

AUSTRALIAN SPELEOLOGICAL FEDERATION
Inc.

ANNUAL REPORT
2007

“Draft – Jan 08”

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AUSTRALIAN SPELEOLOGICAL FEDERATION Inc.**ANNUAL REPORT 2007****President's Report – 2007*****Jay Anderson***

As the year draws to an end, many members may be reflecting on the past. We started the year with a celebration, at the Mt Gambier Conference – the 50th Anniversary of the Australian Speleological Federation. In our 2006 Annual Report, I highlighted the opportunity that such a significant milestone gave us – to reflect on the past and to consider the future.

As this year has progressed, it has become clear to me that the organization is at a crossroads. I see that people in the wider community seem to be less interested in the outdoors, and in caving in particular. Many of our corporate members have low membership and this affects the ASF overall. Additionally, many long-term cavers are becoming increasingly involved in a range of areas, reducing the volunteer time that they may have available for a National organization. As an organization, the ASF continues to have administrative tasks and operational requirements. Yet, despite the vigour and enthusiasm of keen volunteers, people only have so much time.

We have seen significant delays within our organization. Whether it be finalising minutes, publishing a journal or progressing a much needed review of bylaws or Ethics. Despite plans and timelines and good intentions, the end result has been a delay, or a total lack of information going to ASF members. This is concerning and the executive have done their best in ensuring the ongoing operation of the ASF.

It is clear that change is required. Whether any more members are interested in volunteering for ASF duties remains to be seen. At each Council meeting, there always seems to be vacant roles or continuous outstanding tasks. Those members who do “stick their hand up” are often also heavily involved in many other tasks and projects – it is often busy people who are keen to volunteer. However this means that decisions often need to be made about priorities and all too often the ASF takes a back seat. Despite our understanding and support, the reality is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the ASF to progress. I see that for the ASF to progress may require a change in direction, perhaps even “thinking outside of the box”.

During the Mt Gambier Conference, I gave a presentation on the ASF and challenged members to consider the organization – its goals and future. Many members are actively involved in their own “caving club” and support issues at a State level. Many cavers expect a certain “Service” from the ASF. Yet, how many cavers are willing to contribute some of their time, to ensure that the ASF remains operational? I challenge you to consider what you expect from the ASF and how you will be involved to make that happen.

At the last Council meeting, a special committee was developed. Many people switch off at the thought of “committee’s” and the ASF has many such groups in existence (but not necessarily operational). This committee was a committee with a difference, it was set up to assess and build organisational identity. I’d like to thank this small group of members who have spent time examining important concepts and liaising with members.

The organization identity committee has progressed over the last year. All ASF corporate members were involved in a group “member survey” during the year. This provided valuable feedback to assist in identifying what members expect from the ASF. The Annual Report provides a summary from this committee and I understand that members will be canvassed further. This process is highly beneficial and will allow the ASF to grow and develop into the future.

One key outcome has been the development of a new, more regular ASF publication. Some members will recall a previous email newsletter – the Speleo E Bulletin. A similar but different initiative is under implementation. With unexpected delays in the publication of Caves Australia this year, and the clear need to ensure that the ASF has regular communication with members, the ASF has developed the “E-Speleo Bulletin”. It is intended that all members on email will receive this publication- a monthly, short succinct newsletter (If you would like a paper copy, please contact your club to arrange this). By the time of the Council meeting in late January, all members should have received three editions. The ASF looks forward to feedback on this new publication.

As you read the ASF Annual Report and the variety of issues dealt with by the ASF, I urge you to consider what change may be required. Does the organization need to out-source and pay for the production of key publications like Caves Australia to ensure that it gets to members as required? Perhaps the ASF really needs a part-time paid Administrator to ensure that the ASF is operating in a timely manner. Maybe continuing to operate on volunteer time is not allowing the ASF to achieve anything more than dealing with urgent administrative issues.

My thanks goes to all of those ASF members who do find time to assist in their ASF roles – despite the many other things that they may have occurring in their personal life. It is the passion and enthusiasm of these members that has brought the ASF to where it is today – a key environmental organization that has so much more to achieve – both for its members and for the conservation and protection of Australia’s cave and karst environment.

In my report last year, I shared that I have a vision for the ASF. The ASF executive has developed key areas to progress our organization into the future. We have had several meetings this year where we have set time aside to look at the organization and its goals. We have refined our Mission Statement and are working to clarify the organisations strategic direction and priorities. The ASF executive sees an organization that is able to shoulder shared administration, thereby freeing up valuable volunteer time to undertake the true objectives of the ASF, to increase knowledge, educate and preserve Australia’s karst and caves. The ASF really needs to consider methods for streamlining the operation of the ASF, and techniques to ensure that we are financially viable and have additional income sources.

Provided here is a brief overview of some of the issues raised in the Annual Report:

Membership

The ASF has 27 Corporate Members, 6 Associates and 20 Individual Members. At the last Council meeting, 2 new Corporate Members were accepted – Welcome to Cavers and Adventurers of the Snowy Mountains (CASM) and Mole Creek Caving Club (MCCC). During the year, the ASF received some sad news that Central Qld Speleological Society (CQSS) has not renewed their membership, but we are aware that active members will continue to retain their ASF membership through other methods.

The ASF membership database is operational and it is excellent to see members utilising this facility. Each Corporate Member is encouraged to keep this up to date to ensure that members are able to receive up-to-date communication from the ASF.

Environmental Fund

Many ASF members have utilised the opportunity to contribute to The Environmental Fund (or “Gift Fund”) of the ASF - donations are tax-deductible and much appreciated. The ASF hopes to refine the process for members to access funding to provide support for local projects. We also encourage members to share information about the Fund to other individuals and community groups.

The ASF is seeking members interested in assisting to further develop the operation of the Fund. The small management committee would appreciate members who have an interest in environmental management, promotion or fundraising.

As outlined to members, the ASF and Cement Australia have continued negotiations and discussions in relation to the proposed gift of land in QLD. The gift includes freehold title to land on the eastern slopes of Mt Etna, adjacent to Mt Etna National Park. The ASF has been liaising with the local committee and obtained legal advice to assist in further decision-making. With the support of key ASF members it is anticipated that the gift will be finalised during 2008. This is an exciting development and you will hear more about it.

Conservation (Management & Protection) Issues

I am aware that each state has a number of significant karst conservation issues. It would be excellent if each club could commit to dealing with a key issue or project. This may present the opportunity to work in partnership with other environmental or recreational groups. The ASF website has a section dedicated to this purpose and the ASF Executive looks forward to seeing more information on what ASF members are doing!

Some members may be aware that the Federal Government has undertaken a process to assess and document key karst areas in Australia – through the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage. This is with a view to determine a National Framework for karst values and to progress National Heritage Listings. Several key karst areas are represented in this process and the ASF hopes that speleologists will have further involvement in determining the values and significance of karst sites.

Insurance

Special thanks to Jodie Rutledge for taking on the role of Convenor for the Insurance Commission. All clubs, particularly ASF members who organise and run “trips” are encouraged to be familiar with the Insurance policy documents.

Publications

The ASF has a number of publications that are developed and produced with thanks to the committed work of ASF members. Special thanks to those members who 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 progressing. These exciting publications are being molded by a key group of interested members.

Mt Etna

I understand that several members have concerns regarding the Mt Etna project. I consider that there have been some misunderstandings but that these can be resolved. To that end I have been working with several members on the issues raised.

