

F U S S I



CHRIS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BRIDGE

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**The Quarterly Newsletter of the
Flinders University Speleological Society Incorporated**

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Photo Credits:

Front cover photo: Jumping off the Bridge.

Back cover photo: Just hanging around.

Photographer:

Rob Cannon

FUSSI AND THE BRAVE NEW WORLD

Clare Buswell

The Federal Government that we all love to hate will, in July of this year when it gains control of the Senate, introduce a Voluntary Student Unionism Bill (VSU) into parliament. This bill will make the payment of the Student Services Fee at all universities and TAFEs voluntary. Currently all students at tertiary institutions pay some sort of student union fee. This fee is used to provide services at tertiary institutions. At Flinders University it pays for such things as an academic rights officer, education research officers, the employment service, health and counselling services, sports facilities, eating facilities, and amongst numerous other things, it funds FUSSI.

The introduction of the VSU Bill, and its successful passage through parliament translates at Flinders University, to mean that the \$360.00 students pay on enrolment to join their student organizations will no longer *have* to be paid, it will be voluntary. This may sound like a cost saving idea but the result will be that, at Flinders Uni and all others, student organizations will not have the funds required to administer their student services.

It is expected that at Flinders Uni, the parent organization of FU Speleo Society, Clubs and Societies, will have to raise its own funds or cease to be. The Sports Association's funding of sporting activities will come to a standstill: health and counselling services, child care, legal advice, the employment service, academic support via the student rights, women's and education officers will also not be available. You can also expect that most food services on campus will be privatised. (Enter Sub-standard, Mac shit, Bakers Plight etc). The Union board is currently meeting with industry representatives to facilitate this.

For FUSSI, which in the scheme of all the above, is a mere drop in the bucket, it means the following.

Your \$20.00 membership fee to join FUSSI gets you and the club access to our recurrent funding from Clubs and Societies of around \$800.00 each year. This money is used to replace gear, send out newsletters, and pay ASF fees. (The latter takes about 1/3 to 1/2 of the \$800.00.) The passing of the VSU bill into law means that FUSSI will get *No recurrent funding at all*.

This means that membership fees to join FUSSI will be set at cost level. That is, the previously student subsidised ASF component will have to be paid completely by members. Further club members will also have to pay a fee to join Clubs and Societies of around the \$30 - \$50.00ea, so that we can store gear, and gain access to the uni public liability scheme. (This issue is still being looked into.) So expect for example if you are a student at Flinders, an increase from \$20.00 to \$78.50, (FUSSI +ASF) + C/Socs component as yet unknown but presume \$30.00. This amount assumes we remain *outside* the ASF public liability scheme. (Currently non-student FUSSI members pay a joining fee to Clubs and Societies of \$30.00; this brings them public liability coverage under the university's banner.)

If FUSSI rejoins the ASF PL scheme (and there are good reasons to do this) then the student membership cost will be: FUSSI \$20.00 + ASF fee \$61.00. (single student rate) + Clubs/Soc fee \$30 = \$111.00. If you are not a student then the cost breakdown will be the following: FUSSI \$20.00 + ASF fee \$68.00 (single) + Clubs/Soc fee \$30= \$118.00

Any gear purchases will have to be paid for either by individuals buying their own ropes, helmets, etc or if the club buys gear then the members will have to undertake serious fund raising activities to cover the costs. It will take more than wine glass sales!

To offset the loss of recurrent funding it is highly likely that a gear hire fee will be charged for the use of gear on all caving trips. The current policy on this is that, as student money purchased the gear in the first place via the payment of the student service fee paid at enrolment, why should it be paid a second time by a student wishing to use it?

No printing of the newsletter, or any backup printing of maps etc., free of charge.

No payment for the annual auditing of our accounts. The auditing of our finances is a requirement under our constitution and is set up by Clubs and Societies who appoint the auditor and pay the bill.

Enter the brave world of user pays. One student recently estimated that his student service fee of \$360.00 returned him the following: He uses the free student union employment service to find him part-time work from which he makes \$5000.00 a year in income, gets his Rugby club national membership paid by the

FUSSI AND THE BRAVE NEW WORLD

Sports Association of \$150.00, uses the gym at the uni for \$2.00 a visit. He also takes advantage of any of the discounts that students get by holding a student card.

On a background note. The politicians driving the VSU bill are: Dr Brendan Nelson. Current Minister for Higher Education. He did his medical degree here at Flinders Uni. Whilst at Flinders he set up a club known as Flinders Investments via Clubs and Societies. The club was eventually shut down by Clubs and Societies because amongst other issues it refused to have its books audited. Other key players: Tony Abbott, Minister for Health and Peter Costello, Treasurer. These ministers have backgrounds in student politics at Sydney University and Monash University respectively and made their livelihoods from of student money. Over the past five years these three ministers have been at the fore front of silencing NGO, such as ACOSS Oxfam/Community Aid Abroad, Conservation Council of Australia, Australian Consumers Association, Sport Industry Australia, Volunteering Australia and many others. The Howard government has done this by changing the definition of a charity to any exclude advocacy role. If charities did advocate on behalf of their membership, then donations made to them would no longer be tax deductible. The result is a stripping of the funding base these organisations. Student organisations are the next in line.

