

JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

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Australian Reptile Park Backs Proposal to Unlock Tourism, Conservation & Park Expansion

The Australian Reptile Park ('the Park') has thrown its support behind WCTV's vision to create a major new tourism and recreation destination at Somersby, following an agreement between the parties that provides greater certainty for the Park's long-term future and creates a significant pathway for its expansion.

The agreement resolves concerns previously raised by the Park and paves the way for its support of the Planning Proposal when it returns to Central Coast Council on Tuesday, 27 October.

Australian Reptile Park Managing Director Tim Faulkner said the agreement marked an important turning point for one of the Central Coast's most significant tourism attractions.

"For years, we've been effectively landlocked. Our car park was built for 158 vehicles, yet on our busiest days we're accommodating more than 500. We've simply outgrown our existing footprint," Mr Faulkner said.

"This agreement changes that. It gives us the certainty and room to plan for the future, expand our facilities, improve the visitor experience and grow the Park for the next generation.

"We've always been supportive of appropriate investment in the wider precinct. Our priority was ensuring the Park's future was protected, and we've now achieved an outcome that allows us to be genuinely excited about what comes next."

The agreement provides for long-term tenure, improved access, expanded parking and additional land to accommodate the Park's future growth, including new visitor attractions, facilities and supporting infrastructure.

Mr Faulkner said neither the Development Application nor the Planning Proposal in their current form would adversely affect the Park's operations, and the proposed mix of complementary uses represented a significant opportunity.

"We see real benefits in creating a broader tourism destination around the Park, with dining, recreation, accommodation and other low-scale visitor experiences that give people more reasons to come to Somersby and stay longer.

"This isn't just about protecting what we have today. It's about creating something bigger and better for the Park, our visitors and the Central Coast."

The wider proposal envisages a staged redevelopment of the approximately 120-hectare site over more than a decade, incorporating tourism and recreation attractions, hospitality, conservation areas, public open space and a low-impact residential component.

Approximately 70% of the site is proposed for non-residential uses, including visitor activity, employment, conservation, open space and local amenity, including around 35.2 hectares of environmental conservation land.

WCTV General Manager Alex Guan welcomed the Park's support, saying the agreement reflected a shared ambition to create a destination that builds on Somersby's unique character.

"The Australian Reptile Park is an institution on the Central Coast, and its continued success and expansion are central to our vision for the precinct," Mr Guan said.

"From the outset, our intention has never been to deliver a development that is out of character with Somersby. Quite the opposite. We want to create something that celebrates the natural environment, strengthens the region's tourism offering and respects what makes this part of the Central Coast special.

"We believe our combination of a long-term vision and patient capital puts us in a unique position to deliver that outcome. We're not interested in simply creating another sea of grey roofs, as we've seen in other growth areas.

"Our ambition is to deliver a thoughtfully planned precinct where tourism, conservation, recreation, hospitality and residential uses complement one another, rather than compete.

"This is a long-term investment in Somersby, and we're prepared to take the time and commit the capital required to get it right."

The proposal also includes a low-impact residential component intended to support the commercial delivery of tourism, recreation, conservation and infrastructure investment across the precinct.

Independent economic modelling estimates the completed precinct could attract more than 600,000 visitors annually, generate over \$76 million in additional annual tourism expenditure and support approximately 1,054 direct and indirect jobs.

Mr Faulkner said the Park now looks forward to the Planning Proposal progressing to the next stage.

"Council's decision to allow more time for discussions has delivered a much better outcome for the Park.

"We're confident about our future, excited by the opportunities across the wider precinct and supportive of the Planning Proposal progressing to Gateway."

For more information about the proposal, visit this [link](#).