The Executive and MELMAC have worked quite hard to maintain the momentum in relation to ensuring ongoing progress on the Mt Etna project and the proposed Environment Fund gift. I would reiterate that it does take time to consult with numerous people and to go through several drafts of correspondence or to gain a resolution – especially operating with a committee in states across Australia, including several time.

There are clearly also significant differences of opinion and understanding of process between all of those involved. Nevertheless I am satisfied that the Executive has continued to operate in accordance with the Council's directions and that any communications with Cement Australia were in accordance with the legal advice we had received. During this time I have also had phone contact with the Manager on several occasions and we were both satisfied with progress and the ongoing partnership. I am also satisfied that the ASF Executive has abided by existing procedures.

I can confirm for members that the Executive has been progressing correspondence to the Directors, via the management committee. Unfortunately this correspondence has been stalled due to a number of factors, not the least of which was the festive season which has just passed. We will be diligently pursuing this communications process in the new year.

Documentation

Since the Karst Index Database (KID) went on-line in 2005, ASF clubs have been working through updating information. The ASF has a number of requests for access to the KID and the executive is currently considering a request in relation to the NSW data. The DECC-Karst Conservation Unit and the ASF are also working on a proposal involving a partnership to seek funding to progress the updating of karst information.

It has been another busy year – full of interesting issues and challenges. The executive has continued to work well together, despite the distances. I'd like to thank the executive for their determination, volunteer time and support. I look forward to hearing from all members about what the ASF means to them and how we are going to work together to ensure that the ASF is a part of our future.

Environmental Fund – Annual Report 2007

John Dunkley

In our 2006 report we noted that one of the Fund's objectives is to facilitate small-scale projects, and that the Fund was in a stronger financial position to receive proposals. In 2007 it is even stronger with over \$5,000 collected at the ASF Conference at Mt Gambier, a fund-raising at the NSW Cavers Dinner and sundry other donations.

This is very encouraging, but raising money is simply the means towards an end. The Fund exists only to further the environmental objectives of ASF. The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts makes it clear that to retain ASF's registration and tax-deductible status as an environmental organisation, we must actively promote environmental programs, not just raise money.

We have already been chided once about this, yet no proposals were received in 2007. Indeed, there has been no formal contact at all from ASF during 2007 and we have not been formally advised or consulted about progress at Mt Etna.

So, the Fund is not reaching its potential and does not have all the practical support needed from the Executive and members. A strong dialogue needs to be commenced within ASF about its future, and we wish to pose some difficult questions:

- *Do the ASF Council and Executive fully understand the fiduciary role of the Fund Directors and the mutual obligations of ASF and the Fund Directors?*
- *Do the ASF Council, Executive, clubs and members really wish ASF to be an environmental organisation, or do they prefer to continue as a loose Federation of clubs with disparate objectives related to speleology?*

Some issues were discussed at the Council Meeting in Bunbury in 2003 but it is our assessment that little progress has been made since then. One reason is that two Directors in other capacities had their attention diverted to Mt Etna. However, outside their fiduciary role, it was never the intention that the Directors would be responsible for ensuring that the Fund worked. That responsibility lies with the Executive and Council.

It is now nearly 10 years since work began on the project to enable ASF to become an environmental organisation, 7 years since the Constitution was altered to accommodate this, and 6½ since registration was obtained and the Fund set up. There are obvious problems in making it work, and ASF must re-examine its commitment to the Fund. We strongly recommend that the ASF Council:

- *Immediately commence a robust debate centring on whether ASF really wishes to be an environmental organisation, what the implications are, and how member clubs and individuals can support it*
- *establish a Committee to:*
 - *consult with member clubs and individuals about developing a closer integration of ASF's environmental objectives with the functioning of the Fund,*
 - *investigate and recommend structural and procedural alterations necessary to achieve these aims, especially practical means of expanding a corps of support among member clubs, individuals (both within and outside ASF) and other organisations with a particular interest in protecting the cave and karst environment of Australia*
- *Make a concerted effort to better publicise the Fund's role and more actively seek out projects that are suitable for support - both within ASF and in conjunction with other organisations and individuals.*

Peter Berrill, John Dunkley, Nicholas White
Management Committee

ASF TREASURER – Annual Report 2007

To be presented at Annual General Meeting

CONSERVATION COMMISSION REPORTS 2007

QLD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Queensland Convenor – Peter Berrill

The Mt. Etna land deal

Peter Berrill Queensland Conservation Convenor;
Coordinator, Mt.Etna Land Management Advisory Commission (MELMAC);
Director, ASF Gift Fund.

Because of the dynamics of the Mt.Etna land deal between ASF and Cement Australia, during the past two years I have had to use all of my above positions at one time or another. I have therefore decided to present a combined report for all of the positions that I hold.

We are now into the second year of negotiations with Cement Australia and as mentioned above they have been very dynamic. Understandably an issue as large and involved as this has many hurdles to overcome. Cement Australia manager Chris White and myself, with the help of the MELMAC committee have been working through these. In the original proposal, ASF was to receive as a gift, the land covering the Eastern Quarry and funds to maintain the rehabilitation. This has changed a little. Early in 2006 I successfully negotiated for ASF to receive an additional gift of the house adjoining the eastern quarry. However when this proposal went to the new board of directors it was rejected. I understand that this was because the board of Cement Australia is now made up of as I believe the three major cement companies in the world. The deal was originally totally rejected but Chris White managed to save it after further negotiations between us. The proposal now as it stands is that Cement Australia will sell the house to fund the deal. The land area around the house is to be surveyed down to a minimum giving ASF more land. We have negotiated conservation covenants to be applied to the title of the house before sale. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has released the leases, satisfied that all legal environmental requirements have been met. The EPA is also negotiating with adjoining land owners for conservation covenants to be placed over sensitive land areas adjoining the National Park.

The rehabilitation planting of Mt. Etna, under the current work plan of Cement Australia, is all but complete. This will be completed by the time ASF takes possession. The rehabilitation has taken nine years and throughout that time Luke Berrill has been the leading- hand responsible for the on-ground work. In October 2007 after nine years Luke finally left Mt. Etna and is now employed with Greening Australia.

I particularly mention this, not because I am his father but because for a number of years I and others close to Luke have been trying to get him to progress his career and move on from Mt. Etna. I in particular had concerns that Mt. Etna would impact negatively upon him but to his credit he genuinely wanted to finish the project. During the nine years, he has overseen the planting of 40,000 trees all planted by hand, mulched these trees with 20,000 bales of hay and carried out earth works, weed control and all other aspects of the rehabilitation. The task was not just a 9 to 5 job. It required him to be out there on his days off and on weekends ensuring that trees waiting to be planted were watered.

The rehabilitation of Mt. Etna has been a mammoth and unforgiving task especially in the early years and during the hot summer months. Luke has truly been dedicated to the task and much of the success of the rehabilitation can be attributed to his dedication.

Negotiations between Cement Australia and MELMAC are progressing and we are successfully handling all problems as they arise.

Unfortunately I regret to inform you that at the time writing this report, I consider that major problems have developed within ASF in the handling of the Land Deal. In my opinion the problems relate to inappropriate protocols and procedures between the executive and the Gift Fund Directors. I and others have tried to get these problems addressed on a number of occasions. However, following a telephone conversation between the President and myself regarding the problems I saw fit to give notice of my resignation from the project.

