

Australian Age of
Dinosaurs

museum
newsletter

June 2020, Issue 34

Responding to the new normal.

After three months the Museum
is preparing to **reopen**.

NEWS FROM THE JUMP-UP

WINTON SHIRE COUNCIL VISIT THE MUSEUM

On 29 May the Museum received a visit from the Winton Shire Council. Officials and councillors first toured the Fossil Preparation Laboratory to see the impromptu workstations set up during the Museum's COVID-19 closure and the progress the team has made preparing exhibition fossils. The group then headed over to the Museum's latest development, Stage 3.2 – the Dynamic Destination project, which comprises the Gondwana Stars Observatory, *March of the Titanosaurs*

exhibition and supporting infrastructure. Following completion of Stage 3.2 fundraising for Stage 3.3, the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History (the MNH main building), will commence. Stage 3.3 is the final development phase of the Museum and construction is expected to commence by the end of 2022. It was wonderful to host the group and to showcase the progress on capital works and exhibition projects made over the last three months.



L to R: Australian Age of Dinosaurs Executive Chairman, David Elliott (foreground), Cr Anne Seymour, Cr Sandy Gillies, Australian Age of Dinosaurs Limited Director Bruce Collins, Cr Cathy White, Winton Shire CEO Ricki Bruhn, Deputy Mayor Tina Elliott, Director of Community and Economic Development Jessica Greenway and Mayor Gavin Baskett. Photo John Elliott.



Supporting a lasting
legacy to Australia's
natural heritage.

THE AAOD LEGACY FUND

was established to build an investment portfolio that will provide ongoing and permanent income for operations and development of the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History.

Tax-deductible donations are a great way to contribute to a worthy cause. Every time you make a gift to the AAOD Legacy Fund, provided your donation is \$2 or more, you will most likely be able to claim the full amount of your charitable donation on your tax return (check with the ATO if you are unsure). The AAOD Legacy Fund relies on the generosity of Museum supporters to ensure a lasting legacy to Australia's natural heritage.

To donate, visit *make a donation* and select [AAOD Legacy Fund](#).

Responding to the new normal.

After three months the Museum
is preparing to **reopen.**

Just over three months ago the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared coronavirus COVID-19 a global pandemic.

Since this declaration severe restrictions on travel and social gatherings have been introduced and phrases such as “social distancing”, “the new normal” and “flattening the curve” have become part of our everyday lexicon. News feeds and reports have focused on tracking the spread, reporting global death tolls and cataloguing the closure of many well-known and local businesses. Mass unemployment, government funding packages, toilet paper shortages and border closures have meant a period of high stress and anxiety for many of us that we could not have imagined three months ago.

Closing the Museum

While the Museum Management Team (MMT) had been following government announcements closely for weeks leading up to the Museum's closure, it still came as shock when it was announced. On the evening of 24 March 2020 Prime Minister Scott Morrison addressed the nation and revealed that further social distancing measures were necessary. As Mr Morrison read through the list of non-essential businesses that would be required to shut down, to minimise the effect of COVID-19, four words made our stomachs drop: "museums and art galleries" had been included.

While the MMT had initially set a timeline of one week to shut down to ensure we could cushion the impact on our staff and visitors, the announcement changed everything. Since 5pm on 25 March the Museum and Dinosaur Stampede have been closed.

The abruptness of the closure was difficult to deal with for a number of reasons. Financially, as summer was over and we were entering our peak season, the closure resulted in many cancelled tickets, experiences, events, wholesale groups and accommodation. But the closure also raised major questions. Will the Museum

team still have jobs? Can we progress our ongoing and planned projects? Can the Museum survive without a peak season, let alone keep our staff employed?

Responding to change

During these days of upheaval the MMT met many times to discuss the best way forward. Initially, fear and anxiety plagued these discussions but, eventually, the MMT decided it wasn't enough to merely get through this experience. With no end date in sight the MMT decided that the only thing the Museum could control was its own reaction to the closure. So the MMT decided on ensuring two main objectives were put ahead of everything else: 1) looking after the well-being of the Museum team and 2) promoting positivity and connectedness during this time.

If we could sustain these objectives then, rather than helping to spread the fear and anxiety that had initially plagued the MMT (and no doubt others around Australia), we could help keep visitors and the Museum team focused on the future that exists after COVID-19.

The Museum team

Unfortunately, the Museum's planned winter recruitment of nine new staff





members was no longer possible. These new staff members, who had thankfully not arrived yet, took the news graciously and with understanding.

