

# On Display – Public Exhibitions at: The Perth Zoo, The WA Museum, The Art Gallery of WA

Report 1 – April 1997

## Background

Zoos, museums and art galleries are guardians of our natural history and cultural heritage. In Western Australia, the Perth Zoo, the Western Australian Museum and the Art Gallery of Western Australia have been undertaking that role for a hundred years. They receive significant ongoing financial support from government.

In 1995-96, the venues reported a combined total of over 1.6 million visits. The Museum reported about 750 000 visits, the Zoo about 550 000 and the Gallery about 350 000.

Recent visitor trends are generally positive but the venues face growing competition within the leisure and entertainment industry. To withstand this challenge, the agencies need to know how to meet the needs of their visitors and potential visitors within the agencies' conservation and education role.

## What the performance examination found...

The Perth Zoo has a thorough understanding of both visitors and non-visitors through effective market research. While the Art Gallery and Museum have an understanding of their visitors, better information on non-visitors would help them expand their community reach.

The venues generally open traditional hours. The Zoo has recently changed its opening time to meet visitor needs. There may be opportunities for all venues to increase attendances through more flexible opening hours.

All venues recognise the potential benefits of new and emerging technologies to increase their community reach but only the Museum has developed detailed plans for expanding their use.

All agencies are seeking to reduce their reliance upon government funding, but only the Zoo has set specific targets for financial self sufficiency.

The Gallery and the Museum have operated largely in isolation from each other. Recent moves towards greater cooperation between these two closely located and allied venues may improve opportunities in developing exhibits.

## What the performance examination recommended...

The Gallery and Museum should:

- set specific targets for increasing financial self-sufficiency; further develop their market planning; and
- investigate cooperative market opportunities.

All three agencies should identify optimum opening times using current and future customer/visitor data.