As a Fund Director given the current problems and the failure of the executive to address these I cannot vote in favour of ASF accepting the Gift from Cement Australia.

On the 4th June 2001 ASF was registered as an environmental organisation. By changing the constitution and becoming registered the Council charged the executive with the responsibility of redirecting ASF as an environmental organisation. After years of formal advice on how to proceed no change has been forthcoming. At present I believe we are in crisis and the problem has to be addressed now. The executive have had a number of strategic planning meetings and I consider that nothing in regards to the Gift Fund has been done.

I believe that a special meeting/workshop to address the problem of redirection should be convened as soon as possible.

Following is a report from Scott Hocknull of the Queensland Museum regarding the fossils at Mt. Etna.

I have recently been approached by Queensland National Parks informing me of their centenary celebrations in 2008 and asking if we wish to participate. I have replied positively outlining the current land deal with Cement Australia and the future announcement and celebrations that we have planned. I believe that it would be an excellent opportunity for all parties to demonstrate the positive outcomes of the Mt. Etna issue.

The Impact of Mt Etna

*Scott Hocknull: Bsc (Hons. IA) Phd candidate
 Curator Geosciences
 Queensland Museum*

Understanding future impacts of environmental change on the Australian environment is vital for sustainable management. Of great importance are tropical rainforest and cave ecosystems, which are among our most biodiverse yet most vulnerable to environmental disruption. Past events and patterns underpin the assumptions and robustness of future modelling, however, this data is almost completely lacking for Australian environments, thus seriously impeding future predictions. Finding the direct evidence of this past change is vital for determining future events.

Internationally significant cave deposits at Mt Etna have been discovered and systematically surveyed by a collaborative team from the Queensland Museum and the Central Queensland Speleological Society. These deposits contain the direct evidence of incredibly diverse rainforest ecosystems spanning modern times through the last 500,000 years. We are able to date and correlate the extinction of species in response to aridity, climate variability, and the elevation of regional sea-surface temperatures (Hocknull, 2005;

Hocknull *et al* 2006, 2007). The evolutionary relationships of these species allow us to reconstruct palaeobiogeographies of species now restricted to rainforests of Papua New Guinea and the Wet Tropics

The discoveries at Mt Etna lead to the development of a major multidisciplinary team, including vertebrate palaeoecologists, geochemists, sedimentologists, palynologists and educators with extensive expertise. This team won a Large Australian Research Council Linkage Project Grant (2004-2006) with considerable support from local partners (Central Queensland Speleological Society, Cement Australia and Rockhampton Regional Development). This team, made up of three universities, two museums and four industry partners has provided impetus for these major discoveries and future work in the region. The research team, backed up by members of CQSS has systematically surveyed and excavated cave sites with the Mt Etna region, including the Mt Etna Mine, National Park and Tourist Caves.

Interspersed amongst the bone beds are cave deposits (speleothems) and sediments that record local climate, vegetation change and fire regimes over similar time frames. Our group matches the faunal changes found in these deposits with local climatic, fire and vegetation change. Local aspects of climate change will be related to global climate proxies from ice and ocean cores by using sophisticated radiometric dating techniques, thus placing our research within the global context of climate change. The Mt Etna Mine, National Park and surrounding cave systems both on public and private land offer science a unique opportunity to look into the recent past, to help predict and preserve our future. These projects would not be at all possible without the help and support of local community organisations, such as CQSS, Lions, Capricorn Caves, Rockhampton Regional Development, Capricorn Tourism, Central Queensland University, Cement Australia and the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

WA CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Western Australia Co-convenor – Jay Anderson, Rob Susac, Eve Taylor, Jeff Murray

Summary of WA Karst Conservation and Management Issues

This has been a quieter year on the cave and karst conservation front in WA – mostly due to reduced volunteer time available. The highlights include:

- Significant karst projects involving ASF volunteers
- Continued involvement of speleological representatives in the management of WA karst areas.

Several areas that need further progression are:

- The assessment and protection of vulnerable WA karst areas due to human development.
- Further delays within Government in relation to progress on expired management plans for key karst areas.
- Requests for speleological karst assessments and advice on karst areas continue to increase. Speleological advocacy and continued consultation with several agencies has highlighted the need for more Government involvement in planning and management of karst areas.

As reported in the ASF President's report, the Federal Government has undertaken a process to assess and document key karst areas in WA - with a view to progressing National Heritage

Listings. Several WA areas are represented in this process and we look forward to speleologists having further involvement in future protection of caves and karst areas.

Several key areas in WA have adequate karst management while other key areas have significant knowledge gaps or a complete lack of management. It would be excellent if the ASF and State Conservation Agencies could work together in progressing a framework for karst management in WA. Many speleologists acknowledge that 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. 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, through key involvement of local speleologists, 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. This is an avenue that is being progressed in several ways and ongoing discussions are looking promising. We look forward to reporting on progress towards this in the future.

Jay Anderson

Rob Susac

Eve Taylor

Jeff Murray

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) is yet to be updated. The draft management plan is still being compiled and is yet to be released for public comments. The Cave Management Advisory Committee (CMAC.) continues to meet to advise the DEC on cave management issues. This process continues to work really well and various projects are undertaken regularly - involving local speleological members.

The 2006 Report outlined an issue regarding a Eucalypt plantation adjacent to karst (the Jewel cave karst system). During 2007, the two Cave Managers in the South West (DEC and AMRTA) met with the Margaret River Shire representatives to progress liaison regarding regional development relating to karst. There is a significant need for thorough interagency consultation and communication, including liaison with speleological groups. It is hoped that improved future communication on karst management issues will lead to further research on the areas karst system.

One significant Tourist cave in the South West – Jewel Cave, is undergoing some restoration works. Jewel Cave is located on a Class A Reserve in the LNNP, managed by the Augusta Margaret River Tourism Association (AMRTA) since its discovery in 1957. Upgrades to the site are planned to include removing old lighting and relocating the visitor infrastructure – allowing much of the site that is currently on top of the cave to be returned to natural vegetation. It is hoped that natural infiltration will be restored over sections of the cave that are likely to have been affected by human development. Local speleologists have given their support to the project and it is anticipated that any in-cave works will utilise speleological knowledge and skills.

Local speleologists continue to be involved in on-ground conservation works such as cave restoration, removal of debris from caves and trackmarking.

1B Karst in the Mandurah/Peel Region

As reported previously, there is no specific management of the karst system that lies south of Perth and adjacent to the Dawesville Estuary - 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.

2. To the East:

2A The Nullarbor

As reported on in previous reports, the ASF and local WA speleological groups continue to be involved in the project - aimed at protecting the biodiversity of the Nullarbor Karst. It involves the progression of plans and projects through 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. The project has progressed well with two field trips in 2007 (speleologists and indigenous representatives) and the compilation of a final report on the subterranean biodiversity of the region. The next phase will be to produce Interim Management Guidelines and ASF members will be consulted in the development of these.

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.

The ASF continues to advocate for the need for World Heritage Listing for the Nullarbor. 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:

There has been no release of the draft Yanchep National Park Management plan (1989-1999). However, there has been significant speleological input in management plan drafts, with liaison between the Department of Environment and Conservation and local speleologists.

The Yanchep National Park Caves Advisory Committee (YCAC) 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. There are plans to alter the lighting in Crystal Cave, to remove the lampenflora and to upgrade the in-cave infrastructure.

