



Australian Speleological Federation Inc. (A.C.T.)

ABN: 15 169 919 964

2017 Annual Report

(Financial year 1st September 2016-30th August 2017)

(Adopted January 2018)

Alan Jackson, STC, hanging out looking for caves.
Bunda Cliffs Expedition 2017

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Cover Photograph

Title: Alan Jackson hanging out looking for caves. Bunda Cliffs Expedition 2017.

Photographer: Brian Evans, Illawarra Speleological Society Inc.

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Executive Members

President	John Cugley
Senior Vice President	Graham Pilkington
Vice President	Joe Sydney
Vice President	Jim Crockett
Vice President	Deb Hunter
Treasurer	Grace Matts
Executive Secretary	Phil Maynard
General Secretary	Bob Kershaw
Membership Secretary	Colin Tyrrell
NEVP UIS 2017 Conference Convener	Denis Marsh (appointed October 2013)
NEVP	Daniel Burt (appointed Jan 2016)
NEVP Strategic Planning	Steve Milner (appointed January 2017)

President's Report

2017 was a prodigious year for the ASF! We held our AGM in Adelaide followed by a dinner to commemorate that 60 years ago a group of clubs gathered to form the ASF. Lots of reminiscing on the night and discussion on the relevance of the ASF then and now!

In July, the ASF were the hosts for the UIS 2017 Congress. The Commission's report is included in the Annual Report. I would like to extend a **big thanks to Dennis Marsh and his team** from all of the ASF for a job well done, along with the many volunteers that made this event happen. Australian speleology can be proud of its presence in the international speleological arena and its achievements. Dr Timothy Moulds was elected to the UIS Bureau at the UIS Congress. The next UIS Congress is in Lyon France in 2021 so start planning your attendance.

As reported in some of the Commissioner reports we have been very lucky once again in 2017 in that we had no long term serious caving injuries or deaths. I am sure that there have been many close calls that have not been reported. Please report all incidents to the SLARM Commissioner, Darren Brooks so that we can make caving safer for all, by disseminating recommendations and conclusions.

The ASF is a completely volunteer federation with all giving up their time for free. In dollar terms, \$11,624 worth of time was worked as a conservative estimate by the ASF Executive plus all the extra things that are done for free. You can easily triple this figure for all the time spent by the Commissioners and their teams.

Thank you to all my fellow ASF members on the Executive for all their work and efforts in making sure that the Federation is functioning and looking after caves and karst. They all put in a large amount of volunteer time and travel, so thank you to their partners/family.

Lots of the work for the Federation happens in the Commissions. A big thanks to the Commissioners and their teams for the outstanding efforts in 2017.

We welcome new faces, ideas and input. So before the next AGM think "what can I do for the ASF?" to assist in protection of caves and karst, and nominate for a role.

In 2018, the ASF Executive will be continuing on from planning sessions in 2017 on strategic planning. A session is to be held at the January 2018 Council meeting.

The next ASF Conference, for those members who did not attend the Australia night at the UIS Congress and saw the outstanding presentation by the Tasmanians, is on 30th December 2018 to 4th January 2019 in Devonport.

John Cugley
ASF President

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer: Grace Matts
Presented and accepted at meeting.

The ASF Karst Conservation Fund

Nicholas White

The fund is operating well, it could do with more members in the Commission, more publicity and more funds. It should be noted that direct conservation projects and those proposed by member clubs of the ASF, form a minor portion of those approved and University research studies now form some of the projects supported. Much of this is research directed at the causes of cave dwelling bat decline as well as microbiological studies to determine if these are causes of population decline.

Current Projects

Population dynamics of the critically endangered Southern Bent-wing Bat, PhD Project of Emmi van Harten, Latrobe University. This work is proceeding well and a poster on the work was used as a display at the ASF Table at the Congress. The PhD will be presented in mid-2018 and a report for Caves Australia will be presented.

Health Survey of Bent-Wing Bats, PhD project of Peter Holz, University of Melbourne. There is now an interim report which shows that there was no White Nose Syndrome fungus detected in South Australian and Victorian bent-wing bats (*Miniopterus orianae bassanii* and *M. orianae oceanensis*). The *Histoplasma capsulatum* fungus was confirmed for caves in SA, Western Victoria and Eastern Victoria. No other infectious agents were detected which might have contributed to the population decline in both the Southern and Eastern bent-wing bat populations of SA and Victoria.

Cliefden Projects: **Geoheritage Significance of Cliefden Caves**, NSW, Armstrong Osborne, University of Sydney, in progress. OSS-SUSS Cave mapping project (not funded) is ongoing. This Cliefden project has contributed effectively in giving cave levels which are important for assessing the impacts of potential dam proposals on Cliefden Caves (see Conservation report).

Aerial Survey Baxter Cliffs, Nullarbor WA, Steve Milner. A paper was presented at the

International Congress in July 2017 on the results of exploring the Bunda Cliffs for caves and information was given for future trips to cave prospects on the Baxter Cliffs.

M-3 Shades of Death Cave, property purchase completed by Rimstone Cooperative Ltd. The Fund directors have supported the fund-raising for this purchase, allowing donors to get a receipt from the Fund (ASF has advanced a loan for the purchase). A management strategy is now being prepared.

An exploration project has just been funded for Matej Lipar and Mateja Ferk to **explore for caves and karst features on the North Western edge of the Nullarbor**.

Fund raising of remaindered and donated books was held at the Congress raising about \$4,000.

Currently there is a proposed Linkage Project which the ASF or the ASF Karst Conservation Fund is considering supporting titled "Vulnerability of Australian bats to white-nose syndrome - a catastrophic fungal disease". Such a project needs some support from ASF member clubs for cave access and cave maps. Financially our contribution need not be very much.

The ASF Executive and Conservation Commission are currently reviewing the KCF operations.

