

**New South Wales Speleological Council**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Saturday – 23nd May 2023**

**10 AM Bungonia**

**Meeting opened:** 10:15 am

1. **Apologies:**Colin Tyrrell, David Fisher, Melissa Hadley, Justin Wilkinson

**Attendance:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NAME** | **CLUB / S** | **PROXIES** | **REPRESENTATION**  **i.e. ASF COUNCILLOR ASF ASSOCIATE**  **ASF INDIVIDUAL OBSERVER/VISITOR** |
| Peter Dykes | CWSS |  | Councilor – CWSS |
| Roderick Smith | MSS/NHVSS | BMSC | Councilor – MSS & NHVSS |
| Lachlan Bailey | NUCC |  | Councilor – NUCC |
| Glenn Stalgis | RSS |  | RSS |
| Cathy Brown | HCG |  | Councilor – HCG |
| Brittany Meers | MSS |  | Visitor |
| Emily Butcher | SUSS |  | Councilor – SUSS |
| Keir Vaughn-Taylor | SUSS |  | NSWSC Exec |

1. Confirmation of minutes from meeting on 21/05/2021. Moved Keir, seconded Glenn
2. Matters Arising from previous minutes

**Motion** – That the minutes from the previous meeting be accepted

Moved – Keir Vaughn-Taylor

Seconded – Glenn Stalgis

Approved

1. Correspondence:
2. Received:

* KSS – Concerns regarding dams in the karst catchment

1. Outgoing

* Meeting details

1. President’s Report

**Peter** – I called in to see Sophia Meehan four times, and all four times she wasn’t there and I got nowhere. Her position is legislated, so they need to still have someone there. I feel that with the issues with Jenolan, Wombeyan, Yarrangobilly, Bungonia it would have been the perfect time for the karst unit to be involved, but they were nowhere. On a side note, local SES, Police rescue etc. were staggered that the office here at Bungonia wasn’t manned. With the change of government, this is our chance to make representation.

**Cathy** – Who to?

**Peter** – Penny Sharp is the new environment minister.

**Glenn** – Do we need to go that high, or just talk to NPWS

**Keir** – There’s a whole new set of people within NPWS, which means we need to re-introduce ourselves and re-establish the “rules”

**Cathy** – We need to talk to NPWS to find out what the situation is.

**Glenn** – Who do we go to?

**Peter** – There are different people in different areas

**Rod** – Is it worth asking Andrew Baker?

**Glenn** – I think that’s a good place to start. He could at least give us an idea of what’s happening

**Action Item** – Rod to talk to Andrew Baker

**Peter** - There’s a lot of things that haven’t happened over the last decade due to government. Look at Wombeyan and Jenolan. Where are the government and NPWS going in relation to management of the parks. Do they have a strategic plan? How do the finance it?

**Cathy** – Is there no ranger here because there’s no money?

**Peter** – I suspect so. NPWS would be a low priority in relation to everything else.

**Cathy** – Staff turnover could also be a problem.

**Keir** – Jenolan are tendering for a feasibility study for a gondola based on the recommendation of the JCSRG.

1. Commission and Representative Reports
   1. KMAC (Karst Management Advisory Committee) – Jill Rowling  
      Report sent it:

1) There has been a re-organisation within NPWS and Sophia Meehan is no longer working there. She has taken on academic studies in human behaviour.

2) The new chairperson of KMAC is Claire Allen, Director Policy and Engagement, NSW NPWS (email claire.allen@environment.nsw.gov.au)

3) There was a meeting of representatives from groups (such as KMAC) in February. KMAC was represented by Graeme Pattison. The report of the meeting can be sent out if requested. Karst is not a big issue in Parks.

4) KMAC has not met since the last report in 2022.

5) The general email for KMAC is KMAC@environment.nsw.gov.au and will be answered by one of several people in the NPWS Policy Department.