Our core Museum team consists of 20 staff including three Fossil Technicians involved in relocating the dinosaur trackway. In order to keep the Museum afloat and keep staff employed, the MMT began to devise a plan of employment working within Centrelink's guidelines. In this way the MMT hoped to continue to employ staff without reducing their benefits. However, it was with great relief that the JobKeeper Payment scheme was announced and we were able to offer far more than we had anticipated and keep the majority of core staff employed.

Once the anxiety surrounding employment and wages had dissipated, the MMT focused on ensuring the Museum team's safety and well-being was maintained.

Staying positive

The Laboratory was transformed into a COVID-19 safe area and many of the Museum team were taught how to prepare and restore a range of fossils for the future *Australia Through Time* exhibition. During this time some of the Museum team worked together to create training videos for the Museum's new training portal

– from customer service to laboratory inductions – while others embraced the idea of Facebook live sessions, preparing and researching their presentations on a variety of subjects such as 3D scanning, theropods, sauropods and children's books. Palaeontologists Dr Stephen Poropat and Adele Pentland even participated in the sessions. It certainly brought a sense of excitement to the team!

Jobs like organising and cleaning the store rooms, reupholstering the Noble Express Shuttle bus seats and learning new booking systems were also completed as the Museum team embraced the chance to catch up and to improve the experiences on offer at the Museum.

Preparing for the future

The Museum will reopen on 15 June and has prepared an indepth COVID-19 Safe Plan and completed the COVID-19 Clean checklist. In addition each team member has completed two online training units (through TAFE Australia and the Museum training portal) as well as many on-site training sessions to ensure we can reopen safely to the public. We are all still adjusting to the new normal but, from the entire team, thank you for your support and trust in the Museum over this time. We cannot wait to show you what we have been up to!





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A. The 2020 Museum team.

B. Education Co-ordinator Grace Elliott and her brother Billy demonstrate how to make your very own dinosaur dig.

C. Bec with the fully prepared *Diamantinasaurus* manus.

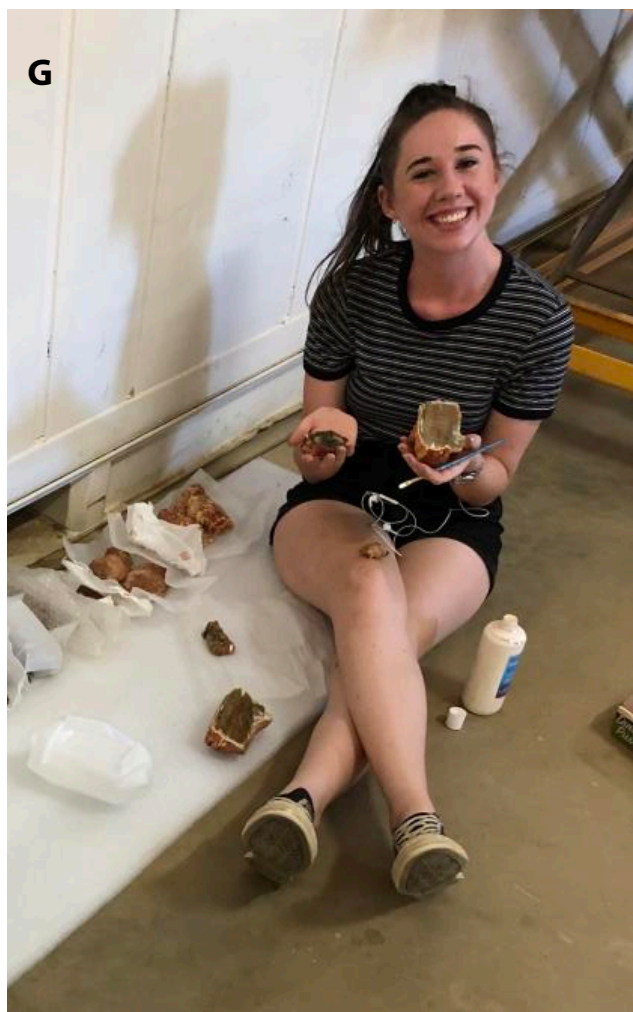
D. Jessie preparing a large slab of bivalves.