Conservation Commission Reports

National

Nicholas White

Below, I list various matters active through the past year. These do not cover the more important part of what we attempt to achieve with our Codes and Practices. These are best framed as questions:

- Are we trashing caves?
- Are there "sacrificial" caves that we are accepting of?
- Is a review of the "State of our Caves" needed?
- Should we be more active in cleaning, repairing or track marking in caves?

These questions only touch on caver impacts on caves but these ethical dilemmas deserve exploring, otherwise we will leave a legacy

which we cannot be proud of. Should we be doing more or changing our caving practices?

Adventure Activity Standards (Caving)

The drafting of these has been delayed. Just to reiterate, it is desirable that a spread of ASF cavers participate in this, otherwise there could be an agenda run which does not allow ASF to provide its own policies for our member clubs to apply. Suddenly managing instrumentalities could apply bureaucratic procedures requiring compliance with competencies obtainable through the TAFE system.

The Caving AAS complement the ASF's own Code of Ethics and Minimal Impact Caving Code and provide owners and managers of cave and karst areas with a framework to reduce the impact of caving activities on Australian caves.

Save Cliefden Caves Campaign

The most significant positive step in this campaign has been the signing of Cliefden Caves onto the NSW State Heritage Register.

One of the dam designs being considered for the Cranky Rock No. 2 Site, is for a full dam level of 395 m above sea level. This would flood the lower accessible parts of known caves that on recent surveying extend to the 390 m level.

Water NSW is due to report to Cabinet on the Water Security Investigation for the Lachlan River and Central West. The investigation included the Cranky Rock sites for a dam on the Belubula River. At present, no further information is available on the progress of the business case being prepared by consultants.

Tasmania Risby Basin Quarry

The Tasmanian EPA has approved a quarry application for a Risby Basin quarry. This block of limestone which is just south of Maydena has caves but the quarry location is "downstream of all known caves and the main resurgence spring, and is close to the road meaning least new road construction is needed". On the basis of this information and STC's advice it was decided that ASF would not object to the approval.

Cavers suggested this Risby Basin limestone as an alternative source of limestone when Benders Quarry was still operating.

Queensland - Cape York

Kings Plains Station and Alkoomie Station are both now owned by South Endeavour Trust.

These stations are 56 km SW and 20 km W of Cooktown respectively. Melody Rocks is a Tower Karst Outcrop with caves located on the boundary between the two stations, bat species including rare and endangered ones such as ghost bats, indigenous use and the source of a permanent spring. Melody Rocks was subject to a Mining Lease. This mining lease has been cancelled.

The Chillagoe Caving Club only cursorily investigated the caves in the Melody Rocks outcrop on one trip in the 1990's and several short trips in the last couple of years. These and other investigations instigated by the South Endeavour Trust, defined values associated with indigenous use and the presence of a number of rare bat species, which were significant enough for cancellation of the mining lease application to be effected.

Quinkan Country, Northern Queensland

ASF supported the nomination of the Quinkan Country to the National Heritage List on 30 May 2017 and it was acknowledged on 21 June 2017.

Obviously the cave shelter paintings in sandstone are not in normal caves, but it seemed appropriate for the ASF to support the listing given the failure to succeed in having the Chillagoe and Mitchell-Palmer tower karst proclaimed due to mining, local and Shire Council opposition.

Karst Water Table Contamination

I have a watching brief on PFAS (firefighting chemical) contamination from airport use. This chemical has contaminated the karst aquifer of Katherine and the Katherine Airport. PFAS was used as a fire-fighting chemical by the Department of Defence at the Katherine RAAF base. The airport and Katherine are 20 km apart indicating that problems can occur with point source contamination of karst aquifers. Reputedly the RAAF ceased using the chemical many years ago. Supplying potable water to the affected community is proving very expensive for the Department of Defence.

White Nose Syndrome (WNS) Fungus

I applied my microbiological expertise to working with the Department of Agriculture and Water to design policies and protocols for participants of the UIS Congress and the associated Field Excursions.

The ASF website needs to be updated on WNS.

Negotiations with Federal Department of Agriculture and Water on proposed Border Control procedures to keep Australia free of the fungus are in process. Border Control has reduced its chemical inventory and it is currently proposed that returning cavers including cave managers and guiding staff, would have to surrender used equipment, clothing etc. at Border Control for independent contractors to decontaminate! The currently used inactivating agent for boots is not adequate for fungal spores and thus this function would be outsourced.

Karstcare

David Wools-Cobb

Oct 2016

We haven't been very active over this past 10 months due to member non-availability, extensive fires in the Mole Creek catchment and since then, massive flooding.

In early summer all boot wash stations in Kubla Khan Cave were serviced and water bags left nearby for re-filling in the future.

The Blackshaw/Spider Complex system map is nearing completion: perhaps requiring 2 more days to complete vertical profiles. Current water levels will preclude this for some time.

We await Parks & Wildlife Service notification of a date for the replacement of the lower gate to Kubla: this is to be stainless steel and we hope, allow stretcher access and the ability to unlock from inside the cave. We hope to be part of this huge operation, particularly to protect the adjacent flowstone from damage.

Brief report of flooding: The Northwest Coast of Tasmania received an inordinate amount of rain during the May-June period. This followed on from a prolonged dry period, resulting in one of the most catastrophic run-offs in living memory.

Marakoopa Show Cave received extensive damage to electrical fixtures and some clay banks, resulting in its closure for many months. PWS are using the opportunity to re-light some of the cave. Road access and the walking track also suffered tremendously, with a landslide and massive vegetation debris coming down Marakoopa creek. Upstream of this area it has been noted that speleothems of considerable size have been ejected from Devils Drainpipe cave.

Honey Comb Cave also experienced a deluge, with a new entrance eroded out and considerable damage in the area that had been previously revegetated. I believe our stone steps are still in existence; however access to this cave had been closed until recently. Croesus Cave also flooded (a very rare event) resulting large rocks being jammed in the gate resulting in a need for replacement. Also considerable damage has been reported to have occurred to speleothems within Croesus.