Previous reports have noted how the area contains a “Threatened Ecological Community” that is endangered and ongoing concerns of the lowered water tables. A partnership of State Government Agencies has been working together and another phase of the “re-watering” of the cave systems is to soon be implemented. 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.

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. This whole area needs significant community education about karst.

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 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 role in karst planning and management. We look forward to reporting on progress towards this issue in the future.

3C Two Rocks & Wanneroo Area:

Although, the City of Wanneroo Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) continue to meet, there has been little focus on the need to assess for karst in development proposals. The committee plays an important role and can assist in raising the profile of karst in the area. Despite its good progress and intent in 2006, the City of Wanneroo has not followed through with the plan to develop and implement a local karst policy. The sub committee has not met since they were advised that the City of Wanneroo had other priorities. This is a disappointing result and it is hoped that the City of Wanneroo would see the need to continue to progress this important policy.

Development subdivisions continue to occur, however it seems that although speleologists can be involved in karst assessments, this is not given the required policy framework for implementation. Development continues to occur and there has been an increase in the number of requests for karst assessment. Speleologists are now receiving regular requests. These requests involve a significant amount of volunteer time to resolve. 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. 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.

3D Coastal Karst – Lancelin to Geraldton - including Jurien/Cervantes:

As reported in the 2006 report, The "Hidden Treasures" Project was initiated and successfully implemented. Speleologists were involved in documenting (and collecting specimens) subterranean fauna from caves in the region. As a result of this project, greater liaison has occurred with DEC and private landowners in the areas. A final report was compiled which will be a significant key reference for the area.

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.

3E Cape Range:

The Cape Range National Park Management plan (1987-1997) has been in the process of review for some time. The Management plan was finalised in early 2007.

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. In addition, 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.

3F The Kimberley – FAR north:

The caves and karst of the Kimberley are of considerable international significance, yet 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 (see the 2005 report for more information). The National Heritage List may be an appropriate mechanism for recognising the areas "outstanding" values.

4. Public Education:

The ASF was again involved in the display at the "Children's Groundwater Festival" in November. Positive feedback was received about this event that targeted teachers and primary school aged

children in the Perth region. Additionally, the 3rd Joint Workshop between the ASF, Greening Australia – WA and Skills for Nature Conservation (DEC) occurred during the year. This was titled “Subterranean safari – exploring the karst systems on the Swan Coastal Plain”. Three ASF members conducted the workshop, which was again well received.

5. Karst Policy:

As reported in the 2006 Report, the EPA Policy document titled “Environmental Guidance for Planning and Development” (2006) (an update of the 1997 “Guidelines for Environment and Planning”) was circulated for public comment. This document contains, Chapter B9 I- a section titled “karst, subterranean wetlands and fauna”. This document contains information relating to karst assessment and particularly how to consider karst during planning. This excellent document is about to be finalised, however it is already being utilised.

One other key assessment/policy document is the EPA “Guidance for the assessment of Environmental Factors” (Policy 54). This policy relates to the assessment of subterranean fauna in groundwater and caves. A recent associated document has been drafted and is currently out for public review and submissions– the 54a Technical Index “sampling methods and survey considerations for subterranean fauna in WA” (12 months – to August 2008).

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

The W.A. –ASF Conservation Commission aims to raise the profile of speleological consultation in karst management, comprehensive karst assessment, policy development and land development planning issues. We consider that there are great opportunities for partnerships and collaboration in local projects. It is our aim to continue to develop relationships with Government and other Environmental Agencies, to progress the vision for future karst management in WA. At a local Government level, there needs to be progress on the development of local policy. 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. The WA Government needs to show a greater commitment to appropriately resourcing areas that manage karst and discussions on this have been ongoing. It would be excellent to see the State Government allocate appropriate resources to each National Park to appropriately manage the karst areas. We will continue to progress the vision for future karst management-involving speleologists and developing Government roles in Karst Management, Planning and karst Education.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY REPORT

Jodie Rutledge

It is with regret that I report that Central Queensland Speleological Society (CQSS) have decided to discontinue their Corporate Membership with ASF. CQSS formed in 1967, and for 22 years fought hard for the protection of Mt Etna Caves, just north of Rockhampton in Queensland. Long term CQSS member, Peter Berrill, is a Fellow of the ASF (one of 8 Fellows). It is hoped that CQSS continues to be an advocate for cave conservation in their region and keeps in touch with the federation in the future.

Throughout the year, the ASF Executive received 8 applications for Individual Membership, 2 from Cave Managers and 6 Cavers (3 being cave divers). 7 have been accepted and 1 currently in process of assessment at the time of writing this report.

In the last few months I have received a lot of negative feedback from members in regards to the ASF Executive approving ASF membership that is outside of the club structure. I need to work within the rules already set out in the ASF Constitution and Bylaws. If any member feels that these rules need to be changed then please talk to your clubs ASF councillor about raising a motion.

In June this year, the University of New England MOUNTAINEERING Club, based in central northern NSW, were accepted as an ASF Associate organisation.

NSW SPELEOLOGICAL COUNCIL – ANNUAL REPORT 2007

President: Denis Marsh

The NSWSC has been active during 2007 with a meeting in May at Timor and another in October at Bankstown. The current Executive consists of Denis Marsh (President), Jodie Rutledge, Kevin Moore, Evelyn Taylor and Colin Tyrrell. These ASF members were elected at the May meeting and are in regular contact via email. The Council has been working to foster a close relationship with the DECC's newly established Karst Conservation Unit (KCU). This is in an effort to propagate greater recognition of the contribution and support speleos and ASF clubs provide towards better management and conservation of karst environments.

The Council has been involved with a number of matters around NSW during the year with some still ongoing at the time of writing this report. The ASF Executive has also been involved with some of these matters and I expect they will be mentioned elsewhere as well.

DECC Karst Managers Forum

The Karst Conservation Unit (KCU) convened a DECC Karst Managers Forum in March 2007 at Jenolan to confirm key issues and identify strategies with respect to karst and geodiversity management within the DECC estate. The forum was attended by DECC karst managers from throughout NSW, as well as managers from Wellington and Wee Jasper caves. Members of the new statutory Karst Management Advisory Committee (KMAC) were also invited to attend. Following on from this forum the KCU prepared a Karst Management Position Paper which set out directions and work priorities for the KCU going forward for the next 5 years. The manager of the KCU, Stephen Meehan, gave a presentation on the forum to the NSWSC meeting in October.

DECC Cave Access Policy Directive

As a follow on from the karst managers forum, the KCU formulated a Cave Access Policy Directive. This policy directive is designed as a stop gap measure until a formal Cave Access Policy is developed by the KCU over the next 12 months. In a break from normal procedure for such policy directives, the KCU consulted with the ASF in the development of this policy directive. The NSWSC and ASF Executive provided a joint response to the draft and most of our suggestions were adopted or points varied in line with our comments. Chris Norton also provided comment through his role as a member of the Karst Management Advisory Committee (KMAC). Much of the focus of the directive concerns the use of written permits as a consistent management approach by DECC for granting access to caves. The Director General's endorsement of the Directive is expected in February 2008. Immediately following this endorsement, the broader Cave Access Policy will be

developed and will include standard conditions/procedures as well as approval and reporting mechanisms. The KCU has indicated that there will be a wider consultation process with the formal policy.

