

## **The Australian Speleological Federation Strategic Plan — 2019 to 2024**

STEVE MILNER PhD (Facilitator), ASF Executive

It has been some time since the ASF has actively shaped its strategy; however, what has been done by the ASF over the last 60 years has served the Federation well.

The ASF was inaugurated in 1956 with a purpose to 'to act as an agency for the collection, preservation and publication of scientific, historical and other information relating to Speleology'. The ASF grew to accommodate the majority of caving clubs in Australia, brought together with biennial conferences and a national magazine.

Today, the ASF is the national body that represents the interests of 24 caving clubs, with over 950 members throughout Australia, and represents Australia on the International Union of Speleology.

ASF Inc. is declared as an Environmental Organisation, registered by the Department of the Environment and Energy in Canberra, with the primary objective of protecting the cave and karst environment of Australia.

In the 1990s some strategic planning work was done by the ASF to evaluate the changing environment and its relevance to the organisation, but the external environment is constantly changing, including but limited to:

- membership demographics (aging);
- burgeoning interests of scientists (wider disciplines);
- sustainable development (impact on karst environment);
- challenges in access (land management);
- respect of indigenous peoples (protection of cultural values), and
- technological changes (social media and communications).

The ASF Executive has implemented a strategic review which will culminate in the issue of a strategic plan. By the time of the conference, the draft plan will have been put to member clubs for comment. This facilitated workshop is an opportunity for individuals and club representatives to learn more and to discuss it further.

What is a Strategic Plan? A strategic plan outlines where an organization wants to be, typically over a fixed period, and defines how it is going to get there. The foundation of an organisation's strategic plan is its vision and its values, and the plan should always tie back to these.

A good strategic plan (either through a document or a collaborative strategic planning process) will spell out the goals everyone in the organization is seeking to achieve. From there, it will identify the action steps necessary to achieve each goal.

The final draft Strategic Plan will be put to the Council General Meeting for ratification.



## Australian Speleological Federation

### Proposed Strategic Plan

2019 - 2024

### What is a strategic plan?

- It is a document that outlines where an organization wants to be over a fixed period, and defines how one is going to get there.
- The strategic plan will spell out the goals everyone in the organization is seeking to achieve;
- It will identify the action steps necessary to achieve each goal; and
- It will be used to communicate and align activities with the vision.
- It is not a management plan *per se* ... these will be developed following the Strategic Plan

### Methodology



STEP	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMING
1	Undertake workshops to develop a strategic plan	ASF Executive	Workshop 1
2	Look inwards (including a SWOT analysis), identify what the organisation is, and what it is not	ASF Executive	Workshop 1
3	Look outwards (including a PESTEL Analysis), identify current issues, systemic issues, and key drivers	ASF Executive	Workshop 1
4	Develop an inspirational vision	ASF Executive	Workshop 1
5	Identify far-reaching goals that effectively serve the caving community and related stakeholders	ASF Executive	Workshop 1
6	Incorporate the vision and goals into the draft strategic plan	ASF Executive	Workshop 1
7	Develop specific objectives and priorities	ASF Executive	Workshop 2
8	Engage members and other stakeholders	Members	31 <sup>st</sup> ASF Conf.
9	Take on board findings, refine the plan and objectives	ASF Executive	TBA
10	ASF Council ratifies the Strategic Plan	ASF Council	TBA

### Why now?

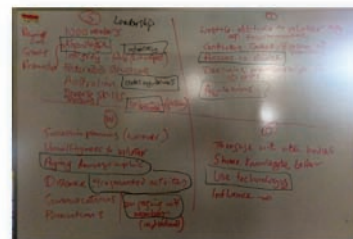
- To be relevant, active strategic development is required
- Today, in 2018, the ASF is the national body that represents:
  - 24 caving clubs
  - over 800 individuals
  - Australia on the International Union of Speleology.
- The ASF Executive has prepared the strategic plan document for:
  - ratification of the Strategic Vision and Values;
  - ratification of the Guiding Principles; and
  - ratification of the Actions.