E. George, David and Tom working at the *March of the Titanosaurs* exhibition.

F. Adele with *Ferrodraco lentoni* during a live session on pterosaurs.

G. Sam organising and cataloguing some of the Museum's collection.

H. Di reupholstering the seats on the Noble Express Shuttle outside the Laboratory.



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[Trish Sloan]
Collection Manager

When the PM announced that all museums and art galleries would close on 26 March 2020 reality suddenly hit me. The hardest part of my job was to shut the gate and put a closed sign on the highway entrance to the Museum. I watched Outback Queensland become a region of ghost towns. Winton no longer had music playing in the street or people stopping to have a yarn. Instead, people walked faster with fear on their faces – it has been a strange time.

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I'm grateful that the Museum supported the whole team. The thought of standing down our passionate and dedicated staff was the one thing that kept me awake at night. Whoever created the JobKeeper Payment scheme – thank you! You saved us from losing our jobs and helped to keep us all positive throughout this whole ordeal.



[Kim Stoter]

Museum Services Supervisor

During the Museum's closure I have been learning the ins and outs of our new booking system. I have also used this time to focus on fine-tuning systems and processes around the Reception Centre.

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I was initially concerned about the Museum's closure as I thought we would all lose our jobs. Thankfully, the JobKeeper Payment scheme has prevented this. I was also fortunate to squeeze in my second knee surgery before private elective surgeries were cancelled. I have used this time to concentrate on my knee rehabilitation and to try out gardening – turns out my thumbs are greener than I thought!

Tour Guide/Dinosaur Stampede Caretaker

I have also been cutting and polishing specimens of fossilised and opalised forest floor, some corals and teredo (shipworm) burrows. In between the cutting and polishing I do some prepping of shells, puzzling and the occasional trip down memory lane... I mean to Dinosaur Stampede National Monument!

Tour Guide/Dinosaur Stampede Caretaker

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[Jacques Guy]

Tour Guide

Fortunately, I'm employed by a great company that strove to keep us all employed. It was also a great relief that the government provided funds to support us. I am so happy the Museum is able to keep ticking over, not only for myself and the business, but for Winton too.

Tour Guide

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REOPENING SCHEDULE

REOPENING
FROM
**15 JUNE
2020**



Dates	Australian Age of Dinosaurs	Dinosaur Stampede
15 June 2020 to 12 July 2020	<p><u>Ultimate Dinosaurs tour (3 hours)</u> Two tours a day, six days a week Morning tour: 9am to 12pm, 20 people per tour. Afternoon tour: 1pm to 4pm, 20 people per tour.</p> <p>Open Monday to Saturday (closed Sundays).</p> <p>Online bookings are essential and only EFTPOS transactions will be available in-store.</p> <p><i><u>Note</u> Customer contact information will be kept for a period of at least 28 days for the purposes of tracing any COVID-19 infections.</i></p>	Closed.
13 July 2020 to 31 July 2020*	<p><u>Ultimate Dinosaurs tour (3 hours)</u></p> <p>Hourly tours from 9am recommence.</p> <p>Open Monday to Saturday (closed Sundays).</p> <p>Online and in-store bookings are available and both cash and EFTPOS transactions will be available in-store.</p>	<p><u>Dinosaur Stampede tour (45 minutes)</u></p> <p>Tours at 9.30am, 11am and 2pm.</p> <p>Open Monday to Saturday (closed Sundays).</p> <p>Online and in-store bookings are available and both cash and EFTPOS transactions will be available in-store.</p>
From 1 August 2020^	Normal trading hours resume.	Normal trading hours resume.

JOINT PASSES

* The Winton Dinosaur Capital of Australia (WDCOA) VIP pass is available from 13 July, online and in-store.

^The Australia's Dinosaur Trail (ADT) pass is available from 1 August, online and in-store.

LABORATORY UPDATE

Since the Museum has been closed the team have been focused on preparing fossils set aside for the *Australia Through Time* exhibition. Laboratory workstations have been set up to meet social-distancing guidelines and to ensure everyone has their own space to prepare in.

The fossils are from sites around Queensland, including Stuart Oil Shale Mine near Gladstone, Chinaman Creek, Hughenden, Ilfracombe, Walsh River and Longreach.

The youngest fossils being prepared date to the Eocene (around 50 Mya). These are the fragile and, at times, very challenging turtle carapaces, bones and coprolites. Amongst the turtle remains, some amazing crocodile fossils have also been found, such as teeth and fragments of bone.

Slightly older fossils being prepared date to the Cretaceous period (around 110–115 Mya). These include large blocks of molluscs and ammonites from several sites around Queensland. The Walsh River specimens are by far the best preserved. Though the dense siltstone preserving the fossils has been challenging to remove because it has, or feels like, the same density as concrete.

A collection of Eocene turtle fossil fragments. After being prepared the fragments are then sorted before being puzzled back together.