Currently conditions are still extremely wet, so little to no caving has occurred for several months. Plans are still on for replacement of clay bags in parts of Kubla when time and conditions allow.

Speleological Council Reports

NSW Speleological Council

Colin Tyrell



This year has been relatively quiet, as things progressed towards the UIS Speleo2017 Conference at Panthers, Penrith in July.

Jenolan Caves

- November saw the appointment of a new General Manager – Jodie Anderson, who has been Manager at Wellington for the past 2 and a bit years. Also announced is a newly constituted Jenolan caves Trust – no details yet. This may bring a bit more stability and forward thinking after a fairly turbulent few years.
- The 2013 draft plan of management has finally been sent to the minister for approval – as yet not signed.
- Continuing issues regarding adhering to the requirements of cave permits. At the last meeting I spoke about the issue that was raised by the Caves Operations Manager in hope that things would improve. Some clubs are still not abiding by the conditions and this has prompted a more official communication from the NPWS Landforms team.

KMAC

Chris Norton has been endorsed as the ASF representative.

The next meeting is scheduled for the day before the October Council meeting.

Save Cliefden Caves

Cliefden Caves have been placed on the NSW Heritage Register. The gazettal was 30 August 2017. It is not yet known the impact on the Bellubula dam proposals.

The latest Lachlan Valley Water Security Project Community Reference Group report included the release of details of the business cases for the dams that propose no dam on the Bellubula River.



Kosciuszko NP Speleo Reference Group (KNPSRG)

The nominations for the new committee have been submitted. The confirmed members: New members Beth Little and Rob Scorse and returning members Denis Marsh and John Brush.

NSW NPWS Cave Access Policy review

I have had discussions with the Landforms team about the policy review. As things seem to have been working well – NPWS are only looking at updating nominated NPWS positions. I have requested that they also update the references to the various ASF standards mentioned. In late November we were advised that NPWS are now prepared to look at a case to update the requirements for cave diving. This has been passed on to Deb Johnston.

NPWS new structure – excerpt of email from Sophia Meehan

I am happy to advise that the Landforms and Rehabilitation Unit (formerly team) has secured a position in the new NPWS structure. A number of staff previously within the Unit have been transferred back to NPWS Field Branches.

The composition of the Unit is as follows:

- *Manager, Landforms and Rehabilitation Unit (I have been directly assigned to this role)*
- *Senior Project Officer (Water and Wetlands)*
- *Senior Project Officer (Coastal Landscapes)*
- *Senior Project Officer (Adaptive Management)*
- *Project Officer (Karst and Geodiversity)*
- *Assistant Project Officer (generic)*

The functions of the Unit can be broadly grouped as Landscape Rehabilitation, Environmental Water and Wetlands, Coastal Landscape Protection, Karst and Geodiversity Conservation and Adaptive Management. As you can see it has a broad portfolio of responsibilities which will keep everyone busy. In regards to the interests of the speleological/caving community, I hope the retention of the Unit is seen as a good thing.

Tasmanian Speleological

Liaison Council

David Wools-Cobb

Many items of action are listed below:

- Lobbying to progress the Cave Access Policy (CAP) as it is over 1 year since we last had a meeting with Parks & Wildlife Service;
- Kubla Rescue Plan Version 1 has been published;
- Some route changes in Kubla Khan Cave; Over 630 hours put in by Alan Jackson and teams in producing Kubla map so far;
- Blackshaw/Spider Complex map is now complete;
- Honeycomb Cave now re-opened (was closed due to flood damage in the winter of 2016);
- UIS Conference: recognition of the tremendous input from Northern Caverneers Inc. A great event!
- ACRC (Australian Cave Rescue Commission) – a successful day in a quarry near Mole Creek, familiarizing us with concrete bolt placement, conducting a Tyrolean lift and vertical descent of a casualty in a stretcher, followed by floatation trial of a casualty and stretcher on the Mersey River. Dave W-C is donating an inflatable kayak which proved the most practical method (thinking of a River Alph extraction...and maybe Croesus) to be held with all rescue equipment at Deb Hunter's residence, Caveside.

- Club reports submitted from all 4 clubs;
- Report on progress on the next ASF Tasmanian conference and
- Need for a Karst Interpretation walk somewhere in the Mole Creek Karst National Park. We all agreed that the Honeycomb area would be best with good interpretation.

Speleological Council of Western Australia

No report received

South Australian Speleological Council

Matt Smith

In 2017 the SA Speleological Council met once in June, and discussed other topics of importance via email correspondence over the course of the year.

The council was formally reformed this year, in order to tackle several local access issues confronting the 3 main caving bodies in South Australia. This includes:

- Supporting the formation of the Nullarbor Special Interest Group
- Continuing working with the Naracoorte Caves National Park on their cave zoning project
- Discussions with One Forty One and Forestry SA regarding recent access limitations to caves on their property
- Preparing a public submission to SA Department of Environment for the Nullarbor Parks Draft Management Plan (the SA section).

Commission Reports

Australian Cave Rescue

Convener: Ross Anderson

No report received

Awards

Convener: Miles Pierce

Notices inviting nominations for ASF Awards to be conferred at the 31st ASF Conference, along with information on the awards themselves, have been included in the last two eSpeleo Bulletins (Sep and Dec 2017). The closing date for receipt of nominations has been set at 30 Sep 2018.



Cave Diving

Conveners: Tim Payne and Peter Kraehenbuehl

No report received

Cave and Karst Numbering

Convener: Peter Dykes

During the past 12 months the commission has been working on the following matters:

ASF Code for Cave and Karst Numbering

A draft of the revised ASF Code for Cave and Karst Numbering was provided to the Exmouth meeting in June 2015 with further discussion/explanation at the 2016 Council meeting. A draft proposal for Karst Terrain Numbering was also submitted to the last ASF Council meeting in January 2017. With the exception of Harry Burkitt, Greg Middleton and Rauleigh Webb, I have not received any written comments on either draft document. Both documents were the joint work of Graham Pilkington and myself (both State Cave and Karst Numbering Coordinators). After much deliberation we have come to the conclusion that seeking change to the ASF documentation system is almost a total waste of time and effort; therefore we have decided to abandon any further efforts to pursue issues/changes related to the code.

