



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

ABN: 15 169 919 964

2016 Annual Report

**(Financial year 1st September 2015-30th August 2016)
(Adopted January 2017)**



6KNI75 Photograph by Bob Kershaw

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Executive Members

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

President's Report

John Cugley

Community organisations would not exist without the fantastic efforts of their members and especially the efforts of volunteers who take on roles to keep the wheels moving. When you are reading Caves Australia, spare a thought for the team working in the back ground to put this together for your enjoyment. When you are off on a caving trip where you need insurance to gain access, spare a thought for the person who has negotiated the insurance cover and made this happen. The Commissions of the ASF are where a lot of this happens. The Executive and I would like to thank the Commissioners for their work and time during 2016

It is often easier to criticize how things are being done than ask yourself how you could have assisted to make things better? Every one of you is a valued member with a vast array of skills to offer. If you didn't have the time in 2016, think about how you might be able to help make the ASF even better in 2017.

Speaking of Caves Australia, 2016 was a great year with some amazing contributions. If you have never contributed before or haven't contributed in a while we want to hear from you! Everyone is welcome to contribute and we'd love to hear the stories of the new generation of up and coming cavers.

On a more practical note in 2016 some issues have arisen regarding caves access. ASF members are privileged through years of networking and liaison with land managers to have access to many unique sites not available to the general public. Local clubs work hard to build trust and respect with Land Owners. Access in many cases is a privilege not a right. In 2017 make liaising with the relevant local club a priority when seeking to take advantage of the hard work that has led to being able to access these caves. Unfortunately sometimes seemingly innocuous actions like writing an article about a caving trip in a local paper may have unintentional consequences of non-cavers walking over crops looking for the caves.

2017 is going to be an exciting time with many international cavers to hit our shores for the Congress. There is great program of pre and post congress trips and opportunities to make lifelong friendships and networks. The congress also offers Australian cavers a time to learn how the rest of the world are doing things and for the Aussie contingent to teach the world a thing or two!

On a personal note 2016 saw me go into remission from Throat Cancer. It was a good outcome from a tough couple of years. Thanks for your support and kind words. Caving is awesome but it isn't everything. Look after your selves and your fellow cavers no matter what the challenges are. The ASF is a great caving community, but as I also found out, is a great community when the chips are down in other areas of our lives, Look after each other and I wish you all and your families a fantastic, safe and prosperous 2017.

Happy Caving!
John Cugley

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer: Grace Matts

Presented and accepted at meeting

The ASF Karst Conservation Fund

Nicholas White

The Fund has been actively spending on projects that are directed at improving speleological knowledge. Such knowledge is used to improve management or interpretation in some instances and directly to assist in cave and karst conservation.

Projects

- Stockyard Gully National Park and Beekeepers Reserve, WA Speleogenesis Project, Dr Matej Lipar Expenditure completed being written up for scientific publication before we get a Caves Australia article.

- Save Cliefden Caves Project (ongoing).

A dam is proposed for the Belubula River. Such a dam could flood or impact the Cliefden Caves and hot springs on the Belubula River. ASF is assisting Orange Speleological Society with a campaign objecting the construction of such a dam. The Fund has been assisting with research projects to assist this campaign and better inform our knowledge of this karst system.

Money has been spent on 3- D imaging of caves; on bat inventory of both caves and the Belubula River Valley; Differential GPS surveying of levels of caves and Belubula River to understand the effects of dam levels on the caves and karst system; there is an ongoing systematic cave surveying assessment led by SUSS; Ian Household is assessing the geomorphology for an MSc at Sydney University; Dr Armstrong Osborne is undertaking mineralogical and other studies which need funding in due course. The Fund is supporting Dr Armstrong's research on mineralogical aspects of the Cliefden Caves.

- Population dynamics of the critically endangered Southern Bent-wing Bat, Emmi Scherlies, Latrobe University. The Fund provided equipment to microchip and monitors the bats at Bat Cave, Naracoorte, SA.