## Assumptions

1. The ASF's customers are people, not just organisations.
2. There is a perceived lack of value in being a member of the ASF.
3. The third assumption is that in order to become a relevant and sustainable organisation, the ASF should be managed as a professional way, and source reliable funds in order to implement its activities.
4. The reliance on volunteers in an aging demographic presents significant risks to the Federation.

## SWOT Analysis

<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership</li> <li>• Knowledge</li> <li>• Advocacy</li> <li>• Codes and Guidelines</li> <li>• Dedication and Purpose</li> </ul>	<b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to Karst</li> <li>• Regulations</li> </ul>
<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aging Demographic</li> <li>• Fragmented Activities</li> <li>• Engaging with Members</li> <li>• Reduced Exploration</li> </ul>	<b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Technology</li> </ul>



## PESTELED Analysis

The purpose of the PESTLED analysis is to identify current issues, systemic issues, and key external drivers.

Political	Volunteer, NGO ; development of sensitive areas
Economic	Tax exemption status ;
Societal	Privileged access ; conflict with other interests
Technological	Impact ? ++
Environment	Regulation of access , finite ; competing with other environmental organisations
Legal	Liability , Incorp. Bodies Legislation ; costs
Demographic	Time poor... Lack of diversity in membership

## Top Issues / Challenges / Opportunities

- Barriers to membership limit diversity
- Complex communication channels
- Access to knowledge and information
- Integration of speleological-related research
- Capitalisation of guidelines, training and education
- Requirement for proactive advocacy
- Raise organisational visibility
- Diversify income to fund activities
- Improve organisational efficiencies



## Vision and Values

To be the lead national body for karst conservation and speleology in Australia; and to represent the interests of Australian cavers and speleologists at all levels in the community.

The Australian Speleological Federation organisational values are that:

- We are dedicated to safeguard and protect the cave and karst environment;
- We strive to bring together and represent those interested in caves and karst in Australia;
- We share knowledge; and
- We foster speleology in all of its aspects.

## Strategic Objectives

There are five keys areas which require attention:

1. Membership
2. Knowledge
3. Education
4. Influence
5. Financial

These should be underpinned by good governance, risk management, and effective delivery of activities.

### Australian Speleological Federation – Guiding Principles

safeguard and protect		bring together and represent		share knowledge	foster speleology
1 Membership	Grow Membership Focus on Individuals Optimise Member Engagement	2 Knowledge	Improve Access Exchange Knowledge Manage Intellectual Property Catalogue Library Stimulate Research	3 Education	Training Guidelines Codes of Conduct Standards and Certification
4 Influence	Be the Authoritative Voice for Caves and Karst	Enable Social Networks	Grow Strategic Alliances	Maximise Brand Recognition	
5 Financial	Generate Sustainable Surplus	Leverage Alternate Funding Sources	Build Intangible Value		

### Good Governance and Risk Management

### Streamline Activities to Deliver Strategic Objectives

*Vision: To be the lead national body for karst conservation and speleology in Australia; and to represent the interests of Australian cavers and speleologists at all levels in the community.*



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## Membership – Entry Requirements

**ISSUE:** Barriers to membership limit diversity

**ACTION (1):** Convey to the Council the need to alter membership requirements to accommodate greater diversity in membership.



## Membership – Engagement and Comms

**ISSUE:** Complex communication channels.

**ACTION (2):** Diversify and coordinate communication channels to suit a wide range of styles; and engage a volunteer communications specialist from the wider membership.



**PRIORITY**

## Knowledge – Sharing Info & IP Mgmt

**ISSUE:** Access to knowledge and information.

**ACTION (3):** Communicate what information is available to members and how to access this; promote two-way exchanges of information.



**ACTION (4):** Ensure ready access to potentially sensitive cave and karst information for *bone fide* persons.



**ACTION (5):** Resolve perceived intellectual property and copyright issues and develop strategies to better share information digitally.