References:

Ellis B., *Goodbye Babylon*. Further Journeys in Time and Politics. Penguin. 2002.

Kingston M., *Not Happy John*. Penguin. Melbourne. 2004.

Samantha Maiden, Nelson urges unis to back fee ban. *The Australian*. 17th March, 2005.

WHAT IS ON

July16-17	Naracoorte.	Rob and Bronya are co-ordinating this.
October.	Bridge and ropes days	Chris Wood Co-ordinating.
Forthcoming: Dec 05 or Jan 06.	Yarrangobilly. NSW	Bronya and Clare Co-ordinating.

CAVING IN THE FLINDERS

Chris Wood

Adelaide Cup long weekend 2005.

This trip started with people coming together on Saturday the 14th of May. The day was fine and the spatial skills were brought into action with the first challenge of fitting the gear in the car. The selection process was reminiscent of some sort of Fascist dictatorship "To big, make it smaller!" The hardy adventurers were Jan, Clare, Bronwyn and Chris (me).

As we approached Port Wakefield a strange haze was seen in the distance, the odds were on dust, but rain it was. Driving through the Flinders lots of kangaroos were taking advantage of the puddles on the road lapping up some well-needed water and keeping us under 80kmh.

We arrived at Wilkawillina Gorge at around 2pm and set up camp. Bronwyn stayed at camp and collected copious amounts of firewood while Chris, Jan and Clare went off to scale some cliffs and look for holes. Following the Wilkawillina Creek, which had only a couple of pockets of surface water we ventured up a valley. Clare found some fossils in the rocks in the creek, whilst Jan scaled the ridge and had adventures. As the sun was setting we waited for Jan on the aptly named Carrot rock and pondered the thought that maybe this was a giant salad bowl, chilli rock and potato rock were discovered soon after. Thoughts turned to our no fuss frozen prepared dinner and beer.

Curry, cake, beer, wine and conversation heated up as we discussed the changing face of university, education for the rich, the undermining of the student voice – a caver seeks not these things. I know for me I enjoyed the wine that night as others must have, so as to not notice the earthquake at 5am.

The following day we scanned the cliff face off the valley we had explored the day before - magnificent views. Pepper flakes of falling rocks were added to the salad bowl by Jan to the surprise of Bronwyn underneath. Chris found one large hole leading into the side of the hill, the exposed hole had some old stalls and flow stone. It extended 4m into the rock narrowing with distance, a small hole of 20cm diameter was at the end. Some smaller holes were found running along in a line traversing the hill.

2pm 15/05: Pack up camp and move to Bagalowie. Hey here's a funny idea, let's do some caving. A nice campsite and a great fire was quickly assembled. Theories of the link between Germans and pyromaniacs were discussed, as was the one between Jan and chocolate cake.

Clara St Dora Cave was good fun with a nice selection of crawling, squeezey bits and pretty stuff. We did find some stals still dripping, however most formation was not active. The walls were covered in Cauliflower formations, interesting stals, straws and flow stone. Clara St Dora Cave is an abandoned guano mine, it consists of 3 main chambers leading in the same direction. An insect was found by Chris and donned Buggy. The insect looked like a skinny praying mantis, crossed with an ant and was taken from the cave to assess.

Back to camp dusty, sweaty, sore, and satisfied. Chocolate cake was demolished and off to sleep. A casual pack up and departure at 10:45am the next day. We arrived back at Bronwyn's place Monday afternoon safe and sound. All and all a nice FUSSI adventure with little to no Mavis incidents

Stuart Nicholas 1954 – 2005

FUSSI members were saddened to learn of the untimely death, in Hobart, of Stuart Nicholas, a talented, modest, funny man and good friend to members of FUSSI. Whenever we were visiting Tasmania Stu would run an open house, at his childhood home in Rupert Ave, for us, as he did for many cavers from around the world. Later he did the same in his flat atop Arthur Street. If you needed gear, he would organise it for you. If you needed maps and local guides, Stuie was your man. Anything needed fixing and Stu, a qualified electrical technician and tinkerer, would build or fix it for you.

Active in Search and Rescue he organized the famous SAREX practice weekends involving cavers, bushwalkers, and Tasmanian emergency services. He was highly involved in the ensuing rescue in Mystery Creek Cave of an overdue school group 1990. He was president of TCC from 1991-2, during a time of major political turbulence for TCC over the preservation of the Exit Cave System from mining by Benders Inc. As a supporter of the Tasmanian Wilderness Society he was able to bring together cavers and the wider environmental activist community in the fight to save Exit cave from being mined out of existence by Benders. In the end the Exit Cave system was placed on the World Heritage listing of items that should not be blown up, cut down or flooded. It was the second fight by cavers to save caves from becoming road base or building material. The first was to save Mt Etna caves in QLD. He was a vice-president of the ASF in 1991-1993.