The equipment is working well, 1,000 bats were microchipped (Summer 2016) and these are counted each time they pass the pickup antennas in the cave. Data reduction is now

being undertaken. It is part of a PhD project with several years to go.

The Southern bent-wing bat has suffered serious population decline in the last 50 years. Despite being the most studied cave dwelling bat in Australia there is very little knowledge of factors contributing to this population decline.

- Health survey Bent-wing bats, Dr Peter Holz, Melbourne University PhD Project This is well underway with sampling and examination for fungal diseases, endo- and exo- parasites and virological investigations being done at the same time as Emmi Scherlie's capturing of bats at Bat Cave to reduce handling trauma etc.

This project is examining for the presence in particular of the fungus causing White Nose Syndrome (*Pseudogymnoascus destructans*) amongst other possible disease agents that could be contributing to the population decline of Bent-wing bats in Southern Australia.

- Cave Gate, Eneabba

The Fund recently supported the gating of a cave at Eneabba, WA. WASG members were instrumental in designing, constructing and installing the gate. The project funding was supported by the WA Department of Environment, WASG, SRGWA and the ASF Karst Conservation Fund.

Fund Processes

The Karst Conservation Fund Commission is supported by a number of members who provide advice on proposed projects to the Directors of the Fund. The Commission provided advice to the House of Representatives Committee inquiring into the operations of tax deductible funds operating as Registered Environmental Organisations. This advice demonstrated that the Fund activities were totally devoted to the objectives of better management and conservation of Australia's cave and karst resources.

The Commission is very well supported by the Fund Directors. All recommendations made to them have been accepted. There is a cautionary note in that the Directors' are fully aware that without more donations the activities of the Fund may become constrained. Fund raising is coming second to other things. Expenditure has exceeded income this year. I do not have a big enough team in The Commission to undertake the promotion and advertising needed to raise funds for existing and projected expenditure. The ASF needs a Fund Raising person, graphic designer and publicist.

Conservation Commission Reports

National

Nicholas White

Overall I have only been working on matters of National interest.

There has been a complete lack of funding coming from Canberra to support initiatives for activities under the EPBC Act. Thus the ASF Karst Conservation Fund is supporting studies necessary to identify why the Bent-wing bats of South Eastern Australia have undergone severe population declines (\$26,000 over two years). It is not that our funding is wrong but is symptomatic of present funding priorities nationally.

White Nose Syndrome

White Nose Syndrome (WNS) is caused by a fungus. It has devastated populations of cave dwelling bats in North East USA. The fungus grows at low temperatures and affects bats during hibernation. Conditions in southern and south eastern Australia could be suitable for fungus growth and cause disease in our cave dwelling bats. The highest risk population is considered to be the Southern Bent-wing Bat that is listed as critically endangered under the EPBC Act (1999). I am working with the Department of Agriculture and the Bat Health Focus Group of Wildlife Health Australia to publicize the risk and to provide protocols to prevent the introduction of the fungus by cavers, speleologists and cave managers and their staff members returning from cave visiting in the Northern Hemisphere. Equally important are international cave visitors particularly those attending the International Speleological Congress in July 2017 and participating in the field trips. Decontamination protocols to prevent the introduction of the fungus are proposed for the personal caving equipment, clothing and boots of field trip participants.

Cliefden

The Save Cliefden Caves Campaign is at an interesting stage with Water NSW letting a contract to GHD for assessment of the proposals for a dam on the Belubula River. The State Government and Water NSW appear to believe that the caves will not be affected by a dam at Cranky Rock on the Belubula River. This is a position which is questionable and which we should not accept. The bat studies undertaken show that there

are a number of other forest bat species in the river corridor, a number of which are classified as rare or vulnerable under NSW and Federal legislation. There are many other values of the Cliefden limestone, its caves and the associated river corridor that need consideration.