**PRIORITY**



**ISSUE:** Access to knowledge and information.

**ACTION (6):** Issue an intellectual property management policy.

**ACTION (7):** Complete the cataloguing of the ASF library and make the library fully accessible to members.



## Knowledge – Promoting Research

**ISSUE:** Integration of speleological-related research.

**ACTION (8):** Develop and approve a strategic integration plan to strengthen ASF's role in furthering karst knowledge.



**PRIORITY**

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## Education

**ISSUE:** Capitalisation of guidelines, training and education.

**ACTION (9):** Consult with members and develop and issue a training and education policy.

**ACTION (10):** Develop and approve a standards development business plan.



## Influence – Advocacy

**ISSUE:** Requirement for proactive advocacy.

**ACTION (11):** Develop a 5-year proactive advocacy plan to reduce threats to the Australian cave and karst environment by 2019 AGM.

**PRIORITY**

**ACTION (12):** Appoint an interim volunteer spokesperson who is capable of lobbying, effective immediately.

**ACTION (13):** Build a strategic network of related organisations.

**ISSUE:** Requirement for proactive advocacy.

**ACTION (14):** Promote ASF expertise in cave and karst conservation to Govt. departments and lobby for participation as a key stakeholder on management committees.

**ACTION (15):** Raise the profile of ASF as key stakeholder and represent both members and the cave and karst environment.



## Influence – Visibility

**ISSUE:** Raise organisational visibility.

**ACTION (16):** Review the effectiveness of the brand, then develop and approve an ASF Marketing and Stakeholder Management Plan to maximise brand recognition.