A Proposal for a New Generation of an Australian Karst Database

The following formed part of my report to the ASF Executive meeting in September 2017 and is included in this annual report for discussion and to inform club representatives.

The Karst Index Database will in concept, be 50 years old next year. In 1968 Peter Matthews published Speleo Handbook, the pre-cursor to the Australian Karst Index and the impetus for the grant application in 1973 that kicked started the computerisation of Australia's cave and karst data, of which the KID was the eventual outcome. It is both mine and Graham's opinion that it's now an appropriate time for the Executive to review the KID with a view to overhauling it in light of changes that have occurred over the last half century in computer storage, programming and karst data collection requirements.

With this in mind we would like to make a submission that a new generation of an Australian Karst Database should be constructed and managed to meet the following as criteria:

- It should empower the karst area data coordinator/s
- Developed using commercially available database software
- Be GIS based

- Be a two way street between the State/National database and the local karst area data coordinator/s
- Have mobile storage and access capabilities
- Not stored or accessed via the internet
- Able to adapt to new technology and new data requirements over time
- Have a proactive management structure capable of dealing with change
- Both the software and the data be appropriately financially reported within the financial accounts of the corporate management body

I have not expanded on these criteria points because to do them justice requires a detailed briefing paper. What I discussed with the Executive was not specifically these criteria, but the whole process that should be put in place to develop a new generation of an Australian Karst Database.

I suggested that at the ASF Executive/Council call for proposals from within ASF for a new generation ASF Karst Database, with the view to holding a specific workshop at the Tasmanian Conference to review proposals so that a shortlist can be prepared from which a more detailed project brief can be requested. Database proposal/s should conform to the above criteria and be operational at a national/state level by 2025. The final database proposal should be accepted at the 2020 ASF Council meeting.

OzKarst

During 2017 Graham Pilkington and I have continued to work on OzKarst; developing and refining both the software and its applications to karst documentation. Graham will be staying at my place "Tricketts Arch", Jaunter for 2 weeks following the Council meeting and I am hoping to run an OzKarst training session for interested NSW and WA karst area documenters. To date OzKarst is used by cavers from NSW, Vic, SA, Tas and WA

OzKarst software is free for all members of any club holding Corporate Membership of ASF; members do not have to agree to exchange their data with the OzKarst Administrators however in the interests of developing both state and national karst databases that they are encouraged to do so. Members can also be assured that having given data to OzKarst State/National Administrators it is not exchanged with other ASF members unless the originators of the data have first agree to it.

State Roundup for 2017

NSW

Documentation using OzKarst is happening in the Blue Mountains: Lithgow-Mudgee, Lachlan, Macquarie, Shoalhaven, and Western Plains Karst Regions. As State Coordinator I have downloaded and entered digital file copies into OzKarst Library of all Lishmund et al (1986) references, referenced and catalogued all Carne & Jones (1919) and Lishmund locality numbers and started collecting digital file copies of Lishmund thesis references and maps.

Vic

Peter Matthews informed Graham Pilkington at the UIS Conference that he has resigned as the Victorian Cave and Karst Numbering Coordinator. Accordingly I will be writing to VSA early in 2018 asking them to appoint a successor and to notify me of his/her contact details.

Peter Matthews has been the Victorian Cave and Karst Numbering Coordinator for well over 50 years since the early 1960's and the National Documentation Commissioner from 1966/7 until the late 1990's. His contribution to Australian Karst Documentation is outstanding and it is for this reason he was made a Fellow of the Australian Speleological Federation in the late 1980's.

Proposed Motion

That Peter Matthews be given a vote of thanks by acclamation of the Council Meeting followed by a letter of thanks from the ASF Secretary thanking him for his contribution over many decades as the Victorian Cave and Karst Numbering Coordinator and National Documentation Commissioner.

NT

Judbarra-Gregory National Park remains the main area of documentation with annual trips to the area. I have spoken to Peter Bannink who informed me that he has not lived in or visited, the NT for nearly 2 decades and believes he is not the appropriate person to coordinate the NT documentation. He also expressed a view that the current system of karst areas based on 1:100k maps needs a major overall and simplification. Accordingly, as an interim measure I, with the assistance of Graham Pilkington, will be undertaking this role until an ~~appropriate replacement~~appropriate replacement is found.

SA

The Nullarbor is a constant area of interest with a large numbers of trips from SA and interstate cavers. Documentation using OzKarst is proceeding.

WA

Issues regarding the coordination and exchange of data appear to have been resolved with WASG now assuming a central coordinating role. Overtures have been made to CEGSA to use OzKarst to assist in documentation, and a WASG representative will be at my place during Graham Pilkington's January 2018 stay for instruction in OzKarst use and other documentation matters.

Qld

Peter Bannink wishes to continue doing the state coordination and has sent me a detailed GIS database with state karst data; Graham and I hope to look at this during January 2018.

Tas

I have not spoken to Greg Middleton since early 2017, but believe he is helping prepare information for the Tasmanian Conference in 2018/19.

Grants

Information: Susan White

The Grants Commission is still without a Chair and the current members are attempting to see that it does not fall over completely. This is a valuable initiative and covers ASF financial support for activities which fall outside the conservation brief of the KCF.

There are occasional requests but even though there **IS** material on the website, these are very few. Nevertheless, those that do apply have been generally successful and have done some good work. There has been one request (approved) this year by the Bunda Cliffs expedition for some assistance with climbing hardware equipment purchases (\$500). Grants supporting attendance at the Speleo2017 ICS were approved by the Executive.