We met with representatives of the Save Cliefden Caves Association, Inland Rivers Network, ASF and OSS in December 2015 and discussed the campaign. From this has there has been a communication group which does a phone hook-up on about a monthly basis. This phone group currently consists of Tim Gartrell, Ian Curtis, Bev Smiles, Harry Burkitt and Nicholas White. This group provides avenues to communicate information, plan political action and so on. Another wider email grouping has recently been set up to pull in all interested groups. To give a wider focus on the campaign a Belubula River Alliance of which ASF is a member has been instituted.

In the ASF Karst Conservation Fund Commission report there is information on Cliefden projects supported which will provide better information on the values of the Cliefden Caves and the area.

Chillagoe Karst Region National Heritage List Assessment

CCC and ASF supported the listing. Both the mining industry and the local Shire objected. The Heritage Council's recommendation that it be listed went to the Federal Minister for the Environment. The recommendation lapses if not enacted by the Minister.

Ghost Bat Listing under the EPBC Act (1999)

ASF supported the advice to the Minister that the Ghost Bat be listed was accepted. The ghost bat is now listed.

Inquiry into the Register of Environmental Organisations (REOs)

This was a Federal House of Representatives inquiry. Its report was issued April 2016. It was a Coalition beat-up claiming the tax deductible funds of REOs was being used for political purposes. Certainly the ASF Karst Conservation Fund is used for protecting and better managing the cave and karst resources in Australia. The report if accepted would have us spend 20% of our funds on Landcare activities! One recommendation was that our reporting be switched from Department of Environment to the Australian Tax Office.

I do not think many of recommendations will be acted on. There was a dissenting report from Labor members of the committee.

EPA issues and karst

Drainage from Williamstown Defence Base and now the creeks in Darwin have been shown to be polluting waterways with firefighting chemicals perfluorooctane sulphonate (PFOS). I raised this issue with the ABC reporter concerning the Tindal Airport (RAAF Base) at Katherine, NT as it is on karst whose aquifers are used for fruit growing and other horticultural activities and drain into rivers going to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The RAAF is now supplying drinking water to residents in the fruit growing areas east of the Tindal Air Base.

Naracoorte Cave Management

I provided advice to a review of "Cave Access Zoning" for Naracoorte Caves National Park. (Graham Pilkington and CEGSA were involved amongst others). The results of this should provide a better regime to manage the cave and karst values Management is charged with managing under the State and World Heritage legislative requirements.

Adventure Activity Standards (AAS)

These are being developed nationally. Several State based versions have been operative and have been very effective for land managers instituting controls on caving ethics, group sizes, leadership skills and requirements for two leaders per caving party. There has been variation between states on the effectiveness of the existing standards and what dependent groups fall under the AAS. I am aware of a number of groups which are not regulated in this manner which leaves a nasty taste amongst users where commercial operators have to comply but "educational users" to the same caves do not

These AAS referred to a number of the ASF Codes of Practice such as the Code of Ethics and Conservation and the Minimum Impact Caving Code (with permission and acknowledgement).

We have a policy that "there not be sacrificial caves". One of the most effective ways of the ASF being proactive is to participate in the specialist committee developing the AAS for caving. Nominations to this expert group will be called for in the first quarter of 2017. A recommendation is listed below supporting this.

Summary

Apart from the question of fundraising raised in the Cliefden section there are no real recommendations needing action.

Federally, the Department of Environment has been severely affected by budget cuts and lowered staffing.

In the States, Environment Department funding and staffing levels are affecting on ground management capacity. This certainly affects cave and karst areas.

Recommendation

1. Adventure Activity Standard – Caving

That the ASF ensure representation on the AAS Caving Expert Committee is representative of organized caving across Australia.

Western Australia

The South-West

The major concern over the past couple of years has been the stated intention of the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) to develop a major new caravan/RV camping area in the Boranup Forest, Leeuwin–Naturaliste National Park (LNNP), on the site of a cleared pine plantation next to Caves Road. Not only is this site in the immediate vicinity of a number of caves, not all of them locked, but its drainage also heads directly towards them. Fortunately, following representations from SCoWA members, DPaW has relocated the site to a more appropriate location.

