

Congratulations to cave volunteers

CAVERS came to the aid of the Department's Blackwood Caves team by helping them carry a pre-constructed viewing platform into the Calgardup Cave in the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park.

Blackwood Parks and Visitor Services Leader Neil Taylor said the enormous task of moving the platform, required volunteers who understood the fragile nature of caves.

"It was really important that the people working on this project were alert to the dangers and the fragility of caves in order to minimise the possible damage," Neil said.

The Department's Blackwood Caves Guide Tracey Robbins invited two caving clubs with their specialist knowledge and equipment to help.

"The local caving group Cavers Leeuwin Inc (CLINC) and the Speleological Research Group (SRG) from Perth happily assisted," Neil said.

"Getting help from the two caving clubs was actually much easier than the task itself."

Neil said the size and weight of the objects the groups moved made the task extremely challenging.

"The viewing platform was 4.5 metres in diameter and was made from stainless steel and recycled plastic," Neil said.

"It has been estimated that the platform weighed 1500kgs and the numerous fixing bolts and batten screws were all 316 grade stainless steel.

"To make the exercise even harder, we had to carry the materials and tools down 212 steps and negotiate 20 metres of low ceiling."

The local CLINC members carried all the materials into the cave after work on a Friday evening and the specialist construction crew from SRG arrived on the Saturday to reconstruct the platform, put together jointly by private enterprise and the Department's work crew.

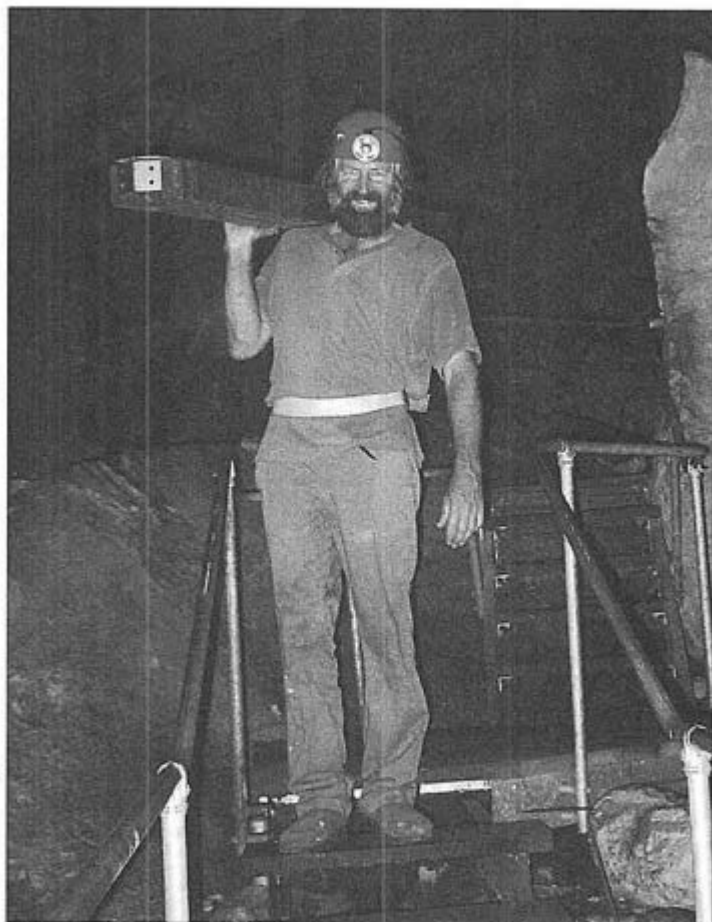
"There were very weary bodies leaving the cave at the end of both days," Neil said.

The initial cost of the viewing platform is higher than a conventional timber structure but the ongoing costs are minimal and it will not require annual oiling.

"The materials are likely to be used more often in our coastal recreation sites," Neil said.

Neil said Anne Wood, her staff and all the volunteers are to be congratulated for doing an excellent job.

"The speleological clubs of Western Australia continue to do a fantas-



National Park ranger Rob Klok carries a piece of the platform down the 212 steps.

tic job in supporting the Department manage the karst areas in the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park and throughout other karst areas in the state," Neil said.

"Their support is thoroughly appreciated."



Rob Kholte

(AIC - Leeum Nationaliste National
Park)

Carrying a piece of the platform
down one of the 212
Steps.