

Perth Zoo Master Plan 2004

A Plan that details Perth Zoo's 20 year development requirements



20/20

twenty twenty vision



PERTH ZOO

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Minister's Preface

A visit to Perth Zoo is an essential part of every childhood in this State – all West Australians value its role in the community. Because it is one of the world's best small zoos, it also draws regular visitors from interstate and overseas.

In recent years Perth Zoo has changed substantially. In keeping with modern animal management and husbandry the animal enclosures and practices are constantly being modified. The Zoo has taken on more active roles in community education, research, breeding of threatened and endangered species and conservation.

This Plan is a blue print that assists the Zoo into the future. It outlines areas where the Zoo can expand and improve its facilities to continue its profile as a world-class Zoo. The Plan's focus on sustainability in its planning and development is a model to other Government institutions.

I know that the Western Australian community will continue to be proud of its Zoo and the contribution that it makes to the community, in breeding of threatened species and more broadly to our understanding of the natural world.

In 2004-05 the Western Australian Government is supporting the first stage of the implementation of this Plan through the funding of a new Elephant exhibit. Government has also supported the Zoo's native species breeding initiatives and maintenance programs.

I commend Perth Zoo for its vision and with the support of the West Australian community look forward to its continued future successes.

Dr Judy Edwards MLA
Minister for the Environment

Contents



SECTION 1	Page
1. Introduction	1
2. A Strategic Approach to Master Plan Development	3
3. Creating a World's Best Small Zoo	4
4. Whole of Zoo Planning Issues	7

SECTION 2	Page
Proposed Zoo Upgrade and Development	11
5. Australian Walkabout	12
6. Asian Rainforest	19
7. African Savannah	25
8. Main Lake, Tropical Garden, Pavilion, World of Birds, Nocturnal House and Reptile Encounter	28
9. Main Lawn and Playground	30
10. Zoo Entrance	31
11. Café Precinct	32
12. Education and Conference Rooms	32
13. Environmental Management and Sustainability	33
14. Horticulture	33
15. Behind the Scenes Facilities	34
16. Summary Development Overview	36

APPENDIX 1	Page
Submissions Received	43

APPENDIX 2	Page
Table of Figures	48

FOOTNOTES	Page
	49

To maintain this high level of public support, Perth Zoo is faced with substantial challenges.



Figure 1

1 Introduction

...there is a ...defect in what many may perceive to be mainstream thinking about zoos ... that is that our visitors represent the ultimate target audience ...Here (zoos) is where science, captive breeding, reintroduction, and in-situ conservation play a role ...that is what zoos ... should be all about.¹



Perth Zoo holds an important place in Western Australia. Established in 1898, it is a significant site for families and for education and conservation work. For local Perth people and for intra-state, inter-state and international tourists, Perth Zoo is a memorable landmark. It displays native and exotic animal species in natural settings, providing conservation education and experience based tourism activities. It has lush and historic botanical species and provides a peaceful and reflective setting for family picnics and concerts.

How will Perth Zoo sustain its special place as a tourist and cultural landmark into the future?

Presently Perth Zoo is one of the most popular places in Western Australia. It is the most popular Zoo on a per capita basis in Australia.

In 2004, market research showed that 98% of Zoo visitors agreed that Perth Zoo held an important role in the community; 94% believed that Perth Zoo demonstrated a commitment to life on Earth and 89% believed that the Zoo demonstrated how people can have an effect on wildlife. In addition, 99% of visitors were satisfied with Perth Zoo's overall services and facilities².

To maintain this high level of public support, Perth Zoo is faced with substantial challenges. There is increasing competition to zoos from other venues, a high demand for new and exciting exhibitory, an imperative to develop scientific research on threatened species, a necessity to extend education programs, a requirement to ensure compliance and a need to develop commercially. There is also a requirement to upgrade some animal holding areas and ageing infrastructure. Perth Zoo is accordingly moving to position and resource itself for the future. We will do this through establishing sustainable environmental systems; facing our business competition; securing resources to develop and upgrade facilities and services, and importantly, consolidating ourselves as a modern zoo.