Jenolan

The handover of Jenolan from the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust (JCRT) to the DECC, Reserve and Wildlife Conservation Branch (formerly NPW) is still not finalised. Under an interim arrangement, Jenolan remains divided into two management zones. The Trust, run by an administrator, continues to manage the Visitor Use and Services Zone. This includes the developed areas such as the tourist precinct, Caves House, the various cottages and buildings, and walking trails and paths through the tourist caves. The major part of the Reserve is managed by the DECC Area Manager, Blue MOUNTAINS. This arrangement will continue until the Minister adopts the new Plan of Management for the area. I also understand that the DECC were reluctant to assume control of the remainder of the Reserve until litigation arising out of the former lease of Caves House is resolved. At this time it is expected that the final handover to DECC will occur by 1 July 2008. A few caves such as Mammoth extend into both management zones and under the interim arrangement, permits for these particular caves are being managed by the KCU.

The Jenolan Tagging Book remains lost. Efforts to trace the whereabouts of this important record of tags used at Jenolan have failed so far but the search is still ongoing.

JCRT Speleological Advisory Committee (SAC) and Scientific and Environmental Advisory Committee (SEAC)

Although the SAC members were assured by the Administrator that these two committees would be retained, neither has been included in the Draft Plan of Management for Jenolan. An alternative proposal for the formation of a "Friends of Jenolan" group was suggested, but this was considered by speleos as an inadequate substitute. KMAC members have advised support for at least a similar committee such as BRAG at Bungonia. There were also indications of some support from within DECC for a Jenolan specific committee replacing the two current committees. The KCU drafted a Memorandum of Understanding in October - setting out terms of reference for a proposed non-statutory, Jenolan Speleological Advisory Group (JSAG). The KCU sought comment from KMAC members on this draft MOU in early November. I am advised that the MOU has been rejected by the Director General due to concerns there would be duplication of the role of the KMAC. At the time of writing this report the NSWSC is still reviewing this matter.

Dogleg Cave, Wee Jasper

The proposed gating project in Dogleg Cave at Wee Jasper is still under consideration. Andy Spate has highlighted a number of management and operational issues which need to be resolved between cavers and with the land managers (Wee Jasper Reserves Trust, administered by the Lands Department) before deciding on any plan for a gate. Firstly a policy needs to be formulated on access. The following issues should be considered: who should have access, under what circumstances and conditions, who will maintain the gate, key control, procedure for gate/lock while in the cave, what if any cave monitoring should occur and should a permit system be introduced. The NSWSC meeting in October 2007 resolved to write to the Administrator of the Trust and local ranger to request a meeting with representatives from the NSWSC and interested ASF clubs to discuss the management issues for Dogleg Cave. The date for this meeting is still to be determined. In the meantime it is proposed that there be further discussion on line prior to this meeting.

Meeting between ASF KID Committee and DECC Karst Conservation Unit

The KCU has made a number of requests to ASF and NSW clubs and members for access to all data on caves on the DECC estate. The ASF has also come to recognise there is a significant task in inputting the large aMOUment of data updates into the new web based KID. A meeting of a small ASF KID committee at Wombeyan in April 07 felt there may be an opportunity to form a partnership with the KCU - with the aim of making a joint application for funding to employ a person or persons to undertake the inputting task in a more timely manner. The NSWSC was approached to facilitate a meeting between the KCU and the KID committee. After consulting with the ASF Executive, an initial meeting was held with the KCU in Bathurst on 12 October 2007 to discuss the idea and determine KCU interest. The meeting established a strong interest from both parties in the proposal and discussed the issues which will need to be worked through by both sides for the proposal to go forward. There are a number of issues which the ASF needs to address and these will need to be resolved before another meeting can be held. The ASF executive may need to seek advice on some matters and there will need to be consultation with member clubs. A resolution carried at the most recent NSWSC meeting endorsed the actions of the ASF and NSWSC Executives and the KID Committee but advised caution on making any commitment unless the capacity exists to meet that commitment. A formal letter has been sent to the President of ASF from Stephen Meehan, Manager of the KCU, outlining their request for access to the KID data and to advise the DECC's support for the proposed joint funding application. There needs to be discussion by the Federation on this letter and action points arising out of the initial meeting with the KCU.

General items

NSW clubs are active on numerous projects around the state. Some of these can be viewed on the NSW Projects Register on the ASF web site. Efforts are currently underway to expand on the list of projects advertised in the register by canvassing increased support for this central register rather than clubs advertising their projects solely on their individual club web sites.

A successful NSW Cavers Dinner was held on 27 October 07 at the Bankstown Sports Club hosted by Highland Caving Group (HCG). Guest speakers were Jodie Rutledge and Garry Smith who spoke on their involvement with a recent scientific expedition to the remote karst regions of Western Flores, Indonesia.

Minutes from the NSW Council meetings can be found on the ASF members Yahoo web site. The next meeting of the NSWSC is to be held at Bungonia on 10 May, 2008.

REPORTS OF COMMISSIONS 2007

CAVE DIVING

Tim Payne

Cave divers within the ASF have had yet another active year with activities occurring across the country and with an increasing aMOUment of coordination. Relations with the CDAA remain good and some assistance from ASF CDG members has been provided to the CDAA as they attempt to improve their caving and climbing competence. Participation in the ASF CDG and formal recognition of diving qualifications continues to grow. ASF SIG/CDG procedures have been created in line with previous directions from the ASF council and executive however there has been some recent uncertainty and the SIG requests the council confirm the concise statement at the end of this report.

In NSW SUSS divers did some work restoring formations and cave cleaning in the Barralong. Additional minor work is underway here with the goal to join upstream Lethe to Bluetongue Lake. With the help of John DelaZuana (individual ASF member) and Ken Smith (CEGSA) SUSS

established RDF locations in Slug Lake allowing the position of Slug Lake's Gargle Chamber on the surface to be determined. This has revealed some errors on the surface theodolite traverse which are to be corrected.

Cocklebiddy cave in the Nullarbor has received considerable effort from a number of separate parties working together to try to put together a complete map. The first sump has been mapped over a number of years by Stuart McGregger (CDAA) and others with final efforts occurring this year. Tim Payne (CEGSA), George Yarra (CCV) and some other ASF and CDAA members including Chris Brown (CEGSA), Mick Quillinan (CCV) and Dean Johnson (CDAA) returned this year to complete the survey of the third sump began in 2006 by Tim, George and Stefan Eberhard plus mapped the final km of the 2nd sump. Once again sled techniques were used to establish a base camp at Toad hall from which mapping efforts were staged. Latter Paul Hosie and Alan Polini (WASG) with Ken Smith (CEGSA), Chris Embry (WASG) and Bob Kershaw (ISS) established a series of RDF points along the unmapped section of the second sump and explored side leads in this section.

In a separate trip to the Roe Plain Paul Hosie and Alan Polini (WASG), together with Ken Smith (CEGSA) and Phil Prust (ASF IM) collected water samples and fauna from the Roe Plain caves as part of a biodiversity study. An additional 300m of passage was explored and mapped bringing to total just over 3,000m of passages in this cave, over 98% of which is underwater. Multiple 1,000m+ penetrations were conducted using off-MOUNT closed circuit rebreathers.

Other efforts by different groups in the Nullarbor have resulted in an additional 500m of underwater tunnel plus the discovery of anchialine fauna in the Roe Plain caves by Stefan Eberhard.

