosphates EIS). This involved 8 new lease areas in mainly undisturbed rainforest Christmas Island crown land. Concerns were regarding potential impacts on the area's hydrology and karst systems. A submission of concerns was submitted and there will be continued strong liaison with the WA Conservation Council and the WA Wilderness Society regarding this issue. The outcome of this has not been finalized.

#### **4. *Public Education:***

There has been one major opportunity for Joint Speleological Groups "Community Education" Displays. There was a display at the "Children's Groundwater Festival" in November. The "interactive" cave, groundwater model and activities were quite popular with the children and their teachers.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Workshop (ASF and Greening Australia – WA) titled "Subterranean safari – exploring the karst systems on the Swan Coastal Plain" was held in April. This workshop was a success and there was enough interest to create a waitlist. A number of Government Officers attended which has provided the opportunity for liaison and future partnerships (particularly leading to a number of referrals and contacts throughout the year regarding several karst areas that need assessment – see 1C). Recent discussions with Greening Australia indicate that there will be funding for a workshop in 2007.

We aim to continue important community events and to facilitate the partnership between the ASF and other environmental organisations. In particular, we aim to focus on an educational program for local landowners in the metropolitan Perth region (see 3B and 3C for more information). This could be an exciting project involving collaboration between a number of groups.

#### **5. *Karst Policy and Protective Mechanisms:***

There is a broad range of policy, legislation and guidelines that are required for karst areas. There is a considerable lack of appropriate state policy and legislation regarding caves and karst areas in WA. The most significant development has been the utilisation of the EPA Policy document titled "Environmental Guidance for Planning and Development" (2006) (This is an update of the 1997 "Guidelines for Environment and Planning"). Chapter B9 is a section titled "karst, subterranean wetlands and fauna". This document contains information relating to karst assessment and particularly how to consider karst during planning. It is excellent to see this document being utilised.

It is our aim to continue to develop relationships with the Government and to progress the vision for future karst management in WA. At a local Government level, there has been significant progress on the need to develop local policy (as reported in section 3C). We also have been able to extend our networks and gain knowledge of International karst policy development, which will assist this project.

## 6. *Future Cave and Karst Management in W.A.:*

The networks and relationships that have been developed with other State environmental organizations are important in the development of a holistic karst management focus for WA. One aim of the W.A. Conservation Commission is to raise the profile of speleologists and the need for their involvement in karst management. However, the opportunities for partnerships and collaboration in local projects are great. The WA Government needs to show a greater commitment to appropriately resourcing areas that manage karst. When the State Government can allocate appropriate resources to each National Park to appropriately manage the karst areas, then real progress will have been made. We will continue to progress this vision for future karst management, which involves promoting the need for a State Karst Education Officer.

## **NSW SPELEOLOGICAL COUNCIL – ANNUAL REPORT 2006**

### **Acting Chair: Jodie Rutledge**

The NSWSC has had some changes in the last 12 months. Our president Megan Pryke resigned during the year after an impressive 5 years of active service. Efforts to attract another President have so far failed but the council remains to be functioning nevertheless thanks to the efforts of the remaining 4 Executive Members, Jodie Rutledge, Kevin Moore, Evelyn Taylor and Denis Marsh. Elections are due to be held in May at the next NSWSC meeting.

### **New Karst Conservation Unit**

The biggest news to come out of NSW this year is the formation of the Department of Environment & Conservation's, "Karst Conservation Unit". This unit will not directly manage any karst area but will provide overall policy advice on management of karst on the NPW Estate, as well as area-specific advice in some cases. Whether this will be a positive initiative remains to be seen – although NPWS has in the past made available karst management expertise, the requirement that areas pay for advice from their own budgets has served as a deterrent to this facility being fully used. Whilst the KCU will provide some advice without charge, in other cases its services will have to be paid for, which may undermine its effectiveness.

After many years of requests from NSWSC, DEC indicated about two years ago that it was drafting a statewide karst policy relating to management of karst on the NPW Estate. However, work on that policy has been placed on hold pending the restructure of karst management. We understand that one of the initial tasks of the KCU will be to draft this policy.

As of mid-2006, the four karst reserves managed by the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust (Jenolan, Wombeyan, Abercrombie and Borenore) have been transferred to management by DEC, with the exception of the commercial area at Jenolan (about 2% of the Reserve) which remains under management by the Trust pending finalisation of the Plan of Management.