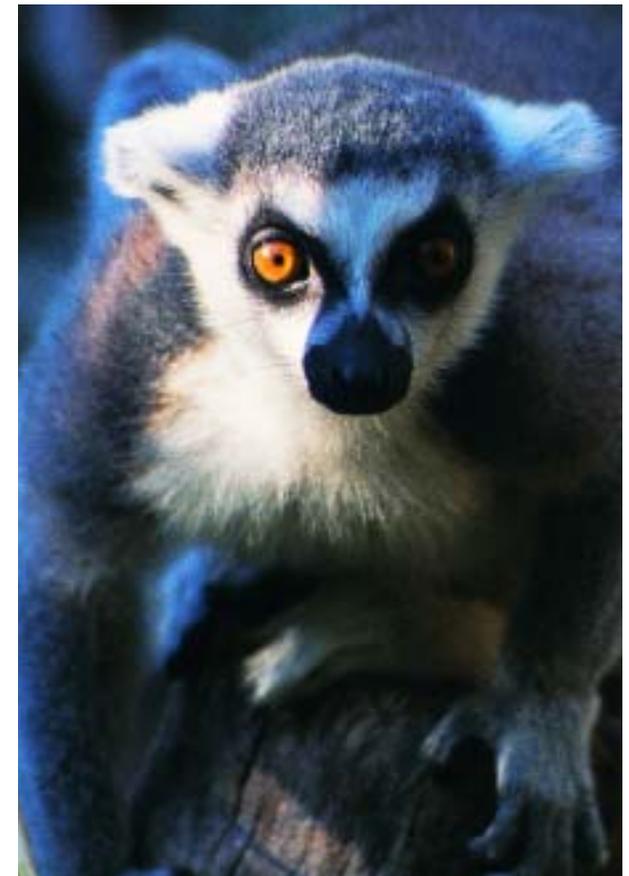


Figure 2

Perth Zoo aims to develop as one of the world's best small zoos.



Figure 3

2 A Strategic Approach to Master Plan Development



Above all, a visit to a zoo should be educational and even a bit inspiring. “A good zoo would leave you changed”... You’d leave the zoo not just with a better understanding of the complexity and interdependence of nature and the extraordinary diversity of natural forms, but also with a passion for finding ways to make the world more environmentally harmonious.³

Perth Zoo Master Plan is not just a physical plan, it addresses the core of why Perth Zoo exists and sets its future direction. The physical lay-out of a Zoo provides a framework for its purpose, reflecting its aims, mission and functions.

A central driver of the Zoo Master Plan is the Zoo’s strategic direction. Perth Zoo has clarified this and following the end of the period of the 1995-2000 Business Plan, Perth Zoo has developed a clearer vision for its future. A new Zoological Parks Authority Act 2001 has been enacted and for the first time Perth Zoo has developed all-of-Zoo operational plans reflecting work in all aspects of Zoo operations. At the strategic level, there has been agreement to concentrate on the Zoo’s role in conservation and in delivering high level research and education programs. These will increase knowledge of bio-diversity and our animal collection and enable protection and re-introduction of threatened species. It will also allow us to show-case best practice in environmental management. This reflects the Zoo’s commitment to excellence in species’ management and care, research, education and in the management and custodianship of the Zoo grounds.

Increasingly, and in line with developments globally through the World Zoo movement, Perth Zoo is not an ‘old-style’ zoo that is a recreational attraction that simply entertains. Perth Zoo provides varied recreational activities for families and other visitors. It is, however, a conservation, research and education agency. This is a conscious strategic direction. The expertise of Zoo staff, the conservation and environmental imperatives facing our world, and the position of Perth Zoo as one of several important sites in the city of Perth, places it well to take a lead as a conservation, research and learning institution. This does not mean that the Zoo will not operate in a commercial manner. Perth Zoo’s commercial activities have been developed to align and complement its strategic objectives. Using principles of environmental and business sustainability and show-casing its activities and expertise in research and breeding of threatened species, Perth Zoo aims to develop as one of the world’s best small zoos, leading the way in animal care, conservation work, community and school education programs, business practice and environmental management.

