



MEDIA RELEASE FOR OGF –28 August 2009

**SOUTH-WEST QUEENSLAND - THE NEW GATEWAY TO DISCOVERING AUSTRALIA'S GIANTS**

South-west Queensland is becoming a new haven for Australian dinosaurs, with the towns of Roma and Eromanga now boasting the oldest and largest dinosaurs in the nation.

A recent two week dig expedition on a site west of Eromanga, has unearthed dozens of dinosaur bones and plant fossils, believed to be around 97 million years old, from a time when the region was covered in forests and wide meandering rivers.

The sheep and cattle station has already yielded Australia's largest dinosaur, 'Cooper', a new titanosaur species, measuring approximately 26 to 28 metres long. These enormous bones are being prepared for scientific study and display for all Australians to enjoy.

This year's dig on the property, which included a team of volunteer locals, supervised by Queensland Museum palaeontologists, has identified another dinosaur, nicknamed 'Zac' while it awaits official identification. Although smaller than Cooper, Zac's skeleton is more complete and may represent yet another species of long-necked sauropod to roam Queensland's ancient inland.

Roma has already claimed its own dinosaur with the discovery of a long-necked plant-eating sauropod, *Rhoetosaurus*, found in the 1930s and dated to 170 million years old.

Queensland Museum palaeontologist, Scott Hocknull, who also presided over the discoveries of the Winton dinosaurs, believes this south-western site to be one of the most exciting in Australia.

"The discoveries made this year confirm the south-west Queensland site is likely to be of great significance, not only for Australia, but for a wider scientific understanding of the age of dinosaurs," Mr Hocknull said.

Outback Gondwana Foundation founding Chairman Stuart Mackenzie is also excited by the discoveries but says there is still much work to be done.

"The Outback Gondwana Foundation is currently working on the fossils already retrieved and is looking forward to releasing more information on the recent discoveries as the research matures," Mr Mackenzie said.

"We've established the locally-driven Foundation to promote the discovery and long-term preservation of these fossils, with plans to develop a southern Queensland centre where the bones will be carefully prepared and conserved for research and public display.

"In developing museum-standard practices, the Foundation aims to preserve the region's natural heritage near its source.

"The Outback Gondwana Foundation and the whole Eromanga dinosaur project is a great example of what can be achieved by people and organisations working together, even in the remotest areas of the state," said Mr Mackenzie.

Australian oil and gas company, Santos, are major supporters of the Foundation. With strong interests in the south-west region, they have committed to provide the dig expeditions with technical, logistic and ongoing financial assistance, supporting local communities in becoming long term custodians of local natural heritage.

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