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MEDIA STATEMENT

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

19 July 1997

Funds for bilby-breeding program

The future for Western Australia's first surviving bilby bred in captivity, six-month-old Quirindi, looks bright with a \$14,500 grant to conserve this 'charismatic' endangered native animal.

Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes said Western Australia's effort in conserving the bilby (*Macrotis lagotis*) was nationally recognised by a funding grant from the Australian Conservation Foundation.

The grant was part of the funds raised from the sale of chocolate Easter bilbies through Coles Supermarkets for the 'Save the Bilby' Fund.

Mrs Edwardes said Quirindi was born and currently located at CALM's breeding program at Kanyana Native Fauna Rehabilitation Centre in Gooseberry Hill.

The Minister said the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) had undertaken a comprehensive conservation strategy to bring the bilby back from the brink of extinction.

"The bilby, or rabbit-eared bandicoot, is one of a number of threatened native species whose populations have almost been destroyed by introduced predators such as the European fox and feral cat," she said.

"Under the conservation initiative *Western Shield*, CALM aims to control the threat of introduced predators and reintroduce species such the chuditch, numbat and bilby into areas they once roamed before the introduction of foxes and cats.

"The establishment of captive breeding programs here at Kanyana and in Broome and are vital to the success of CALM's native animals recovery plans.

"Bilbies have been at Kanyana for nearly 12 months and several young have been produced including Quirindi - is Kanyana's youngest bilby at six-months old.

"Western barred bandicoots have also successfully been bred at Kanyana."

Mrs Edwardes said the \$14,500 would be used to maintain the bilby breeding populations at Broome, Shark Bay and Kanyana and to fund searches for wild populations for translocation.

She said the funds raised highlighted the commitment of the private sector, the wider community and Government agencies to native animal conservation.

"The cooperative effort and support of the ACF, Coles Supermarkets and the people who brought the chocolate Easter bilbies has greatly helped in facilitating CALM's plans to secure the long term future of the bilby."

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