Members of the WA caving clubs, through the Caves Management Advisory Committee for LNNP, have also:

- assisted DPaW in a restoration project to clean and strengthen/stabilise the Calgardup Cave Window Extension, which is open to commercial groups;
- advised on the appropriate route for a projected new road on the Leeuwin Ridge, to avoid impacting known caves and karst areas;
- assisted DPaW to identify the safest and most robust site for a proposed new commercial abseil route into Giants Cave doline; and
- Assisted Traditional Owners and archaeologists in replacing Aboriginal bone fragments in appropriate locations in the caves from which they are known to have been removed.

As an integral part of our caving trips we have carried out replacement/improvement of track marking and removal of off-track footprints, and repaired a small collapse across the track in Brides Cave.

Yanchep

In the Yanchep area the focus remains the incursion of the expanding northern suburbs of Perth into karst areas, and WASG members have been involved in responding to the usual enquiries from people hoping to develop their properties. All too often after offering to visit and inspect the property we hear nothing more, which may mean either that they have realised the need for a detailed geotechnical survey, or that they have opted to ignore our advice.

Eneabba

In the Eneabba area, WASG has undertaken the gating of the beautiful and vulnerable Lady Forrest Cave. With financial assistance from the ASF Karst Conservation Fund and SRGWA, and logistical as well as monetary support from DPaW, a stainless steel gate was installed on 4 December.

Karstcare

David Wools-Cobb

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.

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

The Blackshawl/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 receives an inordinate amount of rain during the May-June period. This followed 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 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 has been closed until further notice. Croesus Cave also flooded (a very rare event) resulting large rocks being jammed in this 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

President: Colin Tyrrell

On behalf of the NSW Speleological Council Executive and Federation Members in ACT and NSW, I present the following report on the affairs of this State Speleological Council for 2016.

The council represents 15 clubs

The Council met twice during the year in May and October.

Meetings were well attended with around 11 corporate members represented at both meetings. The October meeting probably had the highest number of actual people present (rather than proxy representation) that we have seen for several years. During the year the ASF in NSW was represented by caver delegates at meetings of Kosciuszko NP Speleological Reference Group (KNPSRG)

and Bungonia Reference Advisory Group (BRAG)

As President, I have had meetings with the Landforms Team, NPWS on several matters relating to access and issues relating to damage in caves on the OEH estate, and keeping a good relationship with NPWS.

An increasing number of clubs in NSW have run joint caving trips with other clubs during the year and this is seen as a positive action by all concerned.

Kosciuszko NP Speleo Reference Group (KNPSRG)

This committee, established as a requirement under the Kosciuszko NP Plan of Management, Meet at least once this year, with teleconferences on other occasions

NPWS Reference groups

After representation from the ASF General Secretary, Karst Management Advisory Committee (KMAC) is back on the agenda. In June nominations were required and Chris Norton's nomination was accepted. However, the committee still hasn't been finalised awaiting representatives from a couple of other bodies. Sophia Meehan, NPWS, has put forward that the current nomination be for a 5 year period. This committee is still to be reformed with the whole thing awaiting the minister's signature of approval. It has been this way since around August this year. The is some (probably warranted) concern that the Kosciuszko group **may suffer the same fate as it is due for renewal next year**

Jenolan Caves

All quiet on the Jenolan front. There has been another significant change in management at the Caves – hopefully for the better with Bob Conroy (Administrator) taking an increased interest in what has been happening there.

Last year Bob Conroy issued a brief advising that the long awaited Plan of Management is about to be released. It still hasn't been released – probably sitting with the same minister.

It has been in various states of hiatus for well over 11 years.

Save Cliefden Caves

Whilst it has been relatively quiet this year – the NSW Government is still pushing ahead with a \$6m study of feasibility of putting a dam on the Belubula River downstream from Cliefden Caves. There have been some public meeting through the year that have not been

organised by ASF/NWSC but have been attended by members of Orange Speleological Society.