The intent of this Plan is to confirm this direction clearly and to set a future and potential development path for Perth Zoo.

Given that as our vision, the two questions that drive the development of this Plan are:

- Where does Perth Zoo need to improve to become one of the world’s best small zoos?
- How do we balance the many competing priorities to achieve a long-term and sustainable high quality Zoo for our visitors?

There has been substantial analysis of exhibit requirements, education, research focus and visitor service needs in order to identify what is required to be an even better zoo. However, our priority to achieve this is set within the context of financial and physical constraint. Amongst the attachments to this Plan are proposals that have been submitted in the Plan’s development but that in the Zoo’s consideration would not presently be achievable. This Plan sets out to be achievable and practical, recognising the constraints in both the commercial and public sector environments as well as acknowledging our obligations to the community for quality services and responsible management.



3 Creating a World's Best Small Zoo

In 2005, a world-class zoo will:

- *Immerse visitors into natural habitats, rich in biological diversity*
- *Provide multi-sensory experiences that allow visitors to see, hear, smell and touch*
- *Provide a unique contact with nature*
- *Be an ecological park that services as a zoo, aquarium, science centre, art museum and botanic garden*
- *Contribute to local and world-wide conservation programs and enable visitors to learn and see how the zoo interacts with in-situ conservation programming*
- *Be a place where animals are treasured and shared with the public, to be loved, appreciated and respected*
- *Inform visitors of the direct actions and lifestyle changes which they can make that would contribute to local and global conservation efforts.⁴*

What do we mean by aiming to be one of the world's best small zoos? Will zoos be 'out-of date' and unfashionable in 20 years? What is the future of zoos? These are vital areas for discussion in the World Zoo movement.

Zoos in the western world have moved rapidly from being simply display areas for animals to being centres of conservation education and research on animals, plants, environments and their inter-relationships. The major components of a modern zoo are outlined below.

- Western zoos are no longer just 'attractions'. They promote conservation education messages and actively publicise the importance of bio-diversity as central components of their exhibitory. These are given in a modern zoo. A modern zoo has strong stimulating interpretative signage about animals, plants and environment. The signage and displays are increasingly inter-active and technology based, linking to other information sources. A zoo web-site is a primary source of information for threatened species.
- Zoo research that directly increases knowledge of living things, particularly threatened species, is a vital and evolving component of a modern zoo. It is a modern zoo's responsibility to display, educate and to increase scientific knowledge about animal and plant life. Partnerships with research institutions involving shared resources and knowledge are central to a modern zoo.
- Animal enrichment and keeping standards for species are of the highest quality in a modern zoo. Enclosures for animals must demonstrate that they meet legal standards as well as enhance natural animal behaviours. The era of Big Cats in barred cages is past. Enclosures both on and off exhibit must be designed for safety, animal behavioural enrichment and foster visitor understanding and knowledge.
- Modern zoos have better enclosures, exhibit fewer species and have increased behavioural enrichment for animals. This includes keeping herds or groups of the same animal and facilitating breeding when it is in the interests of the health of the species and individual animals. This changes the environment of the zoo, particularly small zoos, with larger and less numbers of enclosures. It also accentuates the importance of off-display enclosure facilities and open range zoos as complementary zoo facilities.
- Captive zoo breeding may be the only option for future preservation of some species and in such situations zoos play a vital role in conservation. For others, with threatened habitats and introduced predators, captive breeding and release to the wild in conjunction with land management authorities is a vital role for zoos. Zoos are positioned well to take on these roles with their specialist expertise in veterinary medicine and husbandry skills.