Another large block from the Ilfracombe area (just east of Longreach) has hundreds of shells preserved in soft siltstone with a few ammonites scattered throughout. Also from the Cretaceous period, several pieces of petrified wood and forest floor have been cut and polished.

The oldest fossil that has been worked on during this time is dated to the Devonian period (around 300 Mya). The fossil is a stunning example of rugose coral, which has been polished in its natural form. This means that it didn't need to be cut or polished as it was naturally polished over time. These specimens came from Chinaman Creek in North Queensland.

The entire team have made the most of the Museum closure by learning about the different fossils that we find in Australia. Together we have managed to add over one thousand fossils to the *Australia Through Time* collection.



A. Preparation stations set up to conform with social-distancing guidelines.

B. Eocene turtle bone from Stuart Oil Shale Mine, Gladstone.

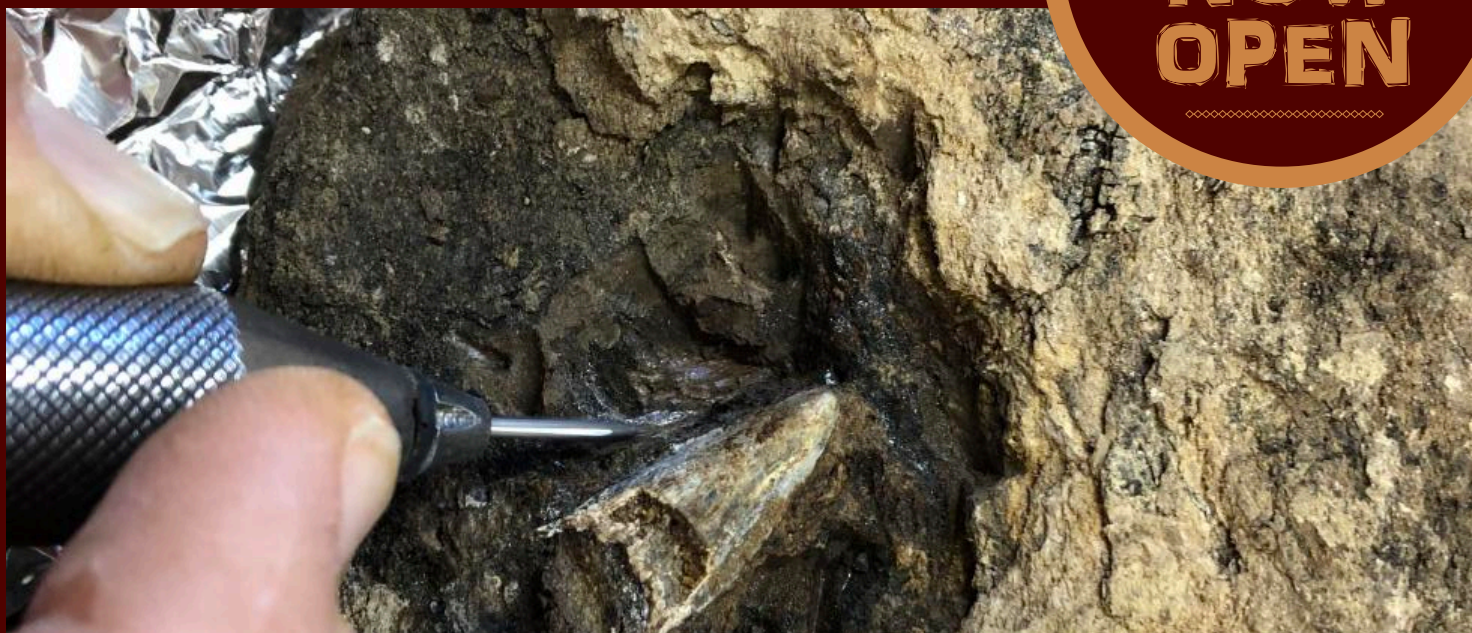
C. Devonian rugose coral naturally polished from Chinaman Creek, North Queensland.

D. Eocene turtle coprolite from Stuart Oil Shale Mine, Gladstone.

E. Cretaceous ammonites from a slab found at Walsh River, North Queensland.

PREP-A-DINO EXPERIENCES


BOOKINGS
FOR 2021 ARE
**NOW
OPEN**



It's time to start dreaming about and planning your 2021 holidays! Why not come to Outback Queensland and prepare some dinosaur fossils? We have a range of packages available or you can contact us directly to create your own experience!