Helictite

Convener: Susan White



Journal of Australian Speleological Research
ISSN 0017-9973

The Helictite Commission is separate from the Publications Commission. When ASF received

Helictite from the Speleological Research Council (SRC) it was agreed to form a separate commission to enhance the chances of continuation of the journal. In 2017 the Commission consisted of Susan White (Chair), Greg Middleton (Chief Editor), Tim Moulds (Editor), Kevin Kiernan (Editor), Grace Matts (ASF Treasurer), Glenn Baddeley (Business Manager) and John Dunkley. The ASF President was an ex-officio member. I have chaired the Commission since the ASF took over Helictite in 2000. The Commission has been run in tandem with the Publications Commission but is a separate Commission.

Greg Middleton is Chief Editor and Tim Moulds and Kevin Kiernan have taken on roles as editors. I have remained as chair, which is basically an administrative role. Greg has indicated that he does not want to chair the commission and I am prepared to continue to do this at the moment.

Volume 42 is ready to be printed for the subscribers who have paid. It has been available on the web since 2016 and this will be the last printed volume; issue number 100! All further publications will be Open Access (digital) as agreed a few years ago. Pre-publication on the website of finalised papers will occur. The first paper for volume 43 is already on the website.

There are about 20 copies remaining of Volume 41 (Bullita special volume). We have now two spare complete sets due to donations and limited copies of some other volumes are available from the Chair of the Commission.

Helictite still has enough money to cover current expenses, but although the reduction of hard copy printing will result in significant savings, the production is not cost free.

The scanning of back-copies is still stalled due to time constraints. RMIT and the Karst Information Portal (based at the University of South Florida) have both expressed interest in being involved in this but I have not had sufficient time to engage in the detailed discussions with either institution. I do not want this to become a serious problem because of not doing the necessary background work on such matters.

The main issues are to do with time constraints by volunteers. However, new volunteers may mean we get a bit more done. Moving Helictite to Open Access after the production of Volume 42 will hopefully mean it will continue,

especially as it is still the only refereed specialist karst journal in the Australasian region. Thanks to the members of the Commission for their involvement.

International Relations

Convener: Nicholas White

The Commission exists to link ASF with the International Union of Speleology (UIS) and to provide a conduit for UIS information to ASF members. It also provides assistance with information for ASF members who are intending caving trips overseas (information was provided to one member during the year).

Barbel Vogel was elected to the UIS Bureau at the Penrith Congress. She is one of the most influential people on karst conservation in Germany and Europe. The UIS is a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Barbel has started initiating the reforming of an IUCN/WCPA (World Commission on Protected Areas) specialist group – Cave and Karst Specialist Group. This group evolved from ideas of Dr John Watson (Western Australia) and was followed up by Elery Hamilton-Smith and later by Jay Anderson. It was responsible for the IUCN Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection. It has been suggested that this be reviewed and it has also been suggested that a report be prepared on Geoparks and Karst and the question of karst and groundwater sustainability. There are a number of ASF members on this network.

Dr Tim Moulds was elected to the UIS Bureau at the Penrith Congress. Thus the ASF and Australia now has direct representation.

George Veni was elected President of the UIS. George is Director of the National Cave and Karst Research Institute, Carlsbad USA. He circulates a very useful email with information on cave and karst meetings, workshops and so on, some of which is forwarded for incorporation in eSpeleo.

Nicholas White and Grace Matts represented ASF at the UIS General Assembly Meetings at the Penrith Congress, July 2017. Nothing particularly contentious was discussed, except that a motion moved to align UIS with Competitive Sports was rejected. Grace Matts has questioned whether we get value for money from our membership.

The next UIS Congress will be in Lyon, France in 2021.

Library and Archives

Cathy Brown

The Library disposed of many duplicate and overseas newsletters at the UIS.

One enquiry regarding PNG publications has been completed.

Membership

Secretary: Colin Tyrrell

Membership

Membership was stable this year, with currently 1031 members spanning 24 corporate member clubs and with 4 Individual members outside the club framework.

This year, again, has seen an increase in the number of individuals enquiring about Individual membership – these are referred to nearby clubs in the first instance.

There are currently 3 Associates and one Complimentary Associate (ACKMA).

There are currently no Caves Australia subscribers.

Membership Database

Its primary use is for the ASF to record its membership. The email lists operating through the membership database are used for all official ASF correspondence. As such it acts as a vehicle for communications (o club contacts (asf-admins), and to individuals (all-comms).

The Membership database is also used for sending the eSpeleo newsletter to those who have their email address recorded.

It is also the distribution list of Caves Australia, which comes as part of ASF membership. With the electronic version of Caves Australia it is IMPORTANT that the email address is current.

A secondary use is to validate if a person is an ASF member and covered by insurance. Parks Tasmania and members of the WA Government are the only known non-club users of this facility.

Several clubs use the facility to confirm whether a visiting member is actually a financial member of an ASF affiliated club.

The main issue to arise this year (again) continues to be that some clubs have been slow in updating their member records and

keeping member details current. This will have an increasing impact with the move to an electronic version of Caves Australia, as well as members missing receiving a copy of Caves Australia and not being covered by insurance.

Some clubs have indicated increased numbers but this is not being reflected in the database. In some instances the updates are up to 6 months in arrears.

Clubs should update membership data as members pay their fees.

This means that the number of members used for calculating the number of councillor votes may not accurately reflect the real number of members. This calculation is made in September using the membership data as at the end of August.

It should be noted that it is not the responsibility of either the ASF Treasurer or Membership Secretary to update members on the database for clubs. If, as a club, you are experiencing problems updating members please ask for help from the Membership Secretary.

Publications

Convener: Susan White



The Publications Commission is complex and has several aspects: Caves Australia, eSpeleo, other publications (their production and sales), management of copyright issues and website content. The involvement of the Commission in the publications aspect of the UIS Congress also increased the workload in 2017.