Stu using the latest (this was early 1993!) technology at the Australian Speleological Federation's TasTrog Conference and where he sold the famous "The last straw" t-shirts, amongst others.

He chose a career in Engineering after gaining admission to medicine, as the latter would have entailed him leaving his beloved Hobart and Tasmania's caves. When that course was rationalised to Launceston, he switched to a TAFE certificate course. His father was a car mechanic of some ability and kept Stu's rally car in fine fettle. On the wall in his home, picture of a VW bug getting seriously sideways, is the only visible memento of his rallying skill – until he navigated for you. Then you knew you were in the presence of an experienced and talented professional. Never one to blow his own trumpet, even his closest friends didn't know he'd been State rally B grade champion two (three?) years running from 1978 with a "works copy" LA Lancer – the weapon of choice at the time.

Typical of the man, through his business Pin 6, he provided networks and results for the Southern Safari/Saxon Safari about 86-87. He'd recently acquired a Subaru Impreza for doing the shopping.

We knew him from his caving days and Stu was active from an early age with TCC and took part in some historic trips over three decades. He was involved in the discovery of Niggly Pot, at 190m the longest single drop in Australia. He helped in many surveys and explorations, including Growling Swallet, the Khazad-dum

Stuart Nicholas 1954 – 2005

– Dwarrowdelf system, Cauldron Pot, Ice Tube and Threefortyone. As a member of the TCC Cave Diving Group, he helped dive the sump in the Junee resurgence. Only later were we to find out why he looked so buggered after ascending out of Exit Cave via Mini-Martin. He was a long-time editor of *Speleo Spiel*, and was an early user of cave mapping software. He features prominently in *Vertical Caves of Tasmania* – a record at that time of what are undoubtedly the toughest caves in Australia. He also co-edited with Nick Hume, *Tasmanian Cave Exploration in the 1980's*.

He often visited the North Island and was on the legendary FUSS 1992 Easter trip to the Flinders Ranges (if you can remember it, you weren't really there). In later years he would indulge his passion for World Music and be a regular at Womadelaide and big shows, such as Elton John, in Melbourne.



Stu (far left) with FUSS near Hollowillina in the Flinders Ranges, Easter 1992.

Stu was a successful electrical technician and ran Pin 6 Technology for many years, with many clients (including Royal Hobart Hospital) in Tasmania and overseas. Later in life he concentrated on share and currency trading. At the time of his death he was in a consortium writing software for currency trading. It allowed him to lead a comfortable life and enabled him to travel overseas to see his caving buddies and chase female friends. An only child, and confirmed bachelor, he'd just returned from a trip to Slovenia mid-April.

Clare and I represented FUSS at his funeral on May 4th. We met up with Stu's many friends, told stories and gained an insight into sections of Stu's life that we didn't know. His undemonstrative and easygoing nature disguised a man of many talents and true friendship. His ashes will be scattered in Dwarrowdelf on what would have been his 51st birthday. We miss him greatly.

Heiko Maurer and Clare Buswell

NATURAL BRIDGE CAVERNS, Texas.

Robert Cannon

In 2004 I had the opportunity whilst studying at the University of Texas in Austin to take a trip with the UT International Office to Natural Bridge Caverns between San Antonio and New Braunfels.



Ted the intrepid globe-trotting bear, this is the kid's amusement area outside the caverns.

While this is not a caving trip in the sense of rigging up and exploring unknown or rarely walked corridors of the middle earth, it in itself was a wonderful view of some truly beautiful scenery. The brochures describe this as being a living cave. Well in Texas at this time we had experienced unseasonably heavy rains, so ...



The Natural Limestone Bridge.

The caverns are named for a curious trick of nature, when the cave collapsed it left a 60ft (18m) limestone bridge spanning the entrance.

... The caverns are part of a cave system in what is called the Glen Rose Aquifer. And with all this extra rain the lower parts of the caverns are under more than 30ft (10m) of water, and all through the tour we had water literally pouring from the roof, while the walkways were like streams.

NATURAL BRIDGE CAVERNS, Texas.



Looking down from the Mount of the Landlords. Snorkelling anyone?

The little circle of light on the left you can see in the above picture is one of the pathway lights floating away, the maintenance people have a bit of work to do when it all dries out. This is the actual top surface of the aquifer that supplies the water for many of the towns in this area of Texas. In the same chamber hanging from the roof is the Chandelier. See photo below.



The Chandelier from the Mount of the Landlords.

The tour started from the end and only went as far as this chamber which was completely full of water; the amazing thing was the sheer volume and noise of the water running through this cave, absolutely fantastic.

I know some of these are not in order and it they don't really convey the size of Natural Bridge Caverns, which is partly the result of having to be herded along as a tourist, trying not to get the camera and myself soaked. The sheer size and the fact that the cave is so very much alive, everywhere you go something is being created. It is quite amazing how good the cave looks considering that it has been open since the 60's. If you get the chance to visit Texas you should go and have a look at these caves, even just to see how the Texans do it.

See y'all round.



FUSSI MEMBERS JUST HANGING AROUND