Inclusions	1-day Prep-A-Dino experience plus Ultimate Dinosaur tour From \$124	3-day Prep-A-Dino experience plus Ultimate Dinosaur tour From \$254	5-day Prep-A-Dino experience plus Ultimate Dinosaur tour From \$384	11-day Prep-A-Dino experience plus Ultimate Dinosaur tour. From \$709
Prep-A-Dino induction	Yes, online	Yes, online	Yes, online	Yes, online
Prep-A-Dino experience	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ultimate Dinosaur tour (Laboratory, Collection Room and Dinosaur Canyon)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
1-year membership (includes a copy of the latest AAOD Journal)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accommodation	No	Yes Maloney Lodge only	Yes Maloney Lodge or van sites available	Yes Maloney Lodge or van sites available

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LABORATORY EXTENSION AND PIPELINE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

In early June the Museum's application for funding through the Building Better Regions (BBR) Fund was successful! The newly funded **Laboratory extension and pipeline development project** will supply reliable potable artesian water to the Museum's public and back-of-house facilities and meet the volume requirements of the planned Museum of Natural History (MNH) main building.

Pipeline development

Since the onset of prolonged drought conditions in late 2012 the dam has struggled to fill even once a year, meaning that the Museum's water supply is often dangerously close to failing. A supply of reliable potable artesian water to the Museum's public and back-of-house facilities would resolve this problem.

Laboratory extension

By extending the width of the Laboratory from 15m to 24m, an additional 270 square metres of storage space will be created. This will be enough to hold nine insulated shipping containers, five of which will be the containers currently restricting the Laboratory space, plus four additional containers to hold specimens currently being stored off site. As the Museum already has two extra containers located outside the building, only two more will need to be acquired.

Removing the five containers from the existing Laboratory space will create over 80sqm of open space, which will be enough to exhibit a selection of the *Australia Through Time* fossil specimens.

Project benefits

There are many social and economic benefits to the Laboratory extension and pipeline development project. These include:

- 2.96 FTE generated through indirect and direct jobs, during and following project completion

- three additional volunteer positions, following project completion
- improved quality of life by ensuring an adequate water supply, sanitation and hygiene at the Museum
- providing opportunities by creating an infrastructure development in a socially and economically disadvantaged area, thereby assisting to reverse a declining trend
- developing long-term sustainability by ensuring the Museum has a reliable, clean water source (regardless of drought) and helping to establish business viability through the shoulder and low seasons
- increasing resilience by building the Museum's capacity to prepare fossils for the proposed Museum of Natural History, thereby increasing the Museum's and the community's resilience to economic and environmental hardship
- working cooperatively with Winton Shire and the Remote Area Planning and Development board to achieve a joint benefit to the community
- developing meaningful partnerships by providing nearby organisations, such as the Winton Shooters Association (about 2km from Winton), with access to the proposed pipeline and
- improving service quality by improving the overall water quality and customer experiences at the Museum.

Timeline

The Museum will be striving to have all project works completed by 30 September 2021.

Building Better Regions Fund

The Building Better Regions Fund (BBRF) supports the Australian Government's commitment to create jobs, drive economic growth and build stronger regional communities into the future.

DARK-SKY WORLD RECORD ATTEMPT

Last year The Jump-Up, where the Australian Age of Dinosaurs is located in Winton, became Australia's first International Dark-Sky Sanctuary and Australia's second International Dark-Sky Place, after the Warrumbungle National Park in New South Wales.

An International Dark-Sky Sanctuary is an internationally designated area that is very remote, dark and whose conservation state is most fragile. Becoming an International Dark-Sky Sanctuary involved monitoring the quality of the skies above The Jump-Up over several years and collecting and analysing the data. The Museum was required to meet strict lighting guidelines and to maintain these guidelines into the future to protect our night skies. Becoming

an International Dark-Sky Sanctuary means the Museum has made a commitment to protect our dark skies for future generations.

How can you help protect the night?

Join us on 21 June 2020, in the largest online lesson on light pollution, to break a world record!

This is a great opportunity to learn about what you can do to help wildlife, the planet and yourself. Not only will you be making a difference, you'll be contributing to science as a science citizen. The event is hosted by the Australasian Dark Sky Alliance. Register on their website to participate in the online lesson. Together we can save the night!

Register now!

