



MEDIA RELEASE

Alice Springs Desert Park Enjoys IPAM Success

A newly formed international partnership will see the Alice Springs Desert Park build close ties with the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in the United States.

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is a world-renowned zoo, natural history museum and botanical garden with exhibits re-creating the natural landscape of the Sonoran Desert.

Alice Springs Desert Park guide manager Jodie Clarkson said the partnership would involve an exchange program aimed towards creating an interactive website aimed at children.

Mrs Clarkson said the website will highlight the survival strategies used by native animals, plants and peoples in their two desert regions.

She said she was looking forward to building upon the partnership made possible through the *International Partnerships Among Museums* (IPAM) program for 2005-2007.

“The Desert Park was one of 17 institutions worldwide whose projects were recently selected for funding,” Mrs Clarkson said.

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).

“We had been talking with representatives from the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum for about five years on how we can facilitate some form of staff exchange and they told us about IPAM, so we submitted a joint application to IPAM to be part of its next program,” Mrs Clarkson said.

“To be successful is great news and I can't wait to get the project underway.”

The project will see the Desert Museum's education specialist Brenda King work at the Desert Park in August and September this year before Ms Clarkson works at the Desert Museum in Tucson, Arizona, in February and March next year.

“These dates have been selected specifically as they are towards the end of our winter periods, which is when our deserts are at their best,” Mrs Clarkson said.

“The exchange will give us a better idea of what material should be on the interactive website so schoolchildren 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.

“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.”

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

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