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Figure 4

Section 1

- A strong push in the modern zoo movement has been to link captive breeding with support for in-situ projects and to conserve habitats of the threatened species. Given the world-wide shortage of funding for zoos this is becoming increasingly difficult. Zoos provide the support with in-kind contributions through staff exchanges, training opportunities and participating in fund-raising activities for in-situ projects.
- Visitors to zoos expect high standards of visitor services. Adequate and clear signage, rest areas, good ablution facilities and transport must accommodate diverse visitor needs, particularly visitors with disabilities, the aged and people visiting with young children.
- Increasingly, visitors are also expecting the charismatic 'flagship' species. A high quality modern zoo displays large species with a high profile for best conservation education results.
- A modern zoo operates in a competitive and commercial environment. The commercial activities must complement the core business of the zoo and promote its overall conservation focus.
- In presenting species for exhibit, modern zoos aim only to use captive-bred animals unless best practice species' management dictates otherwise. This is to discourage potential illegal trade in animals and disruption of wild populations. The captive breeding and related management world-wide (particularly of the genetic representation to ensure successful breeding outcomes) is extremely complex. An entire 'zoo system' exists, involving management of captive species regionally and internationally. Modern zoos are inextricably bound to the global effort through the World Zoo Movement and CITES⁵ to manage captive bred animals responsibly.

- Staff are required to be highly trained and flexible enough to provide Keeper talks, other interactions with visitors and also participate in research activities. Modern zoos need to respond to these requirements and deliver training that reflects the increased research focus, conservation education and presentation skills.
- Zoos must become living and practical examples of conservation agencies. Their policies and practices must reflect conservation values and principles.

It is realistic to position Perth Zoo for the future as one of the world's best small zoos. Already Perth Zoo has the foundation and key elements that make up a great modern zoo with strong research and education programs, highly skilled staff and a sound, well maintained animal collection. Perth Zoo's vision and mission fit well with the charter for modern zoos. The recommendations below identify the areas where the Zoo will be required to develop and grow.

Perth Zoo's membership of the World Zoo organisation is a strength of its operations. It provides a link for Zoo visitors to participate in programs and activities that make a difference in conservation.

- 3.1 Perth Zoo should increasingly highlight membership of the World Zoo organisation in its promotions, signage and negotiation for resources. Bona fide in-situ conservation projects and the World Zoo organisation's role should be show-cased through signage and interpretation where appropriate.
- 3.2 The Zoo's education and interpretation signage should be substantially upgraded to enable high inter-activity and greater inter-action for visitors. Specific higher level interpretation could include three dimensional signage, multi-media and linkages that detail the key issues of bio-diversity. Video link-up with Behind the Scenes activities and enclosures would also enhance understanding of animal management and behaviours.

3.3 Research into animals and plants in the Zoo collection and breeding for release into the wild should continue as a priority activity. This can be show-cased and staff supported to grow these areas of activity. Collaboration with universities and other zoos on research should be pursued as a priority.

3.4 Perth Zoo should continue to implement accepted and changing regulatory standards for captive animal management⁶ in exhibit size and design. It is acknowledged that the time frame of implementation is based on available resources and needs to be staged through priorities identified in this Plan.

It is only by way of funding partnerships that Perth Zoo will be able to develop and address issues of maintenance of its aged site. Of special concern are the animal holding areas requiring upgrades.

Further recommendations relating to the upgrade, replacement and enhancement of Zoo facilities and services are detailed in following sections.

4 Whole of Zoo Planning Issues

Strategic Business Plans, Animal Collection Plans, Botanical Plans, Heritage Management Plans, Operational Plans, Sustainability Plans, Environmental Management Plans,- a Master Plan must reflect our corporate intent and integrate our internal and external planning to ensure that we manage an excellent Zoo into the future.



In addition to staff input in developing this Plan, extensive research has been undertaken on the development of zoo Master Plans, on the World Zoo organisation and the development of zoos in relation to conservation programs.

