



Media Release ***Embargoed***

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10am

NEW ENCLOSURE TO PROTECT DEVILS FROM FACIAL TUMOUR DISEASE

A new enclosure to protect Tasmanian devils from the devastating Facial Tumour Disease was officially opened today.

Work on the enclosure at Tasmania Zoo at Riverside started in January and two young devils were released into their new home this morning.

The enclosure was funded by NRM North and will be used as a safe haven for breeding as part of the zoo's Devil Conservation Breeding Program.

NRM North Acting Chief Executive Officer, Melissa Lewarn, said NRM North was keen to support Tasmania Zoo in its endeavours to protect this unique creature from extinction.

"Our internationally-recognised icon is facing a major threat with the Devil Facial Tumour Disease and is now listed as endangered." Mrs Lewarn said.

"The results of recent surveys really show how bad the situation is. In some areas, more than 90 per cent of the Tasmanian devil population has been wiped out.

"That is why breeding programs like the one at Tasmania Zoo are crucial to ensure the ongoing survival of the species."

The Operations Manager of Tasmania Zoo, Robert Warren, said the enclosure was specially built to ensure no devils could escape and no diseased devils could get in.

"This makes the new enclosure an ideal home for young devils born through the park's breeding program." Mr Warren said.

"The two young devils released into the enclosure today were born last April within our devil program. Both are of separate gene giving them the diversity to breed next year.

"It is vital that every gene in the Devil Conservation Breeding Program is represented. The diversity is large within the program with some genetics coming from the valuable east coast province.

"Tasmania Zoo has the largest and most successful devil breeding program in Tasmania with a 100 per cent success rate. We have 50 devils on site but the aim is to have 500."

NRM North and Tasmania Zoo will be running a naming competition for the two young devils with northern schools next month.

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