The SIG/CDG have established the following operating procedures: Regional coordinators will be established in each of the main cave diving regions. Regional coordinators will help to coordinate research and disseminate information on sites. CDG trips must be led by a recognised caving leader from a corporate ASF club. All diving participants of SIG/CDG trips must be members of the ASF CDG.

All non-diving members of an ASF SIG/CDG trip must be insured members of the ASF. Prior to all ASF SIG/CDG trips notification must be provided to the appropriate regional coordinator. Cave diving trips run by an ASF club may at their discretion utilize the services of the Regional Coordinators. Details of the ASF cave diving competencies, recognition procedures and joining instructions can be found from a link on the ASF web page.

Tim Payne, Paul Hosie, Keir Vaughan-Taylor

CAVE SAFETY

Vacant

HELICTITE

Susan White

Convenor: Susan White

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

Volume 39(2) was published in December 2006 and Volume 40(1) in October 2007. We have some material currently being reviewed for Volume 40(2) but still need some more. Getting sufficient quality material remains a problem.

Since our last major stock take, there are no complete sets of hard copy left and we do not intend to make up any more. The gaps are now too large and we have started work on 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 has been looking at this during 2007 and Glenn Baddeley has started on the scanning of the earlier issues. We have also started discussions with the University of Southern Florida Library on a data storage system via the internet. This is in early stages of discussion at the moment.

We continue to have over 100 Subscriptions (Volume 40) 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 time 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 continued. We are listed on the Speleogenesis: Combined cave journals database. This all raises the status of Helictite in the international literature.

The Helictite website has moved to the ASF website as caves.org.au/helictite.

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

INSURANCE

Jodie Rutledge

At the last council meeting (January 2007) a number of decisions were made in response to choices in coverage offered by our insurance broker. This was the first time in many years that ASF had a choice in policy options and as result, the insurance coverage that ASF Members have now, differs significantly from last year.

ASF holds 2 policies, an Association Liability policy and a Public Liability policy.

Previously, ASF had been forced to purchase Public Liability insurance bundled with Personal Accident coverage, but this year with the option now available to purchase *just* the Public Liability coverage, that is what the council voted for. So ASF Members now no longer hold Personal Accident Insurance coverage.

The Current Policies

- **Association Liability Policy** - The insurer is CGU Professional Risks Insurance and the policy number is 03 ASL 628259. The policy period is 31/01/07 to 31/01/08. The total sum insured is \$1,000,000.00 and the excess is \$2,000.00. The Association Liability insurance is mainly a Professional Indemnity policy. It is not a Directors & Officers type policy that extends to Club committees.

- **Public Liability Policy** - The insurer is Calliden Limited and the policy number is TRIP/000117. The policy period is also 31/01/07 to 31/01/08. The total sum insured is up to \$10,000,000.00 with an excess of \$1,000.00.

This policy insures ASF Members against sums which they become legally liable to pay as compensation in respect of personal injury and/or property damage during the period of insurance, within Australia and as a result of an occurrence in connection with ASF Member business.

Like all insurance policies, there are conditions and exclusions. And due to having a new insurer, I am still trying to come to grips with exactly the coverage that we have with this new policy. For example, it is being investigated whether visitors (non-members) onto club caving trips would be covered under the policy.

It is noted that 3 ASF Clubs are specifically exempt from this policy and do not contribute to the ASF Public Liability policy so therefore have a reduced ASF membership fee. These are SUSS, NUCC & FUSSI. As per the ASF Insurance scheme rules, clubs may apply to be exempt as long as they already are covered under a policy that offers at least comparable coverage offered to that provided by the ASF obtained policy.

A copy of the current certificate of currency and policy wording for both policies can be found on the asf-members yahoo web site www.yahogroups.com.au under **Files > ASF > ASF Insurance > Insurance 2007**. Or contact myself at Jodie@rutco.com.au

The policy renewals will be sent to me shortly. The current ASF Insurance Scheme guideline policy states that the ASF Executive can go ahead and renew the policies as long as there are no significant changes to the level of coverage and as long as the cost has not exceeded by more than 10%. News of the renewal will be reported to the ASF Council in January 2008.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Nick White

There is little to report. The Commission's role is to assist members, if possible where one can with travel planning and to provide representation at IUS meetings.

Notice of the following meetings have been given in ASF publications or the website.

September 2008 The ASF is co-sponsoring a symposium with the *International Association for Subterranean Biology*. This is the 19th International Symposium of Subterranean Biology, Fremantle, WA 21-26 September 2008. Contact: <http://www.issb2008.org.au>

September 1 – 5 2008 13th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology, Jeju Island, Korea
Contact Dr Kiyung Sik Woo wooks@kangwon.ac.kr

July 2009 Fifteenth International Congress of Speleology Kerrville, Texas, USA
Date: 19-26 July 2009 Organisations: NSS

More information: <http://www.ics2009.us/>

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.

Caves Australia

The 2007 year has been a singularly frustrating year for publications, especially Caves Australia. Despite feeling at the last Council meeting that we were going to move on with Caves Australia, things have continued to deteriorate. No Issue of CA has been published since January and there is a serious backlog of material sitting with the editor. CA #172 is still in production as I write this report and there has been little point in sending on material to production if there is already a log jam. We have been trying to work through problems but until recently have not had much success. However we now have some more volunteers based in Tasmania headed by Alan Jackson, to produce CA. I am currently working through getting to them all the "infrastructure" material they need.

As a result of the production problems we are having, publication of CA procedure guide was produced. In summary Caves Australia (CA) has 5 phases in its production: collection of material, choosing and organising the content of a particular issue, editing the material chosen including photographs and diagrams and working out pagination, layout and proofreading, printing and mailing, and archiving the material in digital form and hard copy. Each of these phases has several jobs and they obviously require co-operation and consultation between the various people involved. An outline of how this could work was produced and distributed. Caves Australia is produced under the auspices of the Publications Commission and so the Commission Convenor is the person who is finally responsible.

I can only apologise for the problems this year and have found them particularly frustrating.

Espeleo

This year has seen the start of a new project of a monthly emailed newsletter currently edited by Ross Anderson. This has taken some energy to put together and does not replace CA as it is small items of news and will not have anything that is "abstractable" so will not compete with CA or Helictite. Two issues have been sent out. This may take some of the pressure off CA for news

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.

Carol however is resigning in January as she is no longer able to do the website updates due to moving. I have been hunting for a replacement. As yet I have two offers of people who can do it as a temporary position but am still hunting for a permanent replacement. Anyone who has a suggestion please let me know.

I particularly want to thank Carol for all the work she has put into the website over the past few years.

Other publications

The Wee Jasper new edition has not made much progress for the year but I have put pressure on the various authors to make sure that this starts to make progress in the first few months of 2008.

Similarly, the Conservation Book has slowed. Some material is in and some progress in the further collection of material has happened but progress is slow.

The success however is the production of a book by John Dunkley (*Jenolan Caves Guides Guests and Grottoes*), in co-operation with the Jenolan Caves Historical & Preservation Society. There is a real need for relatively economical books to be available at the tourist cave outlets such as Jenolan. The book retails for \$19.95 (plus postage) and is available from the Publications Commission as well as the shop at Jenolan.

Similarly the A4 book (*Down Under All Over*) produced for the Conference at Mt Gambier last January, has been selling and there are not many left. It is available for \$12 plus postage from the commission.

Thanks to everyone who has been involved in Publications this past year.