It is important for ASF clubs and members to realise that Publications is a large and complex commission. As a result, the Chair relies on a number of people to undertake particular roles, e.g. editing CA, production of CA, editing and producing eSpeleo, sales of publications, website management etc. If any one of the volunteers is unable to continue, their role falls back to the Chair who is not always able to take up the tasks or find a replacement easily.

Caves Australia

CA has struggled during 2016-17 and we have fallen behind in the production schedule. There has been a shortage of suitable material and having no Production Manager has hampered the production when we have had material. We have kept the membership informed through notices in eSpeleo. We now have enough material to produce a decent CA shortly. It has been unfair that the few people who do write for CA, have to wait for ages to get things published but the number of people who write articles for CA is still far too small.

CA is available digitally but the take up of this is slow and is currently under 15% (14.3%) of the ASF membership. This needs to increase to assist in being able to publish high colour photos without the high cost of printing. Please make sure your club is aware that, as the link to the digital version will be sent via the email addresses listed in the membership database, the clubs have a responsibility to keep this as up to date as possible. The cost of printing and posting hard copies is prohibitive and increasing, and digital publishing means that our subscriptions can go to furthering the needs of speleology in the 21st century. Nevertheless those who want hard copy need to make sure that this is registered by their club in the membership database.

The digital archiving (scanned editions) of the previous issues of all ASF Newsletters, Australian Caver & Caves Australia is complete (except #57) and the entire collection is available on the website via <http://cavesaustralia.caves.org.au/archive>. It has the username/password: caves/aussie. Current copies of Caves Australia are at <http://cavesaustralia.caves.org.au>.

eSpeleo Bulletin

Ian Binnie has continued to be a good editor and has generated 5 eSpeleo in 2017. Please keep the information flowing to him on activities, notices, ads etc. Please email material to espeleo@binnie.id.au but please do not include large files as these are unsuitable for eSpeleo and clog his mail box!

Website

The website is generally managed by Colin Tyrrell and has performed well with minimal downtime this year. Colin has attempted to apply all update requests within a 72 hour turn around which was mostly achieved. Most changes have been small relating to updating existing data e.g. contact details on the officer's page, or updated commission documents e.g. insurance schedules. Updated

material for the commissions is gradually being submitted. Please remember that some editing of material is sometimes necessary. An overall review of content is planned for February 2018.

Other publications

David Rueda Roca resigned as publications sales officer and Cath Hemley has taken on the role. The PayPal facility is generally working well. We continue to have some problems with stock control. The order form and sales notice on the website under Publications has largely solved the problem of supplying the small number of sales enquiries but needs updating. The issue of storage of large quantities of printed material continues to need attention. Not everyone has space for the storage of large numbers of boxes of books.

The sales of the *Wee Jasper Caves* book continue to be a success and we have plenty of stock. The *Jenolan Caves* book is virtually out of print (we only have few copies left) and we do not intend to reprint. The *NSW Karst Atlas (The Documentation System)* did not sell as many this year but we have less than half the stock left. *Caves, People and Land: Sandstone Caves of the Blue Mountains and Sydney Region*, by John Dunkley has moved rather slowly. The protocol set up to oversee the process of the production of various monographs will stand us in good stead but the financial success of these is limited. The books in print are available through the Publication Sales officer. The various publications available from the ASF are listed on the website Publications page and can be purchased from the publications sales officer.

The Conservation book is still stuck. We need to work out what is happening with this and it is still "in the queue" of things needing attention and it is not an easy project. I would very much like to hear from anyone who is interested in being involved in regenerating this project! However, I think that the project is not viable.

I would like to reiterate that good editing is a very real component of publication and the Commission is not prepared to back the publication of material we have not had professionally edited. As well, I periodically hear of errors in book X or Y. If errors exist the Commission needs more than just a 'there are serious errors' statement. A much more detailed list with pages and explanation of why it is incorrect is needed. Errata can be printed and inserted if necessary.

The small profits from these books will be available to publish new material which will further our aims. There is great potential in publications to further the aims of the ASF in the general public but more people need to be involved with writing stuff. We still get stuff where people have spent a lot of time on layout that is stripped out anyway, as layout programs generally need plain text. Photos and diagrams need to be high quality, sources acknowledged and grammatical mistakes corrected.

Assisting with the publication issues which arise out of hosting the UIS congress in 2017 took a lot of time and energy. However, we are now through most of this and look forward to a less fraught time in 2018.

Copyright

There are several issues about copyright the executive needs to be aware of and maybe assist with. The ASF is a member of the Copyright Agency Ltd (CAL), and CAL is holding a little bit of money for us for copyright fees, mainly of the codes by schools, TAFE etc. The copyright statement on the website for material is now appropriate. We want people to use our codes and not be put off by overly legal language, whilst still acknowledging our copyright. On a related matter, it is my considered opinion that ASF members should not have to seek formal approval to use the codes; they are their codes after all. They should include the copyright statement with anything printed/published but permission is gratuitous. On the other hand, outside organizations that wish to use our codes should seek permission if it is being incorporated into their material and this includes all government agencies.

Publications is a big commission and it does take quite lot of time and effort but it is a rewarding task, especially when we see the finished results out in the public arena. It is a Commission which requires time to do the various jobs of overseeing the various tasks and finding people to do them including succession planning.

I would like to thank all the members of the Commission for all the work they have put in this year.

Safety, Leadership and Risk Management

Convener: Darren Brooks

No report received

Speleo2017 ICS Organising Commission

Convener:
Denis Marsh

**17th International
Congress of
Speleology, Sydney
2017**



The organization of the 17th International Congress of Speleology (ICS) in Penrith (western Sydney), Australia involved several years of planning by a dedicated team of volunteers from around Australia. This process commenced on 12 March 2012 with a Notification of Intention of proposal to host the UIS Congress of Speleology in 2017 (letter of intent to UIS President) from the Australian Speleological Federation Inc (ASF). This was followed by a formal bid proposal presented at the 16th ICS in Brno, Czech Republic in July 2013 by an Australian delegation (ICS Bid Committee representatives). The bid proposal was subsequently accepted at the UIS General Assembly meeting of world delegates, held in Brno on 28 July 2013 (Second Session).