A series of workshops were held with Zoo staff and volunteers (Docents) and submissions and representations from staff were received. A questionnaire seeking feedback was widely distributed⁷. Feedback on the development of the Plan was provided through staff meetings and on the Zoo IT systems. Summary copies of all submissions and of planning workshops were made available to all staff. Briefings to the Zoo Board were also made on a regular basis.

This Plan is essentially linked to the existing Perth Zoo site and takes full advantage of the Zoo's existing facilities, exhibits, animals and infrastructure, which form the existing Zoo fabric. Where suitable, the re-use and renovation of existing facilities, buildings and exhibits are recommended.

The following areas were considered as key in the development of a Perth Zoo Master Plan:

- Animal Welfare - Legal standards and requirements for the keeping of animals have been introduced at national and international levels. The highest standard of animal welfare is the priority in all Zoo operations. This will include Behind the Scenes facilities, off exhibit enclosures and breeding facilities.
 - Research - Perth Zoo has a strong conservation research orientation and a highly successful research based native species' breeding program. The consolidation, growth and broadening of the Zoo research activities are a priority for Perth Zoo.
 - Visitor Services - Perth Zoo is a very popular venue for visitors. A high quality of visitor services is required, including adequate facilities for the aged, disabled and people with young children. The role of Perth Zoo Docents in our visitor service and education activities is also vital to the success of our organisation.
 - Conservation Education - Community education about conservation and environmental sustainability is a core Zoo function. Enhancement of facilities and services that enhance and strengthen this responsibility is an important factor.
- Animal Collection - Perth Zoo operates on an Animal Collection Plan developed in conjunction with regional animal collection planning with major zoos in the Australasian region. The Zoo Animal Collection Plan has been maintained as a primary source in the development of this Master Plan.

- Commercial Issues - Perth Zoo maintains a strong business partnership approach with corporate sponsors, businesses and performing organisations. The Zoo operates in a commercial environment. The success of the Zoo's commercial arm in events, retail and contract management to optimise self-generated commercial return will continue in the life of this Plan.
- Botanical Estate and Heritage Matters - The heritage of the Zoo site is significant. This includes the substantial botanical site and significant plantings throughout the Zoo. Only remnants of built heritage remain. The conservation of the Zoo's heritage plantings, the remaining built heritage and the ambience of the Zoo as a significant botanical garden will be upheld.
- Environmental Management - In all Zoo operations, best practice environmental management practices will be in place. Infrastructure will require upgrading and replacing to ensure sound environmental practices.
- Off Exhibit Areas - Due to the nature of our business, Zoo staff are often required to work long hours over long periods of time. The Zoo is open every day of the year and has not closed a day in over 105 years. During summer the Zoo is often open for extended hours. Staff facilities need to be upgraded to reflect the specific requirements that arise in zoo keeping, such as animal hand rearing. There will also be facilities proposed that reflect the opportunities of partnerships with other zoos, research and teaching institutions.

An important consideration in Master Plan development is a projection of visitor admissions for the period under question. For the purpose of this Plan, estimates about competition to the Zoo, changing public opinions and population growth have been considered. A trend in zoos within the region and internationally has been the vital importance of new exhibitory, animal births and strong marketing to maintain and grow admission figures. Should resources for new animal exhibits be available within a five year period then the Zoo should be able to expect a maintenance and growth of admissions and revenue over the life of this Plan.

This Plan attempts to be a useful and realistic tool recognising the Zoo's economic and development constraints. The Plan is indicative only and the detail of exhibit design and integration with existing facilities and exhibits will require further detail.⁸

Aside from an analysis of each area of the zoo which follows, the following all-of-Zoo priority planning issues have been identified.

- There has been ongoing interest in acquisition of Perth Zoo's site as a commercial or residential development site. The location and convenience of the existing site are strong reasons for the success of the Zoo. The site is now a place of important heritage value, as a central landmark in South Perth and Perth more broadly. The site is sufficient at 19.5 hectares to maintain a strong small zoo collection and to fulfil its mission.⁹ Given expected animal management requirements and projected population growth, an additional larger country property may be necessary within 10 years, for operation within a 20-year period.

