

Australia in Walkabout

stage in November and gives visitors a diverse Australian animal, plant and landscape experience.

Kangaroos, Wombats, Emus, Koalas, Tasmanian Devil and Western Australia's animal emblem, the rare

Numbat, are just some of the animals that can be seen in 500 metres of pathways.

Stage three — the Australian Wetlands exhibit — features a huge enclosed aviary displaying rare and important wetland animals from Australia.

Bridges and boardwalks link different wetland habitats and give visitors the chance to see wetlands species without getting their feet wet.

In March 1998, this will be expanded to include a crocodile exhibit with full underwater viewing.

By mid 1998, these three exhibits will be linked together by the Australian Cultural Centre. It will highlight through art, dance and music the special links between indigenous people, the land, its plants and animals.

Perth Zoo's Director of Visitor Services, Allen Burtenshaw, says the Australian Walkabout is one of the most ambitious exhibit projects undertaken by an Australian zoo since Perth Zoo built the African Savannah, which opened in 1992.

"We are serious about providing quality and exciting animal experiences to our visitors," said Mr Burtenshaw.

"The Australian Walkabout experience is a world class concept and each stage is setting new standards for Zoo exhibits."

"We are not only aiming to be a popular local attraction, we've developed an outstanding international drawcard."

Native Species Breeding Programs at Perth Zoo

The release of Perth Zoo-bred Chuditch in 1997 marked an important milestone for the Zoo's Native Species Breeding Program.

As part of a detailed Chuditch recovery plan involving the Western Australian Department of Conservation and Land Management, Environment Australia, Perth Zoo and Alcoa, the release worked toward improving the Chuditch's conservation status.

The Perth Zoo Research Program took on a new profile in 1996 and 1997 under the direction of Dr Mark Bradley. The program, which bred 58 chuditch in 1997, centralised its work at the Zoo in South Perth.

"Nowadays, zoos are more often seen as conservation institutions," said Dr Bradley. "It's critical community perceptions are realised by the Zoo and real conservation contributions are made through scientific research and education."

Perth Zoo's strategy for research is the "virtual laboratory". This involved establishing a national research network with universities and CALM. The federally funded Marsupial Co-operative Research Centre is a significant contributor to the Zoo Research Program.

By using laboratory facilities at universities and other institutions, the Zoo has been better able to concentrate on its program's key research and education roles.

"Scientific resources are extremely valuable. It seemed sensible not to duplicate local laboratories, but to take advantage of breeding and research facilities at Perth Zoo. Here we also make the most of the opportunity to educate the 600,000 visits to Perth Zoo each year about endangered native species," said Director of Research Dr Bradley.

Currently, Perth Zoo is involved with a range of scientific research and conservation projects including breeding programs for Chuditch, Numbat, Greater Stick-nest Rats (Wopilkara), Shark Bay Mouse (Djoongari),



Chuditch and young

Southern Dibbler, Western Swamp Tortoise and the Lancelin Island Skink.

"Our breeding and education functions have both proved successful with a number of breeding firsts and the development of education and communication packages."

The Zoo's Native Species Breeding Program managed the first zoo mating and birth of Southern Dibblers recorded and also breed 8 numbats.

NATIVE SPECIES BREEDING PROGRAM

SPECIES	BIRTHS	RELEASES
NUMBAT	8	6
SHARK BAY MOUSE	104	30
CHUDITCH	53	21+15
DIBBLER	21	-
GREATER SNR	21	-

"Fortunately our corporate partners are also proving important players in work with endangered species.

"The continued support of the Numbat Breeding Program by McDonald's Family Restaurants and the significant contribution made to conservation education by the Lotteries Commission of Western Australia ensures that not only does research and breeding continue but the community is aware and understands the importance of conserving our native species."

"Our role is clear — we perform quality reproduction research, learn from it, share it with our colleagues and breed animals for eventual release into secure habitats," concluded Dr Bradley.