



# **Rob Stokes MP**

**Minister for the Environment**  
**Minister for Heritage**  
**Minister for the Central Coast**  
Assistant Minister for Planning

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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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Wednesday, July 9

### **NEW HAND RAIL LEADS THE WAY FOR JENOLAN CAVES VISITORS**

Environment and Heritage Minister Rob Stokes has visited the Jenolan Caves to inspect first-hand works currently underway to replace almost a kilometre of old galvanised steel hand railings within the caves system with non-reactive stainless steel to provide double the benefits to the area's environment.

Rob Stokes said the new non-reactive stainless steel railings would eliminate the impacts the old galvanised steel has on the cave's biota by preventing the leaching of toxic chemicals and rust staining.

"The new stainless steel hand railings will not only protect the sensitive cave environment but will improve visitor safety and allow us to eliminate the ongoing costs of mitigating the impacts the old galvanised steel, and in some cases chicken wire, had on the caves system," Mr Stokes said.

"This will save in excess of \$700,000 in estimated cumulative costs over the next 10 years. Money that can now be spent on improving the area - benefiting both the environment and future visitors to these famous State heritage listed caves.

"The Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust (JCRT) has committed to redirecting the significant savings to a 10-year environmental offset program that will allow them to undertake valuable works such as bush regeneration and restoring degraded cave formations.

"The JCRT will undertake weed management in and around the cave's systems as well as look to install energy efficient lighting to reduce energy consumption and heat impacts on the cave formations."

The railing replacement project was funded by a \$743,000 Environmental Trust grant to the JCRT and I congratulate the JCRT who with assistance of the Environmental Trust has shown great foresight in their environmental planning

"Not only does the stainless steel railing address a pressing environmental issue at the caves but the non-reactive and non-corrosive nature of stainless steel means the structural integrity of the rail will remain intact for generations of cave visitors to use, while posing minimal impact to the environment."

Blue Mountains MP Roza Stage said that the State Heritage Listed cave system is a very important part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

"The Jenolan Caves' formations are unique to this area and are a stunning example of the why it is so important to protect and conserve our heritage for generations to come," Roza Sage said.

Bathurst MP Paul Toole said the Jenolan Caves was an important and significant tourist attraction for visitors travelling west of Sydney.

“I congratulate members of the Oberon community and the tremendous commitment they have shown. Their hard work ensures the beauty of our region can be shared and experienced by all visitors.”

The railing work is expected to be completed by the end of October and is consistent with the conservation management plan for the Reserve.