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## MEDIA STATEMENT

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

23/4/97

### Bilby born in captive breeding program

The future for one of WA's threatened native species, the bilby, looks promising with the birth of a young bilby in a captive breeding program at Broome.

Environment Minister Cheryl Edwardes said the nine-week-old bilby was the first to be born in the Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) breeding program, which aimed to help secure the long-term future for the species.

"The bilby, or rabbit-eared bandicoot, is one of a number of threatened native species whose population has almost been destroyed by introduced predators," Mrs Edwardes said.

"Through the establishment of captive breeding programs and a breeding complex at Broome, we have been able to take positive steps to rectifying this decline."

The Minister said the breeding program, part of CALM's conservation project Western Shield, began in July last year with the capture of four male and two female bilbies from the Great Sandy Desert. A third female was acquired from the Jiggalong Mission in the Pilbara.

"The Broome complex currently houses three males and two females with a breeding pair also being relocated to Perth at Kanyana Native Fauna Rehabilitation Centre," she said.

"All breeding pairs have been successful, with the other two females also expecting young in the near future."

Mrs Edwardes said some of the young bilbies would be translocated to Peron Peninsula, where a bilby breeding complex was being built, for release into the wild as part of CALM's conservation plan Project Eden - a plan to turn the peninsula into a haven for rare native animals.

"The bilby breeding program is one of a number of breeding programs for threatened animals currently undertaken by CALM. Others include the malleefowl and the chuditch," she said.

"Through Western Shield, we aim to re-establish our native wildlife populations and reintroduce them to areas where they once roamed by controlling introduced predators such as the fox and feral cat."

The Minister said the breeding program had received a great deal of support and

assistance from the Broome Shire Council and Shell Australia.

"Shell Australia has been a great supporter of the program, both through a donation of \$6,000 for the capture program and for field assistance in locating bilby populations," she said.

"With this encouraging private sector and community support Broome's breeding program can only go from strength to strength."

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