REGISTER 



WORLD RECORD LIGHT

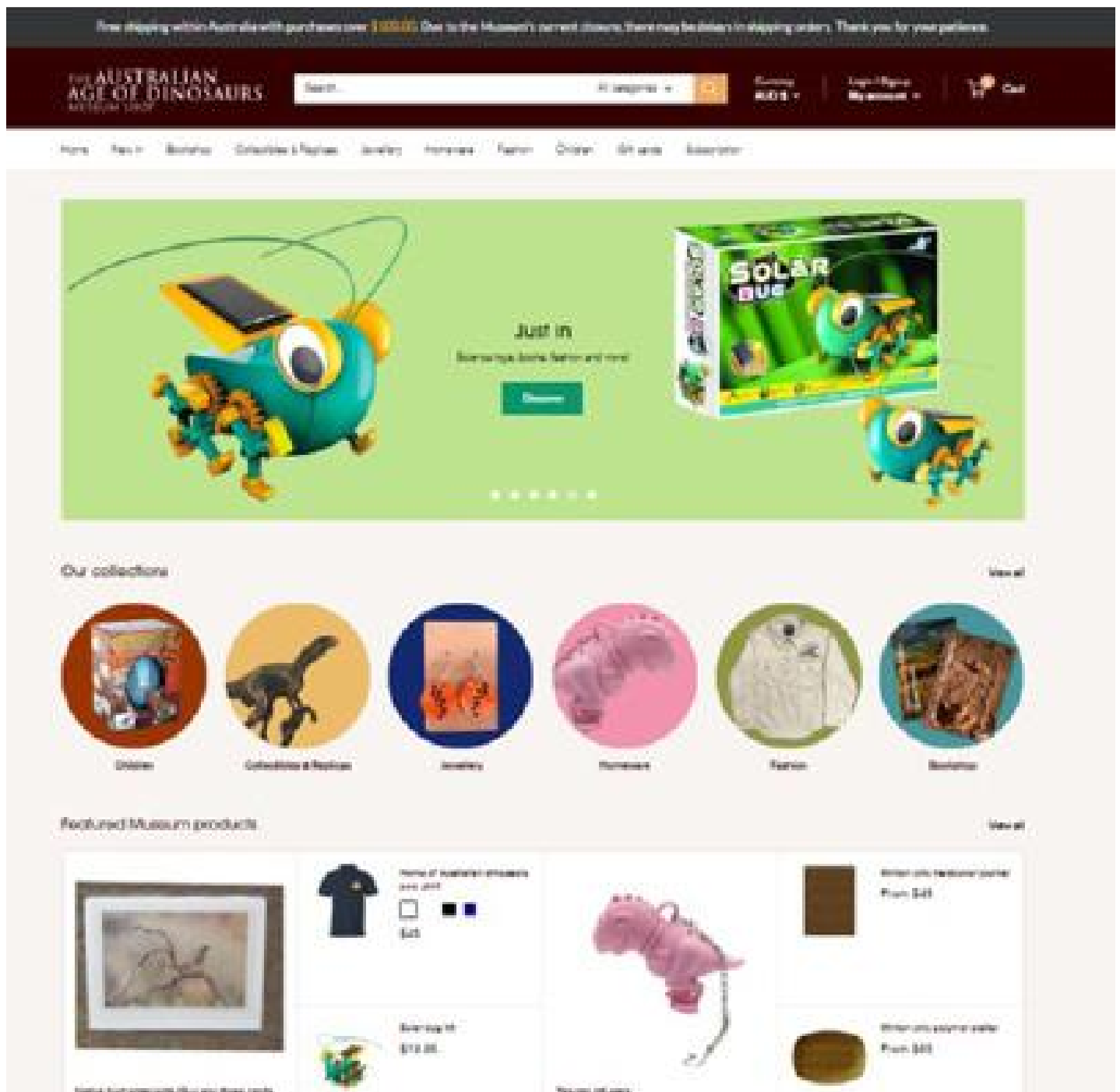
THE ONLINE MUSEUM SHOP

australianageofdinosaursmuseumshop.com

During the Museum's closure the online Museum Shop has been upgraded to a new platform to offer our customers a better experience and wider range of discounts. As a Museum member, you are entitled to 10% off selected products in the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum Shop.

Use the coupon code **10%_MEMBER_DISCOUNT_2020** at checkout on the Museum Shop page, on the Museum website, to secure your discount. This discount will updated annually.

Why not check it out?



UPDATE ON THE DYNAMIC DESTINATION PROJECT

Since being awarded a grant from the Growing Tourism Infrastructure (GTI) Fund in June to deliver the Dynamic Destination project, the Museum has been a centre of activity. The project consists of six main components, including the Gondwana Stars Observatory and *March of Titanosaurs* exhibition, which will become the cornerstone for future development work at Dinosaur Canyon and the construction of the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum of Natural History.

