



David Elliott is looking forward to the next stage of the Australian Age of Dinosaurs at Winton.



Capturing the images of Outback Queensland at the Australian Age of Dinosaurs.



Meet the dinosaurs who

■ ERLE LEVEY

NOTHING is more important than understanding how our Earth works. And to do that we need to understand where it's been.

David Elliott knew two things when he saw a funny bone in a paddock in 1999, the femur of a dinosaur.

Being a third generation sheep and cattle farmer from the Winton area, he knew the soil. And he knew he had found something big, in more ways than simply the size of the bones.

"We have been here for a matter of seconds of time in the grand scheme of the universe," he says, looking toward a dramatic red sunset over the western plains.

"The greatest thing we could do for the community is show them off."

Australia needs its own natural history museum, he maintains.

"The states have their museums but they do not have one that stretches from the birth of this continent.

"Collecting fossils tells the story of Australia ... children can come here and see how our country has evolved."

The Australian Age of Dinosaurs at Winton tells

the story of Australia. From 100 million years ago when dinosaurs roamed on the edge of what was a giant inland sea.

The museum is on top of the Jump-Up site, 1801ha of freehold land about 12km south of Winton. It is predominantly a 75m high mesa that provides a natural flat-top plateau 7km long and 2km wide, a wilderness area surrounded by steep cliffs, massive boulders and deep gorges.

Walking trails, stunning

views, and an abundance of natural flora and fauna make it an outstanding destination in itself.

But this evening we are standing on top of the cliffs, looking toward the vision David has for the expansion of the museum.

People are voting with their feet by showing their interest in the facility, he says. And last year saw 27,000 visitors to the site that is about 11km off the highway.

The Australian Age of

Dinosaurs was formed at Winton following a public meeting in 2002. Since that time dinosaur digs, primarily in collaboration with the Queensland Museum, have led to the discovery and recovery of what is now the largest collection of Australian dinosaur fossils.

To complement the discovery program Australia's largest fossil preparation facility has operated since July 2006.

"It is growing so fast that

sometimes it scares me," he says. "We had 370 (visitors) on one morning of an outback festival.

"It's authentic. People who come here have a fantastic experience and tell their friends about it."

Such is the popularity of the museum that a \$30 million stage 3 is in the planning and preparation stage.

The first visible steps toward the dream include 10 life-size bronze dinosaurs, all created using as a guide



Australia's largest fossil preparation facility has operated since July 2006 at the Age of Dinosaurs Museum.



The vision splendid ... looking north across the endless plains of Western Queensland from the clifftops at the Age of Dinosaurs.