A Draft Plan of Management (POM) for the Jenolan Karst Conservation Reserve is currently on public display. Chris Norton is co-ordinating the NSWSC response to this. One of the most concerning aspects of the draft POM is the Jenolan Speleological Advisory Committee **being axed**, despite speleologists being told that this was not the Government's intention, and the status of the Scientific and Environmental Advisory Committee is in doubt. The NSWSC are concerned that the draft plan does not seem to recognize the efforts of Speleologists at Jenolan. This apparent attitude from DEC is reinforced by the \$40 permit application fee charged from the Kanangra-Boyd

National Park office. There are concerns that this fee for permit idea will spread state-wide in the future. There are many other concerns, too many to list here.

On a more positive note, a statutory Karst Management Advisory Committee has been established with one position being an ASF position. We are very pleased to learn that Chris Norton has been appointed by the Minister after being one of 3 nominated by the ASF. It has been argued that this unit will replace the need for the Jenolan Speleological Advisory and the Jenolan Scientific & Environmental committees, but the unit encompasses state-wide responsibilities and is not focused on management of individual areas. Therefore we believe both committees should be retained for Jenolan.

### **Conservation concerns at Wee Jasper**

NSWSC have been alerted that Dogleg Cave at Wee Jasper near Yass in Southern NSW is under threat of damage caused by inappropriate visitation. A highly decorated passage usually rarely visited because of a periodic sand sump (known as the Sand Trap) has been dug out and has not naturally re-sumped itself because of the current drought. Consequently, visitation to the passage has dramatically increased. Trackmarking is not being adhered to and damage to the floor decoration is already beginning to occur. Hills Speleological Club (HSC) have offered to undertake a gating project at the "Sandtrap" area. NSWSC are of the opinion that this project be funded by the ASF Environment Fund. HSC are in the process of putting together a proposal including costings and the future management of visitation if gated.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. That this meeting support the conservation of Dogleg Cave at Wee Jasper, NSW by recommending support from the ASF Environmental Fund.**
- 2. That the ASF lobby the NSW Department of Environment & Conservation for greater recognition of the contributions received from ASF Member Clubs and ask that the future access arrangements to Karst areas be clarified.**

## **REPORTS OF COMMISSIONS 2006**

### **ADMINISTRATION**

**Chris Dunne**

No report forthcoming at date of compilation of this draft ASF Annual Report.

### **AWARDS**

**Lloyd Robinson**

A review of the ASF awards is still under way and in the meantime the existing awards system will be utilised for the present round of awards.

### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**Greg Middleton**

Compiling abstracts of Australian speleological publications and contributing them to IUS's annual *Speleological Abstracts* has continued to be the main activity of the Bibliography Commission.

The 2005 abstracts were compiled by an expanded group of abstractors. To the former group of Ken Grimes, Jill Rowling, Dave Smith (NZ) and the Convenor, have been added Susan White and Ross Ellis. The number of Australian & NZ abstracts contributed each year has been as follows:

1998: 689	2001: 640	2004: 482
1999: 677	2002: 735	2005: 526
2000: 650	2003: 591	

These figures do not generally include abstracts of items about Australian caves and karst published overseas. Theoretically these are contributed from the country of origin. In fact we have found it more satisfactory to abstract such items ourselves as coverage of international, especially US-based publications, can be very patchy.

A set of the Australian abstracts is provided each year for the ASF Library.

Efforts have continued to find abstractors to cover SA, WA and Queensland but without success. It would also be desirable to have an abstractor covering cave diving as this is a field which is growing and is certainly under-represented.

As mentioned, our abstracts are contributed to the IUS Bibliography Commission for publication. *Speleological Abstracts* #44, covering 2005 is awaited. Work on abstracts for the 2006 issue has commenced.

The \$500 which the Federation agreed to contribute towards the printing of *Speleological Abstracts* has been transmitted to IUS – and was appreciated.

Once again I express my appreciation for the continuing efforts of our small and dedicated band of abstractors.

The Commission operates without a budget and without any members claiming costs.

I am prepared to continue to act as Convenor of the Commission in 2007-08.