LIBRARY

Cathy Brown

Following recommendations from earlier years' reports, copies of a few cave management consultancy reports prepared by ASF but not already lodged in the Library were obtained. This could usefully be expanded to encompass similar reports by non-ASF sources if authors are willing, and we recommend accordingly.

Similarly, we now receive newsletters from a few non-speleological community organisations. We acquired one or two university theses relating to caves and karst and will pursue more from authors as these are often difficult for researchers to source from the host university. Increasingly these are available either on CD or on-line.

A year or so ago we alerted the Executive to the sheer volume of material in the Library and Archives, amounting to over 42 metres of shelf space and expanding at more than a metre a year. The ASF will need to consider options for additional storage space and/or copying our holdings into electronic format in the next few years.

Electronic information sources

The Library now has a CD with over 80,000 abstracts to caves and karst worldwide from 1988 to 2005, in addition to paper abstracts worldwide from 1963 to 1976 and more comprehensively for Australia 1970-1979.

We are not well organised to accession and catalogue the growing number of publications received on either CD, by e-mail or made available on-line. Several clubs now produce electronic newsletters and it is not clear whether all are being copied to the ASF Library. The Library is 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. These are awkward to catalogue & we were not able to make any progress in 2007.

We need professional advice about this. How should we organise electronic newsletters – should hard copies be made? Should they just be collected until there are enough to put on a CD? How indeed are the originating clubs and organisations providing for this? Does it matter?

Recommendations

1. That the author or editor of cave management consultancy reports not already lodged with the Library be invited to arrange for archival copies to be stored with ASF.
2. That approaches be made to non-member community organisations publishing serials relating to caves, to lodge copies with the ASF Library, and to authors of relevant unpublished university theses and term reports for copies to be lodged with ASF Library.
3. That the Council endorse the Librarian to seek professional advice about how to accession, catalogue and store material received in electronic form.
4. That the Council allows \$200 in the budget for the library, principally for printer cartridges, so that we can print out good quality paper copies of the journals supplied electronically.
5. That the Council considers renaming the Library Commission as the 'Library and Archives Commission'.

NATIONAL CAVE RESCUE COMMISSION

Ross Anderson

At the Mt Gambier conference in January, 2007, the NCRC committee convened by Grace Matts met and discussed cave rescue in Australia and options for moving forward. Ross Anderson was nominated as the new convenor of the commission.

During 2007 a number of interesting actions have been undertaken and I feel that the NCRC is progressing toward a situation where the ASF NCRC will hold training materials and have access to suitable trainers nationwide. This will allow the presentation of Cave Rescue programs from basic orientation level to more advanced vertical rescue.

I will endeavour to give a basic rundown on actions for the year and detail the basic objectives of the NCRC at this stage:

Through discussions with a number of individuals with a long term interest in cave rescue in Australia, the basic intent at this stage for the NCRC is to develop a cave rescue training program that is openly available (and modifiable) to all ASF member clubs. These packages will assist ASF member clubs to achieve a similar level of competence among members. The NCRC will compile a list of cavers that have attended the training programs, and be able to provide trainers and resources for cave rescue training. Ultimately it would be desirable for ASF/ Member clubs to achieve recognition from the statutory rescue authorities that they have a significant role in cave rescue. This is not to say that cavers should control cave rescue as there are issues with capability due to the small size of our caver population, it's simply that cavers should be recognised for their specialised expertise and knowledge.

March - New Zealand Search and Rescue Exercise – attended by Ross Anderson and Joe Sydney to build relations with NZSS and gain greater appreciation of the structure and operation of cave rescue in NZ, where they have significant government support.

May - Cave Rescue Orientation Program (CROP) presented in Margaret River Western Australia. This program is adapted from the NSS Orientation to Cave Rescue course that has been presented in the USA since 1978. The program is formatted for flexible delivery but ideally shall be presented

over a weekend with a rescue scenario being run on the second day. At this stage the CROP is available on CD for all ASF member clubs and forms the first part of the cave rescue training package the NCRC will be putting together over the next two years.

July – Development of National list of club based cave rescue contacts and club training officers.

October – Initial phases of development of a SRT training package, to be made available to all ASF clubs. The package will consist of materials that mostly are available commercially and are able to be updated with minimal effort. A number of video presentations have been reviewed and a suitable resource document identified. This will be pulled together with the development of a study guide that club trainers can utilise. The objective is to develop a package that clubs can easily utilise for flexible learning. The development of this package is a necessary pre-requisite before the development of the two planned vertical rescue programs.

Planned events for 2008:

At this stage CCC, CEGSA and NC have expressed an interest in hosting CROP weekends in 2008 and I will be liaising with them further to bring this to fruition.

January – Cave Rescue Orientation Program – Margaret River. This will be the second presentation of the CROP.

February/ March – CROP presentation to multiple agencies (eg SES, Police, FESA, DEC) and other interested parties. Commercial recreational operators have been identified as having significant interest in cave rescue due to the nature of their operations and skill sets of their staff. The CROP will be modified to suit the audience and will hopefully provide a useful opportunity for cavers to build relationships with statutory agencies.

April/ May – Initial presentation of ASF SRT training package to Western Australian cavers.

June/ July – Initial presentation of basic vertical rescue program.

October/ November – Initial presentation of advanced vertical program.

Hopefully by the next conference in 2009 the suite of training programs will be available for all ASF clubs, the CROP will have been presented in four states and a national training/skills register that is compatible with the NZ system will be operational. If any club seeks more information or assistance with cave rescue skills training, please contact to discuss further.

SAFETY, LEADERSHIP & RISK MANAGEMENT

Vacant

SURVEYING & MAPPING STANDARDS

Ken Grimes

As usual, little activity this year.

There was some email discussion with the UISIC survey and mapping workgroup on two topics:

- Proposed revision of BCRA type map grades - I pointed people at the ASF grades (on ASF web site) as a starting point.

- Proposed UISIC cave symbol revision - nothing significant has been suggested.

I reviewed Philipp Häuselmann's article on "Sustainable Mapping" for Australian Caver - making some changes to suit the Australian terminology etc. This will appear in a future issue. There was a copyright request to publish part of the ASF map symbols list in the Timor Caves book by the Newcastle & Hunter Valley Speleological Society.

There were two requests for advice on ASF map symbols:

- Steve Bourne & Andy Spate: re the cave entrance symbol used on surface maps.
- Bob Kershaw - re a symbol for Shawls (I suggested the UIS symbol).

No recommendations for the council meeting (unless someone else wants the job!). No significant costs for 2006. No expected major costs for 2008.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES 2007

MEMBERSHIP DATABASE

Jodie Rutledge

The online ASF Membership database has been operating well over the last 12 months. Only one club remains without a database administrator within their own club. CCV have not indicated yet (at the time of this report being written) which CCV member/s is to be set up as the CCV administrator.

For the majority of the club's, the membership database is being accessed routinely. It is hoped that with more education over the next 12 months, all of the club will be using the membership database soon.

This Committee, set up in 2005, last met face to face in January 2006. All committee business has occurred via email since this meeting. Recently, the committee was asked to consider the possibility of using the ASF member emails stored in the database to email out an ASF Bulletin regularly to members. It was resolved that the database could facilitate this and an email list was set up in the database. The first Speleo E Bulletin was sent via the new asf-members@caves.org.au email list in early November.