Construction work on the Dynamic Destination project kicked off in the heat of early January. While the Museum team applied a jet-black render over the meteorite-textured wall panels of the Gondwana Stars Observatory, the building crew from JT Cox Concreting set up over 40 large wall panels for concreting, ready for the new *March of Titanosaurs* exhibition. These concrete panels all needed to be coloured and textured to resemble The Jump-Up rock and the Museum's other

*Gondwana Stars Observatory and
March of the Titanosaurs exhibition.*







public buildings. With so much to do it wasn't until the end of February that they were all completed.

After waiting for 30 days for the concrete to fully harden, the building crew was back on site and, over the course of two weeks, all of the concrete panels were lifted into position with a 50-tonne mobile crane. This was a massive job and we were very relieved when it was finished. The new buildings look huge with their walls finally upright and the effect is truly amazing. In addition to the new buildings at Dinosaur Canyon, concrete wall panels were also erected ready for the Noble Express Shuttle bus station at Stage 2. The Noble Express Shuttle bus station also doubles as the Museum's new staff car shelter.

In the seven weeks since raising the walls a huge amount of work has been done. The steel roof structure has been erected on the *March of Titanosaurs* exhibition and the roof sheeting is nearly finished. Brad Badgery, who worked on Dinosaur Canyon Outpost in 2016, made time to come out with his brother David to get started on fitting the steel plate ceilings. This ceiling weighs over 20 tonnes, with each sheet weighing around 55kg so, they will definitely have very broad shoulders by the time they are finished! Their job has been made all the more difficult due to the fact that the roof is positioned directly over a 95-million-year-old dinosaur trackway. To reach most of the overhead structure they have had to be very strategic to ensure the integrity of the trackway.

*Gondwana Stars
Observatory.*



*Noble Express Shuttle
bus station under
construction alongside
the Amenities building.*







Two sauropods and several small ornithopods and coelurosaurs will be cast in bronze through the use of modern 'lost-plastic' casting technology. The above sauropod is 17m long and the bottom sauropod is 10m long. Once completed and on site the life-sized reconstructions will be mounted walking in mud (coloured concrete) in front of the **March of the Titanosaurs** exhibition as an interpreted diorama of the trackway within the building.



Running in tandem with the *March of Titanosaurs* building, the steel structure and roof over the Noble Express Shuttle bus station was erected in May and is now almost complete. Work has also commenced on the Gondwana Stars Observatory with the storeroom and access ramps nearing completion and the concrete decking underway. The Observatory deck is nearly 1.5m high and over 500 cubic metres of gravel has been carted and compacted to fill the void. Once the decking is complete there will be a huge amount of concrete rendering required – so there is still plenty left to do!

Last but not least, the two big bronze sauropods being cast at a foundry in Thailand are now finished and ready to be shipped to Australia. The life-sized bronze models are going to be positioned in front of the *March of Titanosaurs* exhibition and will look stunning walking along the edge of the cliff at Dinosaur Canyon. These bronze models are expected to be shipped to Australia in July. Follow the Museum's social media platforms (Facebook and Instagram) for updates as they occur.

PROGRESS ON THE SAUROPOD -----TRACKWAY



Although we lost a couple of weeks due to rain earlier this year, work has continued steadily on the trackway relocation project. Judy, Anna and Chris have put in a tremendous effort, working through the extreme heat of summer with many days over 40 degrees. The trackway is being moved one trailer load at a time and its relocation has been underway now for nearly two years. This has been a very slow and exacting job but the end product looks every bit as amazing in its new position as it did in its original location in the bottom of a creek west of Winton. Around 90% of the trackway has now been relocated to

Dinosaur Canyon and we are hoping to have the last bits in place by the end of September. In the meantime the trackway team are working around builders, scheduling their trackway pick-up trips out to the property with days when they need to vacate the site due to construction work being carried out overhead. Once the trackway has been completely relocated there will be many months of consolidation work required before it is ready for public exhibition, but at least the team now have a roof over their heads and the end is in sight.



Far left: Anna, Chris, Judy and Bruno (the kangaroo) are the trackway team.

Above: The dinosaur trackway is over 55m long. While the majority of the tracks have now been relocated to The Jump-Up there is plenty of puzzling, cleaning and consolidation left to do.

Left: Every fragmented rock is meticulously puzzled back together. This latex mould shows the remains of several coelurosaur footprints that have been preserved on the rockface. These details will help researchers understand the relationship between dinosaur species in the Winton region 95 million years ago.