## **CAVE DIVING**

**Tim and Pam Payne**

ASF cave divers have worked throughout the year to consolidate and bring the various ASF Cave diving entities together. Draft documents outlining the operation and procedures of the CDG and SIG have been developed but review of these is continuing. It is expected that these will be finalized during 2007. Despite not being complete, aspects of the intent are being implemented regardless. Information sharing and coordination between divers in different groups is increasing and although the openness and ease of exchange outlined in the CDG documents is yet to be realized, divers are voluntarily collaborating and friendships and alliances are developing and maturing

Formal recognition of ASF divers against the ASF cave diving competencies is progressing and the majority of ASF cave divers have now been through this process and assigned ASF CDG membership. This formal process has now also allowed the ASF CDG to establish a new agreement with the CDAA that allows a CDG diver's status to be recognized by the CDAA therefore providing CDG members with confidence regarding access in CDAA sites.

Throughout the year ASF cave divers have made significant explorations and contributions to speleology in numerous sites across the country. Many of these have been reported through various club and ASF magazines.

NSW exploration has mainly focused at Jenolan with diving and above water finds competing for space in the newspapers. A number of significant connections to new passage and new chambers

were found. Knowledge and mapping of the elusive Southern River has progressed with excellent maps almost making it to a satisfactory representation and then needing revision with new finds. Several trips have pushed to the Southern most extreme of the Southern Jenolan River and a last constriction may be passed on the next trip. Which mountain the river passes under will be determined if we can pass the constriction.

The drought brings a rare opportunity to dive upstream in Mammoth and make headway against high pressure water and to find the conjectured main drain from the Northern Limestone under Mckewon's Creek. This and another dive in Spider Cave heads a long list of things to do in 2007.

Wellington remains popular with visitation from around the country. This year all the caves have been remapped showing that their layout and relative position are very different to what was thought.

The Anticline restoration project brought people from around NSW to stabilise the entrance and create general public interest in caves, underground lakes and water bodies. This project demonstrated to locals the power of community groups and what enthusiasm can achieve.

In July 06 divers from WASG and CEGSA explored and mapped Kija Blue Sinkhole in the Kimberley on trimix CCR to -112m. New cave diving sites in Ningbing Ranges were investigated and Mujingerra Cave in the Gibson Desert was fully explored and mapped.

In November 06 an expedition to the Roe Plains, Nullarbor by WASG members further explored Burnabbie Cave to 2.75km and continuing.

In October 06 divers from CEGSA, CCV and STC visited Cocklebidy cave and mapped and videoed most of the third sump, revealing significant differences with the previous understanding of the cave structure. Ongoing collaborative efforts from many divers within the ASF over the next couple of years should see this massive cave accurately surveyed.

## **SAFETY, LEADERSHIP & RISK MANAGEMENT**

Vacant

### **HELICTITE** **Susan White**

Helictite has had a productive year and produced all of Volume 39 during the year. Volume 39 (1) was published in April and 39(2) in November. Volume 39(2) is a bumper issue as it is the abstracts from the Limestone Coast 2004 workshop at Naracoorte (which ASF sponsored), with a few extended papers. Extra copies have been printed for attendees. Helictite agreed to cover the cost of this and postage as ASF's sponsorship of the workshop, which we believe is good publicity for ASF.

We have started serious work on Volume 40. We have limited material for 40(1) but getting sufficient quality material remains a problem. This remains our most serious problem.

Helictite has done a major stock take. I spent a weekend in Canberra in February sorting through the back issues with John Dunkley. An upgraded system of stock control was started. There are only 2 complete sets of hard copy left and we are unlikely to make up any more. The gaps are now too large and we need to think our way through into producing CD's of back issues. The initial

suggestion is to do Volumes 1-14 (which are virtually out of stock) and market them with rest being hard copy while we still have copies. The commission will look at this in the New Year. The ASF Library has two complete sets of Helictite archived.

Over 100 Subscriptions were received for Volume 39 and some subscribers have paid in advance for future volumes. Subscriptions for Volumes 39, 40, & 41 are currently \$27 AUD for Australia and \$30 AUD for overseas subscribers. As well, 13 exchanges are made with libraries and 13 complimentary copies are sent to various people and institutions.

Discussion has started on the conversion of publication to electronic format. This is desirable in the long term but will require careful investigation and implementation. We will move systematically towards this over the next 12 months but it may take some time to implement.