Where to now? The next 12 months will focus on further educating members on the use of the database. Also some extra programming will be added so that clubs can see an account online of their fees owed, which can then be 'marked off' by the ASF Treasurer once paid.

A special thanks goes to our programmer, David Connard of SUSS, who has made this online interface possible for members and continues to support the ASF in the implementation and maintenance of the new system.

ASF ORGANISATIONAL COMMITTEE

Ross Anderson

At the 2007 ASF conference in Mt Gambier the following motion was put and passed.

Resolution 18

“Establish a one year committee to investigate building ASF organisational identity and funds through means of publishing and merchandising. The committee will be empowered to implement outcomes of the investigation, subject to executive endorsement of findings.”

After the formation of the committee the first three months of activity were allocated to the committee gaining a greater appreciation of what organisational identity is and how it can work for the benefit or disadvantage of an organization such as the ASF. Initially we looked at the objectives of the ASF and how they related to current functions of the ASF. The chair conducted a call around in late March to discuss the operation of the committee and a small internal survey was conducted to determine: the services that the ASF currently provides to members, services that committee members felt could or should be provided to members and each service item was allocated a priority and comment.

One of the issues faced early on by the “Org Id” committee chairperson was that the ASF did not hold a current list of club contacts. As part of the committee’s tasks it was necessary to create a list of club contacts and ensure that they were all current. This was a significant task that I feel this committee should not have had to undertake. This list has been provided to the ASF Executive to aid in improved communications to all clubs in the future.

To determine member perceptions, and comments as to the strengths and weaknesses of the ASF a survey was conducted in August and the preliminary results were presented to the Executive meeting in September. It is understood that ASF members’ feedback is being included in the executive’s “strategic” planning.

Results of the survey are discussed in a separate document. As a result of the survey there was a clear statement from members that historically the ASF has suffered from less than optimal levels of communication with members. Caves Australia contains excellent information but does not provide the regularity of publication that members seek. As a result of this the ASF E-Speleo Bulletin has been implemented and running for three months in draft phase leading up to this council meeting.

The Espeleo Bulletin has been implemented as a monthly newsletter of the ASF that publishes information and news that is not normally published in either Caves Australia or Helictite. Information includes current events in Speleology, news from the ASF executive about issues they are dealing with, club news, area updates and services offered by the ASF to members. For the first three months of publication the Espeleo has operated smoothly with a number of ASF members offering very positive feedback as to the content and style of the publication. Feedback and input is sought from members please email: espeleo@caves.org.au

Since the September Executive meeting personal issues have distracted the chair from pursuing the objectives of the committee (apart from publishing the Espeleo) and I feel that little progress has been made. I would like to see the term of the committee extended for one more year to allow further investigation of external organisations perceptions of the ASF and investigation of methods to develop the ASF’s image/ presence and methods to raise revenue.

Recommendation – That the Organisational Identity committee continue for another year to allow further progress.

Attachments to be provided at Council meeting:

- file: **070107 ASF Member services and delivery of service priority schedule as developed by Org Id Committee.**
- file: **0108 ASF Member services and delivery of service priority schedule as developed from ASF member Survey 0807.**
- **5 Copies of Survey Results and Discussion**
- **Hand out - 2 copies of Clubs contact lists for updating and following questions**
 - Does your club produce a newsletter? Monthly/ Quarterly
 - When does you club meet? in which town or suburb?
 - Update contact details on list

EXECUTIVE MEMBERS 2007

President	Jay Anderson	Perth
Senior Vice-President	Stan Flavel	Adelaide
Vice-President	Nicholas White	Melbourne
Vice-President	Chris Bradley	Canberra
Vice President	Joe Sydney	Sydney
Secretary	Winfried Weiss	Tolga, Qld
Treasurer	Grace Matts	Sydney
Membership Secretary	Jodie Rutledge	Newcastle
Executive Secretary	Evelyn Taylor	Sydney
Non Executive Vice President	John Dunkley	Canberra

PUBLIC ENVIRONMENTAL FUND DIRECTORS

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

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

National Convenor	Nicholas White, MA, BSc
Members:	Arthur Clarke BSc (Tas) Keir Vaughan-Taylor PhD (NSW) Jay Anderson BPsych, Peter Armstrong (WA) Eve Taylor (WA) Peter Berrill (Qld)

ASF MEMBERSHIP REGISTER

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Speleological Society Inc.
PO Box 156
Curtin ACT 2605

National University Caving Club
c/o Sports Union, GPO Box 4
Canberra ACT 2601

New South Wales

Blue Mountains Speleological Club
PO Box 37
Glenbrook NSW 2773

Metropolitan Speleological Society
PO Box 178
Thornleigh NSW 2120

Cavers & Adventurers of the Snowy Mountains
10/ 35 Clyde St
Jindabyne NSW 2617

Newcastle & Hunter Valley Speleological Society Inc.
PO Box 15
Broadmeadow NSW 2292

Central West Caving Group
PO Box 428
Oberon NSW 2787

Orange Speleological Society
PO Box 752
Orange NSW 2800

Highland Caving Group
24 Walsh Crescent
North Nowra NSW 2541

Rover Speleological Society of NSW
c/o 22/102 Crimea Road
Marsfield NSW 2122

Hills Speleology Club Ltd.
3 Heights Place
Hornsby Heights NSW 2077

Sydney University Speleological Society
Box 35, Holme Building
Sydney University NSW 2006

Illawarra Speleological Society Inc.
PO Box 94
Unanderra NSW 2526

University of Technology Sydney Speleological Society
c/o The Union, PO Box 123
Broadway NSW 2007

Kempsey Speleo Society
1645 Hickey's Creek Road
via Kempsey NSW 2440

Northern Territory

Top End Speleological Society
PO Box 706
Katherine NT 0851

Queensland

Chillagoe Caving Club Inc.
PO Box 92
Cairns Qld 4870

South Australia

Cave Exploration Group South Australia Inc.
PO Box 14
Rundle Mall
Adelaide SA 5001

Flinders University Speleological Society
c/o Clubs & Societies Association
Flinders University
Bedford Park SA 5042

Tasmania

Mole Creek Caving Club
PO Box 209
Mole Creek TAS 7304

Southern Tasmanian Caverneers Inc.
PO Box 416
Sandy Bay Tas 7006

Northern Caverneers Inc.
PO Box 315
Launceston Tas 7250

Victoria

Caving Club of Victoria
PO Box 254
Mulgrave Vic 3170

Victorian Speleological Association Inc.
GPO Box 5425CC
Melbourne Vic 3001

Western Australia

Cavers Leeuwin Inc
20 Village Green
Margaret River WA 6285

Western Australian Speleological Group Inc.
PO Box 67
Nedlands WA 6009

Speleological Research Group of Western Australia
PO Box 1611
East Victoria Park WA 6981

Provisional Members

Victorian Limestone Caving Team
c/o 39 Esdale St
Blackburn VIC 3130

Associate Organisations (non-members)

Australasian Cave & Karst Management Association: PO Box 36, Carlton South, Vic 3053

Victorian Scout Caving Team: 14 Glendale Cr, Berwick, Vic 3806

NSW Cave Rescue Squad: PO Box 122, Bankstown, NSW 2200

Scouting Australia (ACT): PO Box 7547, Sutton NSW 2620

Karst Conservation Unit (NSW): Level 2, 203-209 Russell St, Bathurst NSW 2795

University of New England Mountaineering Club: C/- Sports, The University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2351