The Australian Speleological Federation, as the host organization, established an internal Commission (the 17th ICS Organizing Commission) to handle all aspects of the ICS organization and conduct under a set of Terms of Reference. The organization of the 17th ICS closely followed the UIS 'Instructions and Recommendations for Organisers of International Congresses of Speleology (ICS)'.

We can confidently state from feedback received during and since the conclusion of the event, the 17th ICS was a success. In terms of membership, the ASF may be considered a small national speleological federation on world standards, so it is particularly noteworthy that we acknowledge the dozens of volunteers who worked extremely hard and contributed to this success. All aspects of the ICS organisation, technical and social program and field excursions met all expectations and were well appreciated by all participants.



UIS participants at opening ceremony

A full and rich program of events was provided during the week long Congress, together with a varied and exciting range of field excursion opportunities for registrants, before, during and after the ICS. These ICS's convened by the UIS are arguably the most significant singular world event which contributes much to the furtherance of speleology on the world stage through the presentation of the latest discoveries and scientific findings at each ICS and the 17th ICS has successfully continued this tradition.

We again thank all our partners, sponsors and supporting organizations for their generous financial, material and in-kind support and contribution towards the success of the Congress.

As President of the 17th ICS Organizing Commission and on behalf of the ASF let me convey a final thank you to all those who personally contributed voluntarily to the assessment and review of papers and poster contributions, to the many field excursion coordinators and their support teams, and in particular, to all members of the ICS organizing team who over the past few years have sacrificed tens or hundreds of hours of personal time at the expense of their own activities and their families for the success of the 17th ICS.

A detailed report has been sent to clubs.

Special Interest Groups

ASF Cave Diving Group

Peter Kraehenbuehl

There are no matters to report to the ASF Council meeting.

Judbarra-Gregory Karst Research SIG of the ASF – 2017

Chairperson: Mark Sefton



Nine ASF members from SUSS, CEGSA, VSA and ISS attended the annual expedition to the Judbarra-Gregory National Park in the Northern Territory, held during the first

two weeks of July 2017. Numbers were a little lower than previously, not least because many people were involved in the planning and running of the UIS conference, but the group still managed to map around seven kilometres of new cave which brings the total in the park to approximately 300 km.

This year, a small amount of work was done in the Bullita Cave System but most trips were across the East Baines River, in the Southern Karst which has the caves BAA29 and BAA108 at the western end and Two Fishes and Claymore Cave (now part of the Prometheus System) at the eastern end. A resurvey of BAA29 was commenced by Bob Kershaw and Graham Pilkington, during which they measured somewhere around 500 survey legs which has added substantially to the length of this cave. This task is now three quarters complete and we hope to finish it next year. Further south, in BAA108 (connected to BAA29 two years ago), we descended a previously unexplored pitch and this quickly led to New Bob/Firestick Cave further east. A second connection was found a few days later. Firestick was also pushed a lot further to the east, towards the Prometheus system. A northward extension of BAA135 (connected previously to BAA108) led to 'The Trenches',

not far from Effigy Cave. There are still going leads in The Trenches, mainly heading back towards the north-east of BAA29. A new cave (Scout Cave) was found east of BAA108 and eventually connected westward to the latter. All the passages in Scout Cave to the east of the entrance still remain to be surveyed. A visit to Effigy Cave extended this cave a short distance but mostly in unpleasant collapse. The BAA29-108-135-Firestick-Scout system is now around 19 km long and there is still plenty more to do there.

To the east, exploration and mapping continued in various parts of the Prometheus System. Mapping of Claymore Cave is almost complete and more passages were mapped in Atlantis. A new area (Pacifica) was reached from BAA140. Lair of the Macropod was linked in to the Prometheus System which is now approximately 57 km in surveyed length. Many leads in this system were investigated but more remain, particularly in North and South Prometheus.

Several other caves lie close to the Prometheus System. Among these, exploration and mapping of Serpent Time Cave (found two years ago) was completed. At their closest points, Claymore and Serpent Time are only 1-2 m apart, but separated by a rock pile that will need a lot of work to break through. A new cave (Moebius Cave) was found and mapped and has potential to connect to the Prometheus System, but with difficulty. Another new cave (Remnant Cave) that lies in an isolated area of karst was also found and mapped. It connects to PLC Cave which was found several years ago but not mapped at that time.

This year, the further extension of Firestick Cave eastwards and Crystal Starlet southwards reduced the gap between the two southern karst systems (BAA29-108-135-Firestick-Scout to the west and the Prometheus System to the east) to around 60 m. Further progress in Crystal Starlet will be

difficult, and a final connection between the two systems will not be easy, but should this be managed then, combined with the inevitable further discoveries that we can expect to make over the next couple of years, we will have a single southern karst system of over 80 km.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the enormous amount of work done between expeditions over a period of almost 20 years by Bob Kershaw from ISS who single-handedly brought our map production into the digital age. Without Bob, we would simply not have been able to achieve anything like the success that the group has enjoyed during this period. Bob has now decided to retire from this role and take a well-earned break. Ian Barnard from VSA has now taken on the role of mapping coordinator.

At the Annual General Meeting, held at Bullita towards the end of the expedition, Mark Sefton, Megan Pryke and Ian Barnard were re-elected to the SIG Committee as Chairman, Secretary and Mapping Coordinator respectively. Phil Maynard, Kevin Moore and Peter Freeman were also elected as Committee members.

Committee Reports

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Committee

No report received.

Conference Committees

The Darkness Beneath: Caving Tasmania 31st ASF Conference, 30th December 2018 to 4th January 2019 is being held at Reece High School, Middle Road, Devonport.

