

## ARAZPA Education Policy

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Education is the dual pillar, with conservation, that writes the charter for the work of zoos. Without education there will be no conservation, as people will not understand the need for positive action for the environment.



Every one of us has been on a journey of discovery - a life long learning voyage that has enabled us to grasp the importance of action now for a better future. Many people who visit our zoos have not been on such a journey, indeed they are disconnected from nature, the environment, wildlife, even their own pets - especially as Australia becomes more and more urbanised.

The role of our organisations is to provide the platforms and opportunities for the connection to occur, giving our visitors an opportunity to start the journey and make the contributions we all know are so sorely needed.

We need the people who come through our gates to work with us and eventually have ownership over conservation work in their local areas that will lead to global conservation outcomes. We are well placed to do this. If 10% of the world's population visits zoos every year and if the marketing line that 'one person speaks to another ten', is true then we have 100% of the world's population covered! However we all must embrace the role education plays in our zoos, parks and aquaria, open our minds to learning and encourage magical, meaningful moments between our visitors, us and our animals and plants.

With this in mind the ARAZPA Education Advisory

Group (Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria) set about establishing a benchmark policy for the development and delivery of education in our zoos, parks and aquaria.



During an ARAZPA Education Advisory Group workshop hosted by Taronga Zoo in August 2000, a team of educators from across the region raised their hands to become members of the first writing team to develop the ARAZPA Education Policy. Jenny Hoysted (Melbourne Aquarium, now Zoos Victoria), Daniel Hughes (Melbourne Zoo), John Hopgood (Adelaide Zoo), Karen Fifield (Taronga Zoo, now Zoos Victoria) and I were all members of the initial writing team for stage one of the project.

With each educator on the team living in different states of Australia, communication was quite a challenge. To overcome this, we had two writing workshops hosted by Melbourne Aquarium and Melbourne Zoo.

The writing team ensured that the draft policy underwent consultation with all key stakeholders. Every ARAZPA educator had the opportunity to comment on the policy during its development as did other members of the zoo industry and other selected stakeholders such as the Department of Education. After a multitude of drafts, the policy was ratified by the ARAZPA Board in February 2002.

The policy offers leadership in the formulation of principles, guidelines and minimum standards for the many different focus areas of educational delivery in zoos,

parks and aquaria. The mission statement clearly identifies what education in zoos, parks and aquaria is all about and that is, 'To provide exemplary learning opportunities that connect people with nature. These experiences enable the community to better understand and contribute to a future where humans live in balance with the natural world'.

The six principles of education in zoos, parks and aquaria are that it:

- provides unique learning experiences that connect people with the natural world
- involves the whole community
- is lifelong
- is holistic, encompassing all parts of the organisation
- gives people an understanding of their place within the natural world and the need to take individual and collective action for ecological sustainability
- encompasses social, environmental and economic goals



It was always the intent to provide support material for the policy. We wanted this to be a living document that would provide actual examples, contacts and material in a usable form.

A second writing team of ARAZPA educators was brought together to develop stage two of the project. Dale Alp (Perth Zoo), Leigh Wither (Auckland Zoo), Jane Liefman (Zoos Victoria), John Hopgood (Adelaide Zoo), Michelle Lindsay, Paul Maguire and Melissa de Britt (Taronga Zoo) continued the project.

To achieve the stage two outcomes, the project team identified that a regional education audit needed to be undertaken. This information provided a comprehensive understanding of what education experiences were being offered in our region.



It was decided that to be more environmentally-friendly the supporting documents would be best published online on the ARAZPA website – <http://www.arazpa.org.au> - and be launched during the 2003 ARAZPA Conference hosted by Adelaide Zoo.

We would like to thank all the educators who were involved in the design of the ARAZPA Education Policy and Support Documents, in particular both the first and second writing teams, Environment Australia for their financial support, the ARAZPA Board for their philosophical support and all the people who reviewed the policy and its support materials - you all helped the writing teams stay sane! We hope this material is widely used by all of you and that it helps you stay sane as you develop and deliver great educational programmes in zoos, parks and aquaria across our region!

For a hard copy of the ARAZPA Education Policy contact Melissa de Britt at Taronga Zoo Education, email: [mdebritt@zoo.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mdebritt@zoo.nsw.gov.au) or explore the ARAZPA website <http://www.arazpa.org.au>