International co-operation with other karst journals such as Journal of Cave and Karst Studies, Kras I speleogia and International Journal of Speleology has developed over the past year. We are organising listing on the Speleogenesis: Combined cave journals database. This all raises the status of Helictite in the international literature.

Finally I want to thank the other editors and members of the Commission for their work this year.

Susan White  
Commission Chair & Editor

**Commission Members:** Ken Grimes (Editor), Stefan Eberhard (Editor), Glenn Baddeley (Business Manager), Grace Matts (ASF Treasurer), John Dunkley.

## **INSURANCE**

Vacant

## **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**Nick White**

I chair this Commission to ensure that ASF is represented at International meetings and to provide assistance for members seeking information or connections when planning their travels. There are numerous well-travelled Australian cavers who can assist members with travel planning or the more detailed politics of expedition caving overseas.

ASF has been well represented over the years on the IUS executive and members have played their part in various of the IUS Commissions. Each IUS Congress is well attended by ASF members. Perhaps because of this there is continuing pressure for ASF to bid for the International Conference. We bid in 1997 for the 2001 Conference. This was not to be as Brazil won the bid. Should ASF want to bid again it will need some serious planning and thought. At the present time there is not the energy to bid for such a large conference. However, there are many other ways in which we can initiate productive interchanges with overseas cavers or their National organizations.

ASF through Greg Middleton, bid for the Volcanospeleology Symposium in 2008 under the auspices of the IUS Commission on Volcanic Caves. This was not to be as South Korea won the bid and ours has been put on hold until 2010.

The International Association of Geomorphologists are holding their next Conference in Melbourne during July 2009. ASF will assist with organising a karst program focussed on “How Old are the Caves?” and associated field excursions. The karst session is jointly convened by Susan White and John Mylroie (Mississippi State University).

The ASF is co-sponsoring a symposium with the *International Association for Subterranean Biology*. This is the 19<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of Subterranean Biology, Freemantle, WA 21-26 September 2008.

During the year, ASF gave permission for the use of our Codes of Conservation and Ethics and the Minimal Impact Caving Code by the Oman Ministry of Tourism.

## **LIBRARY**

**Cathy Brown**

This has been a busy year with extensive use of the Library in preparation of material for the book “*Down Under All Over: Fifty years of Australian speleology*”, prepared for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary Conference. As part of this exercise a checklist of all ASF publications since 1956 was completed and is published in the book. The Library has a copy of all but one or two of the items listed and wishes to complete the collection for archival purposes.

We acquired a copy of the International Union of Speleology’s recently updated CD of 17 years of speleological abstracts from 1988-2004. Listing over 77,000 references, this is a useful source of information on caves throughout the world. The Librarian can search for information on caves, or members can obtain their own copy of the CD from Switzerland – details on request from the Librarian or from Greg Middleton who coordinates Australian contributions to this excellent endeavour. Following a Council resolution last year, we also obtained copies of a couple of university theses relating to caves and karst.

A provisional member club supplied print-outs of their internal electronic newsletter – other member groups should be aware that a copy of the latter should be archived with the ASF Library as useful material could otherwise be lost forever. In this particular case, for example, there were reports of new discoveries and some nice colour photographs. The Library is also storing copies of an increasing number of CDs, including back-up copies of ASF and other publications, some cave survey data, power-point presentations, photographs etc. We will attempt to catalogue these next year.

The ASF Archives secured a donation from founding President Dr Brian O’Brien of his papers from the formative years of ASF, including correspondence and an annotated early draft of the Constitution.

Thanks go once again to John Dunkley, custodian of the library, for participating enthusiastically in organising and cataloguing additions to the collection, and actively pursuing copies of missing journal issues.

## **Recommendations**

1. That the author or editor of cave management consultancy reports prepared by ASF but not already lodged with Library be requested to arrange for copies to be made available to the Library.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

## Jodie Rutledge

This year we have welcomed new club *Cavers and Adventurers of the Snowy Mountains (CASM)* to the Australian Speleological Federation as Provisional Members. They are a small but enthusiastic club of 9 members based at Jindabyne, NSW. They report an active year with trips to places such as Cooleman Plains, Bungonia, Bendethra, Wee Jasper (joint trip with NHVSS) and Jenolan.