* 1. NSW Caving Training Coordinator – Glenn Stalgis  
     **Glenn** – Marilyn Scott is still running the pilot of the Cave Leaders Program. She deserves a lot of credit for the work she has put in. Besides the training it has also helped create a broader network within clubs. We also have interstate clubs interested. This program is designed to be additional to the training provided by clubs. It's also helping keep up the interest of members within clubs.
  2. NSW Conservation Convener

**Peter** – I didn’t get a chance to talk to Bruce (Welch), but I will.

**Rod** – Have we contacted anyone else?

**Peter** – No-one has put their hand up

**Rod** – We’ll never get anyone if we wait for them to put their hands up. We need to ask appropriate people

**Peter** – What areas should concentrate on?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Area | Proposed conservation convener |
| Kanangra Boyd | Peter Dykes |
| Wombeyan | Keir Vaughn-Taylor |
| Kosciuszko | John Brush or Phil Flemming |
| Deua | ISS |
| Hunter Valley | Garry Smith |
| Wee Jasper/Bungonia | Keir Vaughn-Taylor |
| Kempsey | KSS |

**Action** **Item** – Peter to contact the people in the table to ask them to take on the conservation convener role for the given area

**Peter** – There is nothing in the signage at Bungonia or Colong regarding what cavers did to save Bungonia Gorge. I find that very disappointing.

**Keir** – Alan (Green) is pushing me to push for a media person in NSW to promote cavers in the media

**Rod** – There is an ASF Media Commission, which is meant to be more than just one person.

* 1. Kosciuszko Speleo Reference Group (KSRG) – Marilyn Scott  
     Report sent in

The last meeting was held on the 26/27 April, and unfortunately I was at the ASF Conference so couldn’t attend. The minutes have not yet been circulated but it’s my understanding that most of the members were able to attend.

The next meeting is scheduled for the 28/29 August and I am expecting to attend.

* 1. Cave and Karst Numbering Coordinator - Peter  
     **Peter** – The archive is complete, except for a couple of water leaks. The door has gone on. Last thing is to paint the floor and then move the stuff from my shed to the archive. If there’s anything that clubs want to have archived it can be included there.

**Lachlan** – Why doesn’t it go to the ASF library

**Peter** – There should be more than one copy. According to standards Graham Pilkington found they recommend up to 5 copies at separate locations.

**Lachlan** – Cathi is going to make each club library as a branch of the ASF library, shouldn’t that include the documentation library you have?

**Peter** – That will happen.

**Lachlan** – Is it time to look at the people who are managing the karst areas?

**Motion** – For Lachlan and the NSWSC Executive to review the list of people responsible for the tagging and documentation of each karst area in NSW, and Lachlan to contact the people on the list and see who is still interested and try to find alternatives where they are not.

Moved – Cathy Brown

Seconded – Lachlan Bailey

Approved

* 1. NSWSC Cave Diving Committee – Emily Butcher  
     Report sent in

In January 2023 a combined CDAA/ASF-CDG weeklong diving trip was conducted at Cooleman Plain. Following this successful weekend the NSW Branch of the CDAA was keen to participate in ongoing NSW cave diving projects. As such they have asked about joining a NSW ASF club. SUSS, MSS and ISS have already been involved with the best way to make this happen.

Also if they join the ASF and then the ASF-CDG would they be able to get their own permits via the ASF-CDG. The next question would be if something was damaged (let’s just say in a NSWNP), who would be responsible, the Permit Applicant or the ASF-CDG Commissioner?

Some new mapping symbols for cave divers mapping underwater passages are now being circulated. Rod OBrien ASF Cave Diving Commissioner has already endorsed them. However, the two shades of blue need to be standardised.

There have also been some dives at Slug Lake to retrieve some of the dive gear that has been moved/buried with the Jenolan floods

* 1. Jenolan Caves Stakeholders Reference Group (JCSRG) –   
     **Lachlan** – Phil Maynard sat in as a temporary member for the recent meeting.

**Rod** – We’ve had one nomination for a caving representative on the JCSRG, which was from Justin Wilkinson of SSS

**Motion** – That the NSWSC endorse Justin’s nomination for the JCSRG

Moved – Lachlan Bailey

Seconded – Peter Dykes

Approved

* 1. NSWSC Exec Report - Rod

**Rod** – The main bit of news is that Stephanie Murphy has resigned from the NSWSC Executive

**Peter** – We need female representation on the Executive. We have quite close to the 50-50 split between male and female members within the ASF, and yet the current NSWSC Executive (now that Stephanie has resigned) is all male. We need a more accurate representation of our members on the Executive.

