



03 July 2009

Three new Australian dinosaur species found in Western Queensland

WINTON: Premier Anna Bligh today announced the discovery of three new species of Australian dinosaur discovered in a prehistoric billabong in Western Queensland.

The Premier was in Winton to open stage one of the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History as part of the Queensland Government's Q150 celebrations.

The centre, has been a collaborative effort supported by \$500,000 Queensland Government's Q150 Legacy Infrastructure funding, \$500,000 from Winton Shire Council, \$42,000 from Desert Channels Queensland and \$58,000 from the Australian Age of Dinosaurs.

"The dinosaurs have been nicknamed after characters created by poet Banjo Paterson who is said to have written *Waltzing Matilda* in Winton in 1885," she said.

"Banjo (carnivorous theropod) and Matilda and Clancy (giant plant-eating sauropods) were found in a vast geological deposit near Winton that dates from 98-95 million years ago."

The creatures were unearthed during the State Government funded joint Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum and Queensland Museum digs in Western Queensland.

"The Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum and Queensland Museum have successfully partnered to uncover this greatest concentration of dinosaur bones ever found in Australia," Ms Bligh said.

"This State Government funded initiative has revealed to the world the first new sauropods to be named in Australia in over 75 years and the most complete carnivorous dinosaur skeleton ever found in our country."

The meat-eating *Australovenator wintonensis* (Banjo) has been coined Australia's answer to *Velociraptor* – which was brought to terrifying life by Stephen Spielberg in the *Jurassic Park* films.

"Banjo possessed similar speed, razor-sharp teeth and had three large slashing claws on each hand. This was a terrifying creature," said the Premier.

"The two plant-eating, four-legged sauropod species unveiled today are new types of titanosaurs – the largest animals ever to walk the earth."

Palaeontologists say that the *Diamantinasaurus matildae* (Matilda) was a solid and robust animal, filling a niche similar to the hippopotamus today.

The second new species, *Wintonotitan watti* (Clancy) represented a tall animal that may have been Australia's prehistoric answer to the giraffe.

“These discoveries are a major breakthrough in the scientific understanding of prehistoric life in Australia, and the potential for educational tourism through their permanent display at the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History in Winton, is enormous,” said the Premier.

Ms Bligh made the announcement as she opened stage one of the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History as part of the state’s Q150 celebrations.

“The construction of the first stage of the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History was funded by the State government with support from the community,” she said.

“This is an important milestone in the development of a world-class Australian natural history museum in a magnificent outback setting, which will also provide an economic boost to the area.

“The construction of this facility supported 14 jobs and will support three full time jobs in operation. It will also attract thousands of visitors who will stay, eat and drink in Winton Hotels.”

The Premier said the purpose-built facility will house the world’s largest collection of Australian dinosaur fossils.

“When the final stage of the three-stage project is complete in 2015, Queensland will boast an unrivalled natural history museum that tells the story of our prehistoric past with substantial display, education and research facilities,” she said.

“The potential of educational tourism for Winton and western Queensland from such a world-class institution will be significant.”

Australian Age of Dinosaurs Ltd Chairman David Elliott said the discovery of the dinosaurs was a great example of what can be achieved by everyday people who set out to do extraordinary things.

“With scientific support from the Queensland Museum, the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum has been able to unlock the mystery surrounding some of the fascinating dinosaurs that once roamed Australia,” Mr Elliott said.

“We have the fossils to prove it and the beginnings of what will become an iconic museum that Queensland and Australia can be proud of.

”This is Australia’s finest palaeontological moment and puts the country firmly on the dinosaur map,” he said.

The paper describing the new dinosaurs was published on-line today in PLoS ONE, the Public Library of Science’s new interactive open-access journal for scientific and medical research. The publication can be accessed at this link: <http://dx.plos.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0006190>

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Images will be available on the Australian Age of Dinosaurs website from 11am July 3
www.australianageofdinosaurs.com

Notes to Editors

About Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum

AAOD is a non-profit, grass-roots science initiative funded by entrepreneurial initiatives and philanthropy and largely powered by volunteers.

Operating since 2002, the AAOD Museum has already amassed the world's largest collection of Australian dinosaur fossils.

It is also the only place in Australia where individuals with no prior experience can become actively involved in the recovery and conservation of Australia's natural history on an everyday basis.

The AAOD Museum is a *bona fide* scientific collection that will allow future generations of scientists the opportunity to be involved in a new era of dinosaur discovery and offer the general public an opportunity to contribute directly to the conservation of their own natural heritage.

The new dinosaurs announced today are only the beginning. The AAOD Museum has literally tons of new dinosaur fossils awaiting preparation and many more fantastic new dinosaur sites are awaiting excavation.

If you love dinosaurs or prehistory and want a hands-on experience or want to see more of what Australia has to offer then visit AAOD online at www.australianageofdinosaurs.com or email info@australianageofdinosaurs.com

Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History

Stage 1: Staff quarters and a large building to house the dinosaur collection, fossil prep lab, temporary visitor facilities and related infrastructure has now opened as part of the Qld Government's Q150 Legacy Infrastructure Funding Program.

Stage 2: Due for completion in 2010/11, Stage 2 involves the construction of a reception and administration centre, and further site development. Funding for this stage has been allocated by the Federal Government under the Better Regions Funding Program.

Stage 3: The Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History is scheduled for completion in 2015 and will be a world class education and science institution with substantial display, education and research facilities.

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Queensland Museum, custodian of the state's natural and cultural heritage, is at the forefront of palaeontological research – working extensively on Australia's ancient reefs and rainforests, uncovering the long history of climate change and its influence on the Australian environment. www.qm.qld.gov.au