There is a significant concern that the new Belubula River Alliance (this is not an ASF body, but has representatives of several environmental groups) is not acting in the best interests of the caving clubs, with an action in October prior to the local State Government by-election significantly upsetting the local landowners who threatened to ban all access to the Cliefden Caves. Some hard work by OSS seems to have averted this, for now.

The NSW clubs at the October meeting moved that we distance ourselves from that group until such time as it is properly constituted and communication rules are formally agreed to. Donations to the fighting fund through the Karst Fund have continued to be disappointing this year

Wellington Caves

This year has seen a new manager appointed to Wellington Caves, Denis and I met with Jody Anderson mid-year. She is keen to have more active involvement with and from club visiting Wellington Caves

Tasmanian Speleological Liaison Council

Report by David Wools-Cobb

The liaison council continues to meet on an intermittent basis, as & when issues arise and the opportunity for delegates from all Tasmanian caving clubs is available (usually coincided with another event).

Unfortunately we only held one meeting this past year in April, with Deb Hunter elected President and Dave Wools-Cobb as Secretary. Cave search and rescue skills training has been a major priority, with Deb Hunter heading up the ACRC doing a great job. In April we held a two day event with Al Warild and several visiting cavers from mainland states which were extremely successful. More recently Northern Caverneers held a vertical rescue skills practice, above ground due to water levels and precluded cave access.

A further cave rescue double weekend is planned for the south of the state in early December.

The Cave Access Policy project of Parks & Wildlife Service has had slow progress, with a planned meeting of interested cavers to discuss Kubla Khan Cave to occur shortly.

Rotating positions with Parks seems to hinder progress.

TSLC major project currently is to produce a Kubla Khan cave rescue plan. Above ground planning has progressed well, with a trip to discuss difficult sites planned for next autumn. The rescue plan for the Mount Cripps area has been updated

Speleological Council of Western Australia

no formal meetings but via emails

South Australian Speleological Council

By Graham Pilkington

Several meetings throughout the year. Access to Mt Gambier problems and costs to private company "141" is now the focus of attention.

Commission Reports

Australian Cave Rescue

Convener: Ross Anderson

Nil report

Awards

Convener: Miles Pierce

Nil report

Cave Diving

Conveners: Tim Payne and Peter Kraehenbuehl

No report received

Cave and Karst Numbering

Convener: Peter Dykes

verbal report given at meeting:

- There is a proposed Karst Terrain numbering guideline for discussion that received replies from Greg Middleton and Rauleigh Webb;
- Working on OzKarst with Graham Pilkington
- KID/Green Book is 50 years old
- Common vision for recording disappeared in the mid 1980's
- 4 state databases are not easily compatible and security and updating are issues.

- Need to re-establish a national vision as to ASF Future.
- proposal to get all state karst numbering coordinators together to discuss future documentation
- There must be changes to the current system; must be given money to fund them properly; respect others' opinions; empower area co-ordinators regarding control and consultation; obligation and responsibility of ASF to maintain the system and to maintain annual meetings between coordinators.

Grants

Convener: Fiona Beckwith

Fiona is ill. There are ongoing small grants like bolting and the Bunda cliffs expedition. There is confusion about these grants and the KCF. There are 3 grants for attendance at the UIS congress.

Helictite

Convener: Susan White

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. The Commission currently consists 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 is an ex officio member. I have chaired the Commission since ASF took over Helictite in 2000. The Commission has been run in tandem with the Publications Commission but is a separate Commission.

Greg Middleton has taken over as Chief Editor in 2016. Ken Grimes worked with him until Ken's untimely death in August and Tim Moulds and Kevin Kiernan have agreed to take on roles as editors. It was agreed at a meeting in June 2016 that I stay as Chair as neither Ken nor Greg wanted to do it. This is basically an administration role. This transition has been very smooth and I thank all those involved for their co-operation.

There has been no hard copy issue published in 2016 but 2 papers are available on the website and another is ready to be uploaded. Other papers are in progress. We hope that the last hard copy issue (Volume 42) will be

able to be printed shortly. All further publications will be Open Access (digital) as agreed a few years ago. Pre-publication on the website of finalised papers will occur.