**Motion** – To add Emily Butcher and Brittany Meers to the NSWSC Executive

Moved – Lachlan Bailey

Seconded – Rod Smith

Approved

1. Treasurer’s Report

No report received

**Motion** – That all reports be accepted

Moved – Cathy Brown

Seconded – Glenn Stalgis

Approved

1. General Business
   1. **Rod** – Mike Lake sent a report on NSW and ACT hosted club websites and other items. Please see the end of this document for that report.
   2. Jenolan issues

**Keir** – Bruce (Welch) has been going to Jenolan on a regular basis, meeting with almost everyone, who then leave and we have to start again with the next person. We’re just going over the same thing time and again because of the staff turn-over. Also, apparently, Jenolan is going to have to close so they can fix the 2 mile road.  
**Peter** – Last time the fixed the 2 mile road they only closed for a month  
**Keir** – This is a much more significant amount of work. There’s a massive erosion gulley that intersects the road just past Burma Rd, which will need to be dealt with. There’s eight places where the road has been damaged. While the road is closed we may not be able to get in.  
**Peter** – When I spoke to the last manager he said RTA were going to upgrade the 5 mile road. I think it’s a waste of money. Upgrading the 2 mile road is much the same. There’s been 2 upgrades in the last couple of years. Every time they empty Blue lake, after it fills with sediment, the trucks taking the sediment out wreck the 2 mile road again. There’s no strategic thinking. There was a sentence from the RTA saying the caves should look at alternative access. I think it’s time to meet with Penny Sharp to say the above. Before they spend more time and money repairing the roads.  
**Keir** – According to Al Warild there are repairing the road as we speak.

**Glenn** – It’s a different bucket of money. Can’t go from department of roads to the Jenolan Trust.  
**Peter** – From a whole of government approach they should be asking if this is value for money.  
**Keir** – You are right. I saw the regional roads minister. The problem is that they have insurance money on the road and it’s against the law to spend it on something else.  
**Peter** – As a resident of Oberon shire, Jenolan is a major tourist income for the area. The Hampden road is one lane at the moment. Someone has to ask if this is value for money. We have to have a meeting with Penny or the premier about Jenolan. We have to go with the criticism, but also a solution.  
**Action** **item** – For Keir to create a list of grievances and solutions to go to Lachlan for a second opinion, and then to Peter. Include Justin Wilkinson.

* 1. Remediation works at Dip Cave, Wee Jasper

**Lachlan** – The rubbish tip entrance to dip cave is currently closed because someone wanted to clean up the rubbish, and crown lands then thought there may be asbestos. John Brush and I met with crown lands to tell them the original idea of shotcrete was a bad idea. We thought they were convinced. Then, in February this year, John was alerted to the fact they had reverted to the original plan of using shotcrete. Crown lands do not want to engage with me. As John and I are both ACT residents this is made harder, so we want someone in NSW to take over dealing with crown lands.  
**Keir** – We need to test for asbestos. The NSWSC should write a letter saying they need to test for asbestos first.  
**Peter** – I’m happy to take the letter to Goulburn.  
**Keir** – I’ll find out who the minister for crown lands is.  
**Peter** – I’m happy to put my title as NSWSC President on a letter if someone writes it.  
**Action** **item** – Keir to write a letter, for Peter to sign, to send to crown lands, for the Speleo council, asking for a face to face meeting with the head of crown lands.

* 1. Wyanbene bolting at the Blowhole

**Lachlan** – NUCC visited Wyanbene last year and the matting installed by CSS and ISS has disintegrated, so NUCC asked to install a bolt at the pitch. NPWS were receptive from a conservation perspective. I would like the Speleo council to endorse it.

**Motion** – For NUCC to coordinate the installation of bolts at the Blowhole pitch in Wyanbene

Moved – Lachlan Bailey

Seconded – Peter Dykes

Approved

* 1. Gating Tuglow and Colong caves

**Peter** – Both Tuglow and Colong caves are used by bats, Colong is a bat maternity cave. In the early 1970s BMSC put a grill over the Tuglow cave river access and a gate installed and locked. Over a decade ago the karst unit decided the gate needed to remain open to let the bats in and out. I propose the current grill to be replaced by a grill that would allow bat movements and also let in the leaf litter that the invertebrates feed on. We need a delegation to the head ranger. For Colong there should be no caving when the bats are breeding. Over the last 100 years the bats have migrated 1km into the cave because of cavers. It should have restricted access and gated. It doesn’t have the attention it should have. The track down acetylene spur is not maintained, but is regularly used. I’ll organize a meeting and anyone else that is interested is welcome to join

**Action** **Item** – For Peter to organize a meeting with NPWS to discuss.

* 1. Yarrangobilly fire trail clearing

**Lachlan** – NPWS at Yarrangobilly are planning to clear the east deep creek and eagles nest fire trails. One potential issue with eagles nest fire trail is that they may not clear it all the way.

