



MEDIA RELEASE

Memorandum of Understanding to be signed in Baltimore

A joint partnership in research, conservation and education between the Territory Wildlife Park (TWP) and the National Aquarium in Baltimore (NAIB) is set to become official with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) set to be signed this month.

TWP curator Dion Wedd said he is looking forward to flying to the USA at the end of this week to represent TWP at the signing, cementing a “sister zoo” relationship between the two popular institutions.

Mr Wedd is set to leave Darwin on Friday with a few stopovers before arriving in Baltimore on July 12, although an exact signing date is yet to be confirmed.

His trip, accommodation and meals are being funded by NAIB as he helped NAIB create the *Animal Planet Australia: Wild Extremes* exhibition that opened last December.

“Five years ago, I was contacted by a NAIB keeper who was seeking information on canyon habitats in Australia, what they look like, how they are formed, and what type of flora and fauna inhabit them etcetera,” Mr Wedd said.

“I was asked if I could help replicate a gorge for the National Aquarium, which I was glad to do with TWP’s support, and after NAIB staff flew to Darwin, it was decided the project to build a replica northern Australian landscape at the aquarium would go ahead.

“During this process it was agreed that a Memorandum of Understanding between the Territory Wildlife Park and the National Aquarium would be signed, cementing the relationship and building on the good work that has been done so far.

“I couldn’t make it to last year’s opening so I am very excited to be able to go there now and see it with my own eyes and be part of the signing, and the fact it is summer there is a bonus.”

Mr Wedd also helped the aquarium by supplying animals and husbandry advice and said the MOU would involve a technology exchange, provision of specimens for display at NAIB, promotion of TWP and the NT at NAIB and staff development and secondment to either institution.

He said the MOU also meant NAIB would provide TWP with \$5000 to start the NT Conservation Research Program, with NAIB seeking corporate and/or public donations to support the fund on an annual basis.

Mr Wedd said some of the animals on display at *Animal Planet Australia: Wild Extremes* include turtles, lizards and water pythons.

His trip to Baltimore is also expected to be much more than signing the MOU.

“While I am at NAIB I will also present a formal introduction to the TWP and life in the NT with staff at NAIB,” Mr Wedd said.

“The Territory Wildlife Park is committed to raising the profile of the Top End and the NT as a must see destination for national and international tourism and the development of this display at NAIB has the potential to raise the profile of both on an international scale.

“The MOU signing between TWP and NAIB will also culminate in the foundation of a beneficial relationship between both parties and the NT.”

Mr Wedd’s time in the United States is expected to see him work closely with NAIB staff during his stay in Baltimore, as well as visiting some of the United States’ most prestigious institutions before and after he spends time at Baltimore.

These include a visit to San Francisco’s Monterey Bay Aquarium, going to New Orleans to attend the American Ichthyological and Herpetological Association’s annual conference as well as going to the Aquarium of the Americas and Audobon Zoo in New Orleans.

Mr Wedd is also set to visit aquariums and zoos in the southern states of Georgia and Tennessee.

Ends

Media Note – For more information contact Dion Wedd on 8988 7208

Issued: 9am Monday, 3 July 2006