On a sadder note it is unfortunate to report that the *Macquarie University Caving Group (MUCG)* as such are now defunct and are no longer an ASF Member Club. The group merged with the University's Adventure Sports Group some time ago and now have a much broader focus including Bushwalking and Climbing. MUCG have had a long history with ASF and it is hoped the cavers of MUCG continue on by joining other ASF clubs in their area. The executive are making enquiries into the whereabouts of the MUCG archives.

Membership levels have dropped slightly these last 12 months. At the time of writing ASF had 707 members with the following breakdown;

Single:	332	
Family:	104	(104 memberships containing 254 individuals)
Students:	28	
New:	20	(Note: NUCC has not submitted their 'New' members)
Introductory:	25	(An additional 100 have been recorded since October 2005)
HLM-active:	8	
HLM-inactive:	13	
Fellow:	7	
Individual:	20	

The use of the 3 month Introductory membership category remains high in most clubs. Although time consuming from an administrative perspective, this situation should improve with the launch of the new ASF on-line database which will be out soon. The programmer, SUSS Member, David Connard is well into the process of developing the site.

## Club representation at meetings.

TESS and CWCG have not been represented at the last 2 meetings. If they are not represented at the next meeting they will lose their rights and privileges as Corporate members (ASF Constitution Division 7).

Additionally, KSS, CCC, CEGSA and CLINC were not represented at the last ASF Council meeting. It is recommended that they arrange representation for this next meeting so that they are not in the same situation as TESS and CWCG next year.

## PUBLICATIONS

### Sue White

Publications is an area where ASF is visible to the rest of the world. We need to use our publications to showcase ASF and its work to the rest of the world. There is a lot of potential for

ASF to improve perception as Australia's peak speleological organization. Thanks to everyone who has been involved in Publications this past year: writers, photographers, editors, advertisers, proof readers and production people.

### **Caves Australia**

I have great pleasure in announcing that we have a new editor for Caves Australia. Brooke Grant, a VSA member who recently moved to the Gold Coast (no caves) is continuing her caving connections by volunteering as editor. She will source articles (with help from everyone) and edit the material and get it ready for layout and production. Thanks to Joe who has done an excellent job of improving the journal and it now looks and reads as a good quality caving quarterly. Brooke hopes to work closely with Joe and the rest of the Commission to continue to improve the quality of CA.

Caves Australia 166/7, 168, 169 and 170 have been published this year and #171 is in final editing phase as I write this report. I hope this will be posted before the New Year. Joe continues to manage the production and we missed him when I had to manage production for #170. Fortunately, the production system set up in Sydney works well and I thank Jacqui for layout, Dobsons for the printing and Sue Wallis at Sunnyfield Enterprises for mailing house services.

We continue to have problems accessing good articles with a wide appeal. This remains the major problem with CA. Several people have helped this last year; especially the series of diving articles organised by Paul Hosie, but more needs to be done. Clubs could make sure the Editor is sent copies of the regular club publications as articles are often suitable for reprinting or rewriting for a wider audience.

Joe Sydney is thanked profusely for all the work he has put in to CA. We survived his absence overseas, not the least because he has put into place good production procedures in Sydney. An improved policy on advertising in CA for ASF event has been put into place. This is fairer in terms of advertising ASF events, without crippling us financially.

### **Website**

Carol Layton has again done an excellent job managing the website. Updating has occurred more often as people have fed material to me or directly to Carol. However the relation of the website to various sections/commissions of ASF is still seriously underused. There is a need for the website to be more proactive and to carry more up-to-date material from the Commissions. I will be approaching the convenors for up to date material, and the executive with regards to vacant commissions.

### **Other publications**

The Wee Jasper Book new edition is underway. There was a "working bee" at WJ in May when Alan Pryke upgraded the photos, and Andy Spate, Armstrong Osborne, Geoff Kell and John Dunkley are working on revising the old text and adding new material". I hoped that the new edition would be finished this year but this has proved impossible, although work continues on upgrading the text. We hope this will be completed in the first part of 2007.

The conservation book is proceeding steadily. John Dunkley and Greg Middleton have started to receive drafts of the case studies and progress is reported in most areas. Greg will be chairing a workshop for contributors at Mt Gambier. This is a most important project and we need to see that it does not suffer from long periods of inaction.