ASF Information Technology Systems

Mike Lake
ASF System Admin

The following is a brief report on the ASF Information Technology systems that assist the ASF in the operation of its business. It should be noted that the ASF has IT requirements similar to that of a small sized business.

Currently Hosted Sites

The following are the clubs or state based groups that have sites hosted by the ASF.

http://bmsc.caves.org.au	Blue Mountains Speleo Club
http://casm.caves.org.au	Cavers of the Snowy Mountains
http://css.caves.org.au	Canberra Speleological Society
http://www.canberraspeleos.org.au	Canberra Speleological Society
http://cwcg.caves.org.au	Central West Caving Club
http://iss.caves.org.au	Illawarra Speleological Society
http://oss.caves.org.au	Orange Speleological Society
https://suss.caves.org.au	Sydney University Speleological Society
http://nswsc.caves.org.au	NSW Speleo Council

Canberra Speleological Society still maintains their older URL and both sites are hosted on the ASF server.

The following are ASF sites:

http://cavesaustralia.caves.org.au	Caves Australia
http://exec.caves.org.au	ASF Executive
http://helictite.caves.org.au	Helictite
http://kid.caves.org.au/kid	Karst Index Database
http://membership.caves.org.au	ASF Membership Database
http://savecliefdencaves.caves.org.au	Save Cliefden Caves

ASF also hosts the Speleo2017 Congress sites.

https://www.speleo2017.com	The main Speleo2017 web site
https://conference.speleo2017.com	The Congress registration site

The Congress registration site successfully handled all of the registrations and Paypal payments for the 465 registrants and the initial abstract review process for the 330 submitted papers and posters.

We also provide private, password protected areas for some of the above web sites. Note that some sites use secure https instead of http. This is required for those sites. In 2018 we will shift all sites over to *https* as in 2018 most web browsers will begin to flag http only web sites as insecure.

New Sites

CEGSA and RSS have just decided to host their site on the ASF server and are currently developing their site content.

During the Speleo2017 Congress I had a number of discussions with cavers and speleologists on the use of LiDAR and other technologies, such as photogrammetry and "Structure from Motion", in cave surveying. There were a large number of posters on display describing results using such techniques. Subsequent to the congress I have had some emails with persons who are interested in these new surveying methods. Therefore, I have setup an ASF hosted web site to bring together information and data on these techniques. Hopefully this site will become a valuable resource and the go to" site for cavers and speleologists interested in these technologies.

This site is at: <http://speleo-lidarium.caves.org.au>

Email Services

Other services that the ASF servers provide are the email aliases for the ASF Executive (@caves.org.au emails) and Speleo2017 Committee (@speleo2017.com emails). These aliases redirect incoming emails to the email addresses of real persons. The personal emails that each email alias below goes to is available from Mike Lake or the ASF Executive.

The aliases have been removed to reduce spam emails

Hosted Applications

Membership Database <http://membership.caves.org.au>: There have been no changes.

Karst Index Database <http://kid.caves.org.au/kid>: There have been no changes.

Speleo2017 Congress registration <https://conference.speleo2017.com>: Limited access now.

There are a number of smaller applications such as club wikis and a survey data archive system.

ASF Servers

The above sites and services are hosted across three virtual servers provided by a US server hosting company.

One machine hosts most of the clubs, another machine hosts the major applications like the KID and the membership database and the third is a test machine for testing updates and software.

Backups of the two production servers are done nightly automatically and sent to another server owned by an entirely separate company. The total cost per month for these servers and backup is approximately AU \$ 75.00. The servers and backups are managed by Mike Lake.



Contact List of ASF Corporate Members 2017

ASF is incorporated in the ACT
PO Box 388 BROADWAY NSW 2007

Australian Capital Territory

Canberra Speleological Society Inc.
PO Box 156
Curtin ACT 2605

National University Caving Club
c/o ANU Sport and Recreation Association
ANU Building 19,
North Road
Acton, ACT 0200

New South Wales

Blue Mountains Speleological Club
PO Box 551
Hazelbrook, NSW, 2779

Kempsey Speleological Society
PO Box 31
Kempsey NSW 2440

Cavers and Adventurers of the Snowy Mountains
Contact- Email Alan Beck:al-shiva@hotmail.com

Metropolitan Speleological Society
PO Box 178
Thornleigh NSW 2120

Central West Caving Group
605 Jaunter Rd
Jaunter NSW 2787

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

Highland Caving Group
PO Box 54
Georges Hall NSW 2194

Orange Speleological Society
PO Box 752
Orange NSW 2800

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

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

Illawarra Speleological Society Inc.
PO Box 94
Unanderra NSW 2526

Sydney University Speleological Society
PO Box 3318
Redfern NSW 2016

Queensland

Chillagoe Caving Club Inc.
PO Box 92
Cairns Qld 4870

South Australia

Cave Exploration Group South Australia Inc.
PO Box 144
Rundle Mall
SA 5000

Flinders University Speleological Society
Alan Mitchell Sports Centre
Flinders One
Flinders University
GPO Box 2100
Adelaide SA 5001

Tasmania

Mole Creek Caving Club Inc
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

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

Western Australia

Cavers Leeuwin Inc
P.O. Box 1192
Margaret River WA 6285

Western Australian Speleological Group Inc.
PO Box 67
Nedlands WA 6909

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

Provisional Members

Associates

Landforms and Rehabilitation Team
(NSW NP&WS, OEH)
PO Box 2267
Bathurst NSW 2795

Wellington Caves
Caves Rd
Wellington NSW 2820

NSW Cave Rescue Squad
PO Box 66
Westmead NSW 2145

ASF Special Interest Groups

ASF Cave Diving Group

ASF Judbarra-Gregory Karst Research Group
C\ - Chairperson, Mark Sefton
C\ - PO Box 144,
Rundle Mall, SA 5000

Karst Conservancies

KarstWatch (Mole Creek)