## Financial – Funding

**ISSUE:** Diversify income to fund activities.

**ACTION (17):** Develop and approve an ASF Business Plan, including how the plan will be implemented.



**PRIORITY**



## Organisational Efficiencies

**ISSUE:** Improve organisational efficiencies.

**ACTION (18):** Review and complete an organisational review by the 2020 AGM.

**ACTION (19):** Undertake baseline member satisfaction survey.



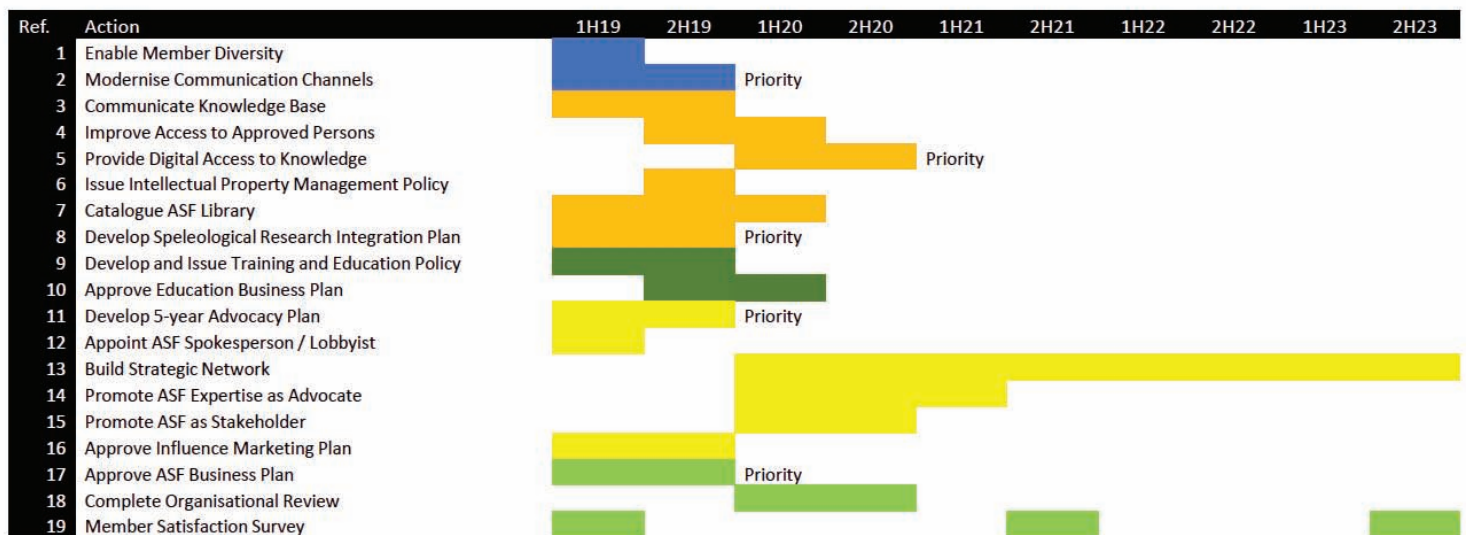
## Priorities

The top priorities, which are the key drivers for the success of this strategic plan include the following:

- Improve communication with members (Action #2)
- Provide digital access to knowledge (Action #5)
- Develop a speleological research integration plan (Action #8)
- Develop a 5-year advocacy plan (Action #11)
- Approve the ASF Business Plan (Action #17)

**PRIORITY**

## Timelines



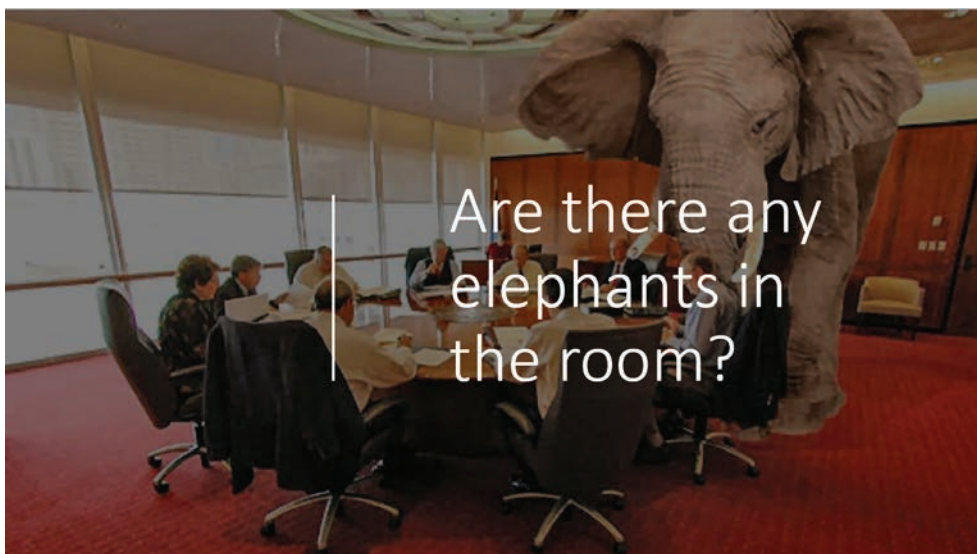
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## Feedback

- Who will coordinate / implement / drive the delivery of actions?
- What role does ASF have in promoting and evaluating caving competency?
- Communications are ok.
- It needs more meat [on the bones of the Strategic Plan].
- It's about time we had a plan.

## Success Factors (Challenges)

- Commit to the Strategic Plan
- Sense of urgency
- Find resources (people effort)
- Professional input
- Delegate authority to ASF Exec to act (e.g. approve plans)
- More frequent ASF Executive Meetings
- Coordination and integration of activities
- Commitment to a budget (to bring people together, professional fees)



## Where to from here?

- Ratification of:
  - Strategic Vision and Values; Guiding Principles; and Actions.
- Address success factors (challenges)
- Start work on the priorities immediately
  - Communications (Action #2) ... quick wins possible
  - ASF Business Plan (Action #17), which brings the following together
    - Advocacy Plan (Action #11)
    - Research Integration Plan (Action #8)
  - IP Management (Action #5) ... long term