There are about 20 copies of Volume 41 (Bullita special volume). We have now one spare complete set due to donations from Elerly Hamilton-Smith's library. Limited copies of some other volumes are available from the Chair of the Commission.

We have been trying to scan back copies but this 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 the 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.

The Commission, and especially Helictite, will sadly miss the input of Ken Grimes. His hard work and dedication has kept the journal going through a difficult period. **Thanks to the members of the Commission for their involvement.**

International Relations

Convener: Nicholas White

Little to report for the year.

Action is all focused on communication related to the International Congress of Speleology for July 2017.

The Speleo2017 Commission is very well supported by the UIS Bureau with many email exchanges of advice, information and contacts useful in organizing the Congress.

No action required.

Library and Archives

Convener: Cathy Brown

- ongoing long term storage issues continues.
- Continued cataloguing Elerly's material
- Carol Anderson still working on cataloguing;

Membership

Secretary: Colin Tyrrell

Membership

Membership increased this year, with currently 1048 members spanning 27 corporate member clubs 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 is currently 4 Associate and one Complimentary Associate (ACKMA).

There are currently no Caves Australia subscribers

Membership Database

Its primary use is for ASF to record members. The email lists operating through the membership database is used for all official ASF correspondence. As such it acts as a vehicle for communications (to club contacts (asf-admins), 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. In November, I did a check on the listing and found 2 members that had indicated 'Yes' for the electronic version but had no email address. One of these was a family unit where the email address was attached to a family member that was not the primary contact. A secondary use is to validate if a person is an ASF member and covered by insurance. Parks Tasmania is the only known non-club user of this facility. In 2016 I had 2 requests to confirm club data from issues raised by Parks Tasmania

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

The main issue to arise this (again) year 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 member data as at the end of July.

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 had problematic year in 2016. The 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 for the upcoming UIS Congress has also increased the workload.

Caves Australia

CA has struggled this year and we have fallen behind in the production schedule. There has been a shortage of suitable material and the resignation of Alan Jackson as Production Manager is a serious loss that has been hard to fill. It is quite unfair that the few people who do write for CA for them to have to wait for

ages to get it published. The number of people who write articles for CA is still far too small. The latest CA is available from the website and the posted copies should be in everyone's mailbox by now. We currently have only a couple of articles in hand for CA 203.

As a result of this dearth of articles and the fact we have an excellent ESpeleo with Ian Binnie as editor, perhaps we need to think whether ASF members WANT or need Caves Australia 4 times a year and twice would be more manageable, e.g. once in the first half of the year (March?), and once in the second half (September or October)? Fortunately, the reliable ESpeleo means that notices and general information goes out to ASF members regularly.

Motion: That the ASF Executive and the Publications Commission investigate publishing 2 issues of Caves Australia per year rather than the current 4. This is to be implemented in 2018 if adopted.

**Moved: Commission Chair: Susan White
Seconded:**

CA is now 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 does mean that if 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 is incomplete and has not progressed this year due to. Most of the earlier copies of CA and its predecessors are scanned and we are still negotiating lack of time. The missing section is the scanning of volumes 1-25 of ASF Newsletter at the appropriate price i.e. free.

We have a volunteer to take over overseeing production of CA, Greg Leeder from VSA and I hope he will be able to deal with this this year. The actual production is still able to be done in Hobart; the team there of layout (Fred Baker), Trevor Wailes (printer) and TadPac (mailout) is

able to be managed from a distance with these days of good email.

Ian Curtis has continued as editor and I thank him for his time and hard work correcting cavers' grammar.

ESpeleo

Ian Binnie has continued to be a good editor and has generated 5 ESpeleo in 2016. 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. Some upgrade of content is being planned for early in 2017.

Site usage: www.caves.org.au has had good usage this past year with 8884 sessions, 8,758 users of which 75.9% are new users. Most sessions have originated in Australia but there are a number from overseas.

