



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Desert Adventure Awaits Jodie Clarkson**

Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA) biological parks community alignment manager Jodie Clarkson is set to fly to the United States next week to learn more about Arizona's Sonora Desert.

Mrs Clarkson will be based at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum (ASDM), which is in partnership with the Alice Springs Desert Park (ASDP) as part of the 2005-2007 *International Partnerships Among Museums* (IPAM) program.

The partnership was entered into last year with the program focused towards creating an interactive website aimed at children.

ASDM education specialist Brenda King spent a month at ASDP last year as part of IPAM's exchange program and now it's Mrs Clarkson's turn to spend a month at ASDM.

"The ultimate aim of the project is to create a website so that children gain better understanding about the survival strategies used by native animals, plants and people in their two desert regions," Mrs Clarkson said.

"Just yesterday I was reading that there is a desert onion that grows in the sandy soils, like our Yalka (*Cyperous sp*) and a desert pigweed, whose seeds have been collected, ground, mixed with water and cooked just like in central Australia – I wonder if they are related species.

"But a huge plus in all of this was the time Brenda and I spent together last year and I am very much looking forward to catching up with her again and learning more about ASDM and the Sonoran Desert.

"Brenda and I are similar in that we enjoy learning about and experiencing different natural and cultural environments which Brenda has done and is something I'm really looking forward to.

"While I am in the US, Brenda and I will be going to schools there, both in the town of Tucson and in the reservations, including a deaf and blind school so that should be fun.

"The Sonoran Desert extends all the way down through Mexico so we will also be going there to learn more about the plants, animals and people who live there."

IPAM provides museums worldwide the opportunity to establish lasting institutional ties through work on collaborative projects through the exchange of staff members who work collaboratively on a joint project.

The IPAM program is administered by the American Association of Museums (AAM) and funded by the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

“The exchange will give us a better idea of what material should be on the interactive website so children will be able to respond to the information in such a way that will see them put together particular projects and maybe even some games,” Mrs Clarkson said.

“These children will acquire an increased knowledge and appreciation of the place they call home and learn about inhabitants from another region who also call the desert their home.

“So apart from learning about plants and animals from another country, Tohono O’odham children there and Arrernte children here will have an opportunity to develop joint projects across language and geographic barriers .

“We also plan to have children regularly contribute stories and artwork to the site making it a more meaningful and ongoing connection that will facilitate the development of long distance friendships for many years to come.”

Mrs Clarkson said a test website has been available to the children involved in the project during the recent school holidays with a final version due by May.

Ends

**Media Note \_ For more information contact Jodie Clarkson on 0417 082 359**

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