

## Dare to Discover – Backyard to Bush

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'Backyard to Bush', the latest precinct launched at Taronga Zoo, is an environmental wonderland where visitors travel from the familiar world of the urban home through an adventure packed Australian farmyard and then into the mysterious bush with a gigantic wombat burrow.



This brand new two hectare exhibit is designed with an educational focus and a theatrical theme – a first of its kind in Australia. Visitor presentations, school workshops, animal encounters and exhibit interpretation are all in keeping with the unique theatre of the exhibit, which is based around a very interesting family called the Keens.

The Keens live in the house and their grandparents live on the farm at Backyard to Bush. They never seem to be home but their presence is all around. You are invited to snoop around and explore their home, where you'll discover the kids' native pets and projects on animal care, Mrs Keen's recipe for getting rid of the cockroaches in her kitchen cupboard and the mice Mr Keen discovered when he bashed a hole in the wall to see what was making the noise.

You may also notice that the Keens aren't environmentally perfect but they certainly try their best. They have a lizard lounge, a frog pond and they attract native birds and possums with all of the native plants they have in their garden. The Keens also do their best to recycle, be waterwise and compost their scraps for their organic vegetable garden. Their grandparents are doing their best too, by trying out more sustainable farming methods. They farm yabbies in the creek, make native bee honey, their pigs help tractor the soil for the fruit orchard and they have chosen goats over cows as they have less impact on the soil.

The strong theatrical theme brings Backyard to Bush to life. As children run around exploring and discovering, parents will be inspired as they notice very handy environmental tips and realise how easy it is to adopt sustainable and environmental ways of living.

There are many themes throughout the exhibit. One very important message is that native animals are our closest neighbours and it is our responsibility to care for them and their environment.

Formal educational workshops at Backyard to Bush have taken an alternative approach. Students are met by an educator costumed as a magical garden pixie, an 'eggspert' vet, a nosy neighbour or various other 'friends' of the Keens. All education workshops are interactive and extremely hands-on. Students are encouraged to dress up and get dirty as they learn environmental ways of living.

Public presentations are just as dramatic. At the farm visitors may be invited by a farmer to help collect eggs from the chicken coop and watch goats being milked. A family friend may ask you to help look after the Keen's pets in the backyard. If you choose to watch the presentation in the bush area you may find yourself about to join an eco tour trek, with a rookie ranger who needs help to remove a giant scary reptile that has gone inside the tent down at the campsite!



It's the theatrical magic that makes Taronga Zoo's 'Backyard to Bush' one of Australia's most exciting and innovative educational exhibits. The experience visitors have is unlike any other in the Zoo, inspiring them to make a difference.