Other publications

David Rueda Roca has continued to be the publications sales officer. 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 book continue to be a success and we have plenty of stock. The Jenolan book is virtually out of print (we only have few copies left) and we do not intend to reprint. The New South Wales Karst Atlas (The Documentation System) has sold steadily and 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 subsequent volumes in the Atlas project worked well for this volume and will stand us in good stead and the Commission looks forward to new volumes. These are all available through the Publication Sales officer. The various publications available from 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 I do not have time to deal with this 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.

Assisting with the publication issues which arise out of hosting the UIS congress in 2017 is taking up real time.

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 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.

Copyright

There are several issues about copyright the executive needs to be aware of and maybe assist with.

ASF is a member of the 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 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 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: Caroline Forest
Nil report

Speleo2017 ICS Organising Commission

Convener: Denis Marsh



17th
International
Congress of Speleology,
Sydney 2017

Following is the 2016 annual report of activities of the 17th International Congress of Speleology (17th ICS) Organising Commission. This past year has been very busy for this Commission with several major milestones achieved:

- Development of a draft budget for the Congress to allow setting of registration pricing.
- Release of the Second Circular with comprehensive details about the Congress for presenters and attendees.

- Development of the Conference Management System website facility to allow online registration, payment and abstract/paper submission.
- Opening of Registrations on 1 August 2016 accompanied with the call for submission of papers and poster presentations.
- Close of official abstract submission deadline on 19 December 2016.

The Commission has received an overwhelming response to the call for presentations with approximately 300 presentations submitted, over 240 as paper presentations and almost 60 poster presentations, plus several video presentations. This is undoubtedly on a scale well beyond anything ASF has ever attempted in the past, more than filling the available program slots and may require up to seven sessions running concurrently. This will provide for an exciting program with attendees spoilt for choice with interesting presentations from all around the world.

The Commission membership has expanded over the past twelve months and now consists of eleven senior organisation members, with a further 18 volunteers assisting with various individual tasks. Around another 18 volunteers are coordinating field excursions, either before or after the Congress. All volunteer members have taken up the challenge of organising the Congress with commendable energy and enthusiasm.

At the time of writing, paid registrations stand at around 132, including some 47 from the US and 35 from Australia. Considering this is possibly the only opportunity in our life time to attend an International Congress of Speleology without having to organise international travel, I would expect there should be more Australians registering than from any overseas country. The early registration discount applies up to 31 January 2017, after which registration increases by \$50 so we need to encourage everyone to get their registrations in very soon. While some have suggested that the registration cost is expensive at \$450, this is comparable with an international conference of this scale and cannot be compared to an ASF Biennial Conference. There are very few venues which could accommodate an ICS and these are not cheap.

A number of people have already advised their willingness to volunteer to help during the running of the Congress but we will need many more to make this ICS a huge success and

spread the load among the willing helpers. A Commission planning meeting is scheduled to be held early February and we hope to identify the many tasks and numbers of volunteers required to run the event at that time so if you plan to attend and can spare a day or even several hours, please contact any of the Commission team.

The final challenge going forward is to convert the exciting program of presentations into a significant number of paid registrations. Don't delay your registration and encourage everyone you know to get theirs in as well.

Special Interest Groups

ASF Cave Diving Group

No report received

Judbarra-Gregory Karst Research SIG of the ASF – 2016

Chairperson: Mark Sefton

The annual expedition to the Judbarra-Gregory National Park in the Northern Territory comprised 14 members of whom five attended for the first time. The group mapped more than ten kilometres of hitherto unexplored cave passages and achieved several important connections between caves.

Continued exploration and mapping of the Prometheus system formed a major part of the groups work this year. In addition, a new cave was found just south of Claymore that yielded close to a kilometre of passage and included a lengthy well-developed stream passage that was coated with tufa-like deposits, contained multiple pristine gour pools and flowed towards the exit from underneath the overburden. At the upstream end, where there appears to be little karst on the surface, the stream way was fed by a series of mud tunnels. This cave is separated from the main Prometheus System by a single rock pile and once the new maps are processed we should have a good chance to connect the two next year.

