



MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 5th October

Sea World's Polar Bear Henry Takes Flight of a Lifetime

Sea World Polar Bear 'Henry' is set to embark on the first leg of his journey to the Cochrane Polar Habitat in Canada with the assistance of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

Henry will fly from the Gold Coast to Sydney in a RAAF C-130J Hercules aircraft on Tuesday morning and ahead of their flight, Air Force Hercules pilot and air crew along with the Federal Member for Fadden, Hon Stuart Robert MP and Acting Gold Coast Mayor, Cr Donna Gates visited Sea World to meet Henry.

The move to the world-class Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat in Canada marks the next step in Henry's development where he will play an integral role in the International Polar Bear conservation and breeding program.

Sea World's Director of Marine Sciences, Trevor Long said it was only fitting for the RAAF team to visit Sea World to meet Henry before they fly out to Sydney.

"It is a wonderful opportunity that we have been able to align Henry's trip to Sydney with a RAAF routine flying operation. The flight is sure to be an enriching experience for Henry as well as the air crew, so we thank them for their assistance," Mr Long said.

"From Sydney, Henry will then continue on his journey to the Cochrane facility. Sea World staff will care for and monitor Henry during his travels with the experienced team successfully transporting a number of Polar Bears around the world using the same method.

"We have chosen the Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat as they share the same dedication and standards as Sea World to the conservation, care and well-being of Polar bears and is the perfect place for Henry to continue his development."

RAAF Hercules pilot, Flight Lieutenant Conan Brett, said that it is a fantastic opportunity to be able to combine routine flying operations with such a special event as relocating Henry.

"Usually we transport cargo or Defence personnel, so today is a very special opportunity to put our training to a unique use. I've flown thousands of passengers, but Henry will certainly be the most interesting passenger I have ever flown," Flight Lieutenant Brett said.

The request for assistance with the flight was organised through the Honourable Stuart Robert MP during his time as Assistant Minister for Defence. "I never thought I'd have to call the Chief of Air Force about transporting a polar bear." Mr Robert said.

"Sea World is a world-class tourist attraction and an icon of the Gold Coast. As a Federal Member of Parliament representing our city, I'm proud to have played a role in helping Henry fly to Sydney.

"On behalf of all those who love Henry, I would like to thank the Royal Australian Air Force for all the support they have provided to him and I hope he enjoys his time on board the Hercules."

The Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat is the only bear facility in the world dedicated solely to Polar bears and features exceptional animal care standards, educational programs, research partnerships and is an internationally respected centre. Despite moving to the Cochrane facility, Henry will remain a part of Sea World's Polar bear population with the Polar bear team continuing to have a role in his ongoing care.

Sea World's Polar Bears are ambassadors for their species and play a vital role in raising awareness of the effects of global warming. Current research indicates that Polar bear numbers in the wild are declining, with 20,000 – 25,000 bears remaining worldwide.

****ENDS****

Media Contact:

Mitchell Olivey | P 0403 279 973 | E mitchell_olivey@vrtp.com.au