* 1. Landholder introduction document

Keir – We met with the land holder for Narrangullen cave to enquire about access to the cave. He said he gets a lot of requests for cave access and doesn’t have time to vet everyone. So, Alan (Green) suggested writing a document to introduce the ASF and it’s clubs, which was done. This is potentially a common issue. We also thought about having a landholder liaison officer within NSW.

**Action** **Item** – Lachlan to forward the document to the NSWSC Executive and we work on making it more generic

* 1. Bat research

**Lachlan** – Bat researchers from UWS are doing a bat study with ASF support about white nose syndrome. They potentially want to do a larger study next year. They would find it very handy if cavers encounter bats at any point over winter to let them know. Can send it to the NSWSC and I can forward it to them.

**Glenn** – Might be a good idea for them to affiliate with a club to help them with the technical stuff, and the club could learn from them. Also, we could ask them to present at the next NSWSC meeting.

* 1. Cave cricket research

**Rod** – There’s also a study on cave crickets being run from one of the universities in South Australia.

**Lachlan** – Could you find the information and include it here?

**Rod** – Absolutely

Here is an article about it: <https://blogs.adelaide.edu.au/environment/2022/05/20/unravelling-the-enigma-of-cave-crickets/>

They’re looking for any details about cave crickets, including photos and samples.

1. Proposal for next meeting

19 October 2023 – Zoom – 7:00pm

1. Close of meeting

Around 14:15

**Report to NSWSC on NSW/ACT Hosted Club Websites and Other Items**

May 2023

The following NSW/ACT caving clubs have websites hosted on the ASF servers:

* NSW Speleo Council [https://nswsc.caves.org.au](https://nswsc.caves.org.au/)
* Blue Mountains Speleological Society [https://bmsc.caves.org.au](https://bmsc.caves.org.au/)
* Canberra Speleo Society [https://css.caves.org.au](https://css.caves.org.au/)
* Illawarra Speleological Society [https://iss.caves.org.au](https://iss.caves.org.au/)
* National University Caving Club [https://nucc.caves.org.au](https://nucc.caves.org.au/)
* Orange Speleological Society [https://oss.caves.org.au](https://oss.caves.org.au/)
* Rover Speleological Society [https://rss.caves.org.au](https://rss.caves.org.au/)
* Syd Uni Speleological Society [https://suss.caves.org.au](https://suss.caves.org.au/)
* The SUSS CAVE web application <https://suss.caves.org.au/cave/> for storing SUSS’s survey data.

Other hosted sites which are national in scope, and which may interest club’s members are:

* Caves Australia Magazine [https://cavesaustralia.caves.org.au](https://cavesaustralia.caves.org.au/)
* The clubs membership database [https://membership.caves.org.au](http://membership.caves.org.au/) (used by most NSW clubs).
* Cave Diving Group SIG [https://cdg.caves.org.au](https://cdg.caves.org.au/)
* Helictite, the Journal of Australasian Cave Research [https://helictite.caves.org.au](http://helictite.caves.org.au/)
* The Karst Index Database [https://kid.caves.org.au/kid](http://kid.caves.org.au/kid)
* ASF and Clubs OPAC [https://opac.caves.org.au](https://opac.caves.org.au/)

The Open Public Access Catalog lists all of the holding of the ASF Library and the Metropolitan Speleological Society (MSS). The OPAC is managed by Cathi Humphrey-Hood from MSS. Checkout the Library sometime.

The sub-domains and hosting for clubs is free. Contact Mike Lake for information on what can be provided.

Best Regards

Mike Lake  
ASF System Admin  
Mike.Lake@uts.edu.au  
May 2023