In the longer term we hope to eventually join the Prometheus System to the 13.4 km long cave system (BAA29 and BAA108) further to the west. This year, two important steps towards this were achieved. Atlantis Cave (part of the Prometheus System) was

connected under a valley to Crystal Starlet cave which is in the western half of the southern karst. Further west again, a new cave was found near to, and connected with, Firestick Cave. The western end of this new cave is close to the eastern extremity of BAA108 and we should make a connection next year. Slowly, the gap between the eastern and western halves of the two major cave systems in the southern karst is 'shrinking' as intermediate caves are found and explored. A final link up could give us a cave system of some 70 km or more.

We also made several connections between caves in the northern karst as well as surveying new passage there. Most important was linking Thunderbirds, via a small cave (found in 2013) to the Dingo Cave system which has, as a result, increased in length to over 41 km. Connections were also found between Piano Bar cave and BAA46, and also between BAA3, 4 and 6.

In the Bullita cave system we added a small amount of new cave by investigating a few of the numerous internal 'question marks' that still remain. We were also able to sort out most of the remaining survey problems that we had identified in the southern end of the system and a few in the Neighbours block. Finally, we found a second link between the Frontyard and Backyard sections of the Bullita Cave System.

Following this year's expedition, we have now mapped a total of 293.4 km of cave passages in the Judbarra-Gregory National Park. The three longest cave systems in the park are:

- The Bullita Cave system in the central karst block, currently 123.5km. This cave remains among the top twenty longest in the world.
- The Prometheus System in the southern karst block, which includes North and South Prometheus, Claymore, Two Fishes, and Atlantis caves, is now 52.6 km.
- The Dingo System of the northern karst is now 41.5 km.

(Statistics compiled from data supplied by Bob Kershaw)

At the Annual General Meeting, held at Bullita on the last day of the 2015 expedition, Mark Sefton (CEGSA), Megan Pryke (SUSS) and Bob Kershaw (ISS) were re-elected to the SIG Committee as Chairman, Secretary and Mapping Coordinator respectively. Phil Maynard (SUSS), Kevin Moore (SUSS), Peter

Freeman (VSA) and Ian Barnard (VSA) were also elected as Committee members.

As always, we wish to express our thanks to the Park staff at Bullita for allowing us to work in the park and for all their support during our activities earlier this year.

Committee Reports

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Committee

Nil report

Conference Committees

ASF Server and Karst Index Database

Nil Report



Contact List of ASF Corporate Members 2016

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

Corporate Members

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.

Metropolitan Speleological Society

PO Box 178
Thornleigh NSW 2120

Cavers and Adventurers of the Snowy Mountains

Contact- Email Alan Beck:al-shiva@hotmail.com

Newcastle and Hunter Valley Speleological Society Inc.

PO Box 15
Broadmeadow NSW 2292

Central West Caving Group

605 Jaunter Rd
Jaunter NSW 2787

Orange Speleological Society

PO Box 752
Orange NSW 2800

Highland Caving Group

PO Box 54
Georges Hall NSW 2194

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

PO Box 3318
Redfern NSW 2016

Illawarra Speleological Society Inc.

PO Box 94
Unanderra NSW 2526

University of Technology Sydney Speleological Society

c/o ActivateUTS Sports
PO Box 3210
Broadway NSW 2007

Kempsey Speleological Society

PO Box 31
Kempsey
NSW 2440

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

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

Associates

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

Landforms and Rehabilitation Team
(NSW NP&WS, OEH)
Level 2, 203-209 Russell St,
Bathurst NSW 2795

Wellington Caves
Caves Rd
Wellington

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

UCSSC- Lake Ginninderra
2 Emu Bank Drive
Belconnen, ACT, 2617

ASF Special Interest Groups

ASF Cave Diving Group

Karst Conservancies

KarstWatch (Mole Creek)

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