- The Zoo site also has a number of heritage remnants. These should be accommodated into the new Zoo fabric. The Zoo has beautiful gardens and good signage. Improvements are greatly needed in inter-active interpretative signage, to remain competitive and to meet visitor demands. Immersion, the use of a re-created environment, such as in the Savannah or Wetlands, is a successful approach that will be continued. However, interpretation could be enhanced through discrete information 'hubs' that provide easily understood high level information on the natural world, research activities that occur in the Zoo and issues that relate to animal habitat protection. Inter-active signage using high-level information technology can be incorporated.
- Perth Zoo already has a shortage of suitable enclosures to hold animals off exhibit, to allow for transactions, quarantine, breeding and appropriate management. This requires urgent attention.
- High level environmental management is a high priority for the Zoo and this will continue. The Zoo has a keen interest to be sustainable in its environmental management programs. A Sustainable Management Plan developed in 2001 provides a useful planning tool for implementation and will be continually addressed.
- High impact Zoo exhibitory will be necessary to maintain competitiveness and visitor impact. It is planned that large species, such as Elephant, Gorilla, Orang-utan and Crocodile will be displayed in state of the art enclosures that present the animals in the best immersion experience for visitors.



- The public areas of the Zoo are becoming run down. New toilet facilities which accommodate facilities for the aged, disabled and young families are required. Seating and rest areas are also required. The eating facilities and cafes all require replacement.
- Behind the Scenes in the Zoo there are also increasing demands to upgrade off-exhibit enclosures and staff facilities. Perimeter fencing around the Zoo urgently needs replacement and the nine gates must be rationalised as a priority to improve security management into the future. New fencing is also necessary to ensure the security of animals in open exhibits.¹⁰
- The Zoo has been operating on a non-sustainable business footing in recent years. The Zoo has a high debt profile which resulted from a period when the zoo was required to borrow to offset the lack of any capital funding to maintain or build new exhibits and facilities. Operating costs are also rising in an environment of increasing competition. There has been some recent additional funding from Government and modest improvements in the Zoo's own commercial returns, however the business basis requires further support. The Zoo will allocate resources to the commercial activities consistent with its mission to enable business growth that will support wider Zoo operations.

In summary, it is recommended that:

- 4.1 Perth Zoo should remain on its existing site and be further developed as a peak tourist and visitor experience, with high-level conservation education experiences.
- 4.2 Within the period of this Plan, the State Government should consider a site for a complementary country or 'open range zoo'. This would enable accommodation of open range animals as required over time, and would enable growth of research, learning and tourist facilities in the medium term.
- 4.3 Off-exhibit multi-purpose animal enclosures should be constructed throughout the Zoo to enable breeding research and provide off-exhibit times for more comprehensively-based animal management.
- 4.4 The Zoo should be used as a centre for public education of sustainability principles, with the construction of water recycling facilities, water treatment plants - to become a model for the public in best practice environmental management.
- 4.5 There should be an upgrade of visitor amenities throughout the Zoo. Toilet facilities require attention. While functional, they do not provide modern services for disabled, the elderly or parents with young children. Rest areas throughout the Zoo need to be identified with increased seating and shaded areas. Opportunities for creche, child care and child holiday care facilities could be accommodated as commercial opportunities as a part of the upgrade of these facilities.
- 4.6 Perth Zoo security requirements should be given priority with new perimeter fencing and associated security lighting, rationalisation of the number of gates and introduction of other security measures.
- 4.7 The business and commercial areas of the Zoo should be sufficiently resourced to enable a regular and assured commercial return, with performance facilities, upgraded conference facilities and provision for a commercially viable special purpose function centre.

This Plan attempts to be a useful and realistic tool recognising the Zoo's economic and development constraints.



Figure 6