We have also started work on translating and publishing a very obscure article by Jiri Danes cited by Joe Jennings in a Helictite article 40 or so years ago. It's all in German and runs to 76 A5 pages. This is one of the most comprehensive papers written on Australian karst up to Joe Jennings' arrival. Gerhardt Noss has agreed to attempt to do a basic translation and he has a copy of the text. This may take some time but is a worthwhile, if obscure, project.

The Publications Commission has also assisted with the production of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary book collated and edited by John Dunkley, Chris Bradley, Jeanette Dunkley and Cathy Brown.

Finally, I would like to always know if there is a publication being planned or organized; the Publications Commission may be able to help!

## **SURVEY AND MAPPING STANDARDS**

**Ken Grimes**

As usual, little activity this year. No queries this year apart from a request for my Poster on "Sketching the Detail". I had some discussion with Praezis (President, UISIC mapping & topography workgroup) concerning UIS map symbols for surface karst features.

No recommendations for the council meeting (unless someone else wants the job!). No significant costs for 2006. No expected major costs for 2007.

## **REPORTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS 2006**

### **Gregory Karst Research Special Interest Group**

**Mark Sefton**

An inaugural Annual General Meeting of the Gregory Karst Research Special Interest Group of the Australian Speleological Federation Inc. (hereafter abbreviated as 'Gregory SIG') was conducted on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> July at Bullita station in the Gregory National Park during the annual expedition. Those present elected Mark Sefton as Chairman, and John Redpath as Secretary of the Gregory SIG. Subsequently, and following electronic correspondence among the members, Bob Kershaw was elected onto the Committee as Mapping Coordinator, and John Dunkley as a Committee member.

Several decisions were taken at the AGM and afterwards. These included:

- All present at the AGM in 2006 are automatically considered members of the Group until such time as they indicate that they no longer wish to be members, or until they no longer be financial members of the ASF, or until the Group terminate their membership.
- The business of the group, other than the AGM, will be conducted electronically.
- All previous participants to caving expeditions to the Gregory National Park who are financial members of the ASF, and who apply to the Hon. Secretary for Group membership will be automatically awarded membership. (Membership of the Group is also available to other ASF members, subject to application and agreement by the Committee).
- Until determined otherwise by the Group, the Group shall hold no assets other than its intellectual property, which shall include records of its activities, expedition diaries etc.

At the completion of the 2006 expedition, the surveyed length of the Bullita Cave System stood at 109.6 km. A brief report on the activities of this expedition is being prepared for 'Caves Australia'. A further expedition to the Gregory National Park is being planned for July 2007

## **REPORTS OF COMMITTEES 2006**

### **KARST INDEX DATABASE**

**Mike Lake**

Two clubs, SUSS and VSA, have moved from testing to production. SUSS is updating caves at Jenolan and VSA is updating several Victorian cave areas. There are five SUSS updaters and five VSA updaters. All have extensive experience with their areas and caves. So far a few questions have been asked on some aspects of updating that were not clear but no technical problems or bugs with cave updating have occurred. The total number of updates by SUSS over the period August to November 2006 was 259. Organisations and people data is also being updated. Map updating is being held back as I am not yet certain that it is bug free.

The system is open for other clubs or organisations to contribute and update cave areas they have expertise in. I expect first that they will do some practice with the test KID and later when they are confident and understand how the KID update system works to move onto production. There is also a mailing list for KID updaters that anyone can subscribe to. Contact me for the details or visit <http://www.caves.org.au>

### **MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE**

**Jodie Rutledge**

You may recall this committee or "working group" was set up for the purpose of assisting the development of a web-based ASF Membership database (Resolution 13.1.5- ASF Council Minutes, Dover, 2005).

At the 2006 Council meeting held in Bankstown two options for database development were discussed and it was resolved to approach Star 3 in WA to undertake the project. The Membership Committee met briefly after the meeting and arrangements to approach Star 3 were made, including the drafting of a contract.

In March 2006 our programmer from Star 3 left the company and the whole deal fell flat! Fortunately our committee was able to approach SUSS Member David Connard again (our original second option) and the project is now well on its way. The functionality wish list collected from the clubs and has been forwarded to David for inclusion. He was not able to promise that all could be included, but the essentials are being added first, then the *bells and whistles* on top of what is possible.

