Draft release for National Bilby Day Sunday 14th September……

-National Bilby summit announced – on National Bilby Day 14 September 2014 at Dreamworld, Gold Coast.

Bilby plight leads conservation groups to unite

Conservation specialists and organisations will meet in early 2015 for the first National Bilby Summit. The summit will mark the start of a 'One Plan' approach to saving the bilby from extinction.

In this bid for more effective management of threatened species and to support existing recovery plans, key organisations are joining forces for the summit. Save the Bilby Fund has partnered with the Queensland Government to engage a Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Species Survival Commission — 'The Captive Breeding Specialist Group'.

The bilby is much admired as our native Easter icon and the only Australian animal with a designated national day in its honour. National Bilby Day is celebrated on the second Sunday in September each year.

Instead of being treated as one of our country's treasures, the marsupial bilby is slowly disappearing. The species lives largely out of sight in Australia's arid outback. In Queensland, potentially fewer than 400 to 600 of them remain in the wild. The bilby faces serious threats. The major one being the 20 million feral cats that alone may be killing more than 75 million of our native animals every 24 hours.

Expert knowledge and conservation efforts for the bilby reach across several States, and across a number of wildlife sectors and agencies. But recovery efforts and initiatives have been fragmented and lack centralised direction, coordination and resourcing.

Kevin Bradley, CEO of the Save the Bilby Fund stated that 'Despite committed recovery efforts over the last 10 to 15 years, the bilby's future in the wild remains tenuous. We need a united front if we are to win this battle.'

The initiative of the Save the Bilby Fund and the Queensland Government to progress a National Bilby Summit will create a forum where recovery-related issues can be discussed openly and be appropriately resolved. It will bring together representatives from the bilby conservation community and others interested in committing skills and resources to the bilby's recovery.

Bradley says that 'We need support … now more than ever. We need to focus our respective efforts, avoid duplication and ensure the most effective use of the limited resources available for bilby conservation'.

The summit has the support of the Taronga Conservation Society, the Dreamworld Wildlife Foundation and interest and input from the Australian Government. The Taronga Conservation Society in Sydney has offered to host the summit which has been proposed for February 2015.

The summit will access sophisticated tools and processes designed by the Captive Breeding Specialist Group that assist diverse groups work together to build inclusive, effective conservation plans. The group's 'One Plan' approach has a strong record of success with other threatened species internationally.

The aim is to build a single, unified approach to the future of the species in Australia. This will not only generate new and productive alliances that will generate action for bilbies, it will have spin-off benefits for species that live alongside them in our arid landscape.

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Media opportunity: Dreamworld Sunday September 14th (National Bilby Day) 9.30 am

Live bilbies and Kev and Al available for comment /interviews/film/images