Judy has been working on the trackway relocation project since it began in 2018. During most of the relocation Judy and the trackway team have faced extreme heat, wind, rain and flies but it is finally coming together.



IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP **CURRENT?**

While many members are up to date with their membership fees, to ensure you do not miss out on the next AAOD Journal and another year of quarterly newsletters, please check your membership status [here](#).

The future has never
looked **brighter**

Renew now

Help us to **preserve** Australia's unique natural history

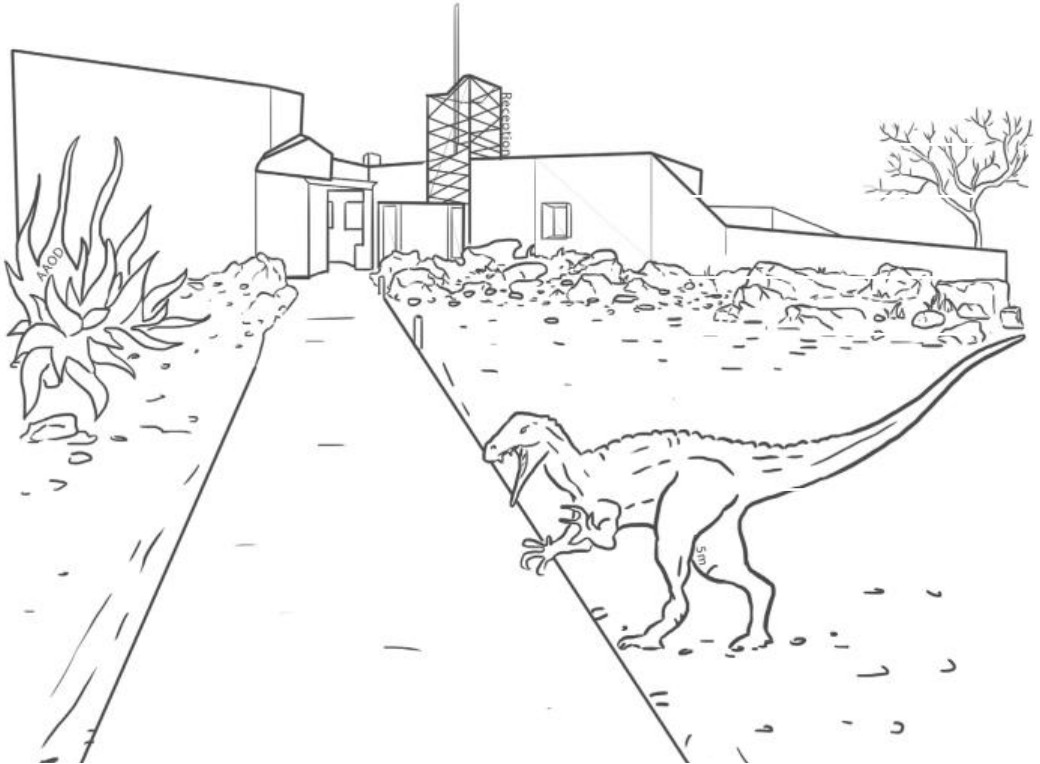
PALAEOPETE FUN



COLOURING-IN CHALLENGE

Can you find all the **orange** words hidden in the picture below? Shhh! One word is missing... Once you have found all the words it's time to **colour in!**

The **Reception** Centre was opened in 2012 and contains a shop, café and staff facilities as well as a fossil **holotype** room known as the Collection Room. A life-sized, **5m**-long bronze statue of *Australovenator* (**Banjo**) stands at the entrance to the Reception Centre. Digitally sculpted by **AAOD** palaeo-artist Travis Tischler.



Introducing photographer Karen Corkill's

NATIVE-BIRD NOTECARDS



This range of fine-art native-bird greeting cards features birds from Lark Quarry Conservation Park photographed by Museum Tour Guide/Dinosaur Stampede Caretaker Karen Corkill. Each greeting card measures 119mm x 84mm with either the Rufous-crowned emu-wren (*Stipiturus ruficeps*), Spinifexbird (*Poodytes carteri*) or rusty grasswren (*Amytornis striatus rowleyi*) displayed.



On the back of each greeting card there is a brief description of the featured bird and where it was photographed. The inside of each card is left blank for your personal greetings and notes.

Head to the Museum Shop
australianageofdinosaurs.com

\$5 ea
or buy any
three cards
for \$12