Those at the last Council meeting may recall reservations in regards to having the database share the same server as the Karst Index Database. Additional software has been installed onto the caves.org.au server to support the membership database. There has been so far only one problem when the additional software stopped an upgrade from working perfectly. A workaround took a little while and during this time the web server was down. This problem has now been fixed. Otherwise it seems to be going OK.

A 3 month testing period will go ahead sometime soon. Those who have volunteered will be contacted when the time comes. Now is a good time for your club to consider the way in which you

administer your memberships and fees. If the ASF is administering your clubs membership year in a way that does not suit your club, please contact the ASF Membership Secretary to get it changed.

The committee also spent considerable time through the year considering on whether to formalize a Privacy Policy. While a draft was created in line with National Privacy Guideline principles, we had some informal advice recommending against this course of action as it is not a legal requirement to do so and it may leave ASF more open to liability. The committee will reconsider this issue in the new year, but in the meantime would welcome any comments.

### EXECUTIVE MEMBERS 2006

President	Jay Anderson Bpsych, Grad. Dip. App.Sc Karst Management	Perth
Senior Vice-President	Nicholas White MA, BSc	Melbourne
Vice-President	Chris Bradley BSc	Canberra
Vice-President	Joe Sydney	Sydney
Vice-President	Stanley Flavel MSc	Adelaide
Secretary	Winfried Weiss LLB, Bcom	Atherton, FNQ
Executive Secretary	Evelyn Taylor BHSc (Nursing)	Sydney
Treasurer	Grace Matts GradDipAdmin, SSoSJJ	Sydney
Membership Secretary	Jodie Rutledge RN, DipHealthSci	Newcastle

### PUBLIC ENVIRONMENTAL FUND DIRECTORS and MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Peter Berrill	Self-employed Businessman	Rockhampton
Maria Comino, LLB	Solicitor	Sydney
Anthony Culberg, BCom, DipEd, TTC Accountant		Hobart
John Dunkley, MEd, B.Ec., Dip.Ed.	Consultant & Company Director	Canberra
Kevin Kiernan, PhD	University lecturer	Hobart
Nicholas White MA, BSc	Micro-biologist	Melbourne

### CONSERVATION COMMISSION

National Convenor                      Nicholas White, MA, BSc (Vic)

Members:

Arthur Clarke BSc (Tas)  
Keir Vaughan-Taylor PhD (NSW)  
Jay Anderson Bpsych (WA)  
Rob Susac (WA)  
Peter Armstrong (WA)  
Eve Taylor (WA)  
Peter Berrill (Qld)

## LIST OF CURRENT CORPORATE MEMBER CLUBS

<b>STATE</b>	<b>CORPORATE MEMBER</b>	<b>ABBREVIATION</b>
<b>ACT</b>	Canberra Speleological Society Inc	CSS
	National University Caving Club	NUCC
<b>NSW</b>	Blue Mountains Speleological Club	BMSC
	Central West Caving Group	CWCG
	Highland Caving Group	HCG
	Hills Speleology Club Ltd.	HSC
	Illawarra Speleological Society Inc.	ISS
	Kempsey Speleological Society	KSS
	Metropolitan Speleological Society	MSS
	Newcastle and Hunter Valley Speleological Society	NHVSS
	Orange Speleological Society	OSS
	Rover Speleological Society	RSS
	Sydney University Speleological Society	SUSS
	University of Technology Sydney Speleological Society	UTS3
<b>NT</b>	Top End Speleological Society	TESS
<b>Qld</b>	Central Queensland Speleological Society	CQSS
	Chillagoe Caving Club	CCC
<b>Vic</b>	Caving Club of Victoria	CCV
	Victorian Speleological Association	VSA
<b>SA</b>	Cave Exploration Group South Australia	CEGSA
	Flinders University Speleological Society	FUSS
<b>Tas</b>	Northern Caverneers	NC
	Southern Tasmania Caverneers	STC
<b>WA</b>	Speleological Research Group of Western Australia	SRGWA
	Western Australia Speleological Group Inc.	WASG
	Cavers Leeuwin Inc	Clinc
<b>STATE</b>	<b>PROVISIONAL MEMBER</b>	<b>ABBREVIATION</b>
<b>NSW</b>	Cavers & Adventurers of the Snowy Mountains	CASM
<b>VIC</b>	Victorian Limestone Caving Team	VLCT