

## Jodie Anderson

### Visitor Experience Officer – Taronga Western Plains Zoo

It was a love of people and not animals that bought Jodie Anderson to Dubbo to take on the role of Visitor Experience Coordinator at Taronga Western Plains Zoo.

Jodie is responsible for guests who take part in overnight accommodation at the Roar and Snore and the new Billabong Camp. “My primary role as the Visitor Experience Coordinator is to ensure guests staying at the Zoo have a memorable time,” she said.

The Billabong Camp is a new immersive Australian bush camping experience.

“It is a brand new site for the overnight accommodation and part of my role has been progressing the tours and training the Discovery Hosts – it is a very exciting time to be at the Zoo,” Jodie said.

“I have been lucky enough to be involved with the new Billabong Camp as well as training and development of the staff that are involved, as it is the people at the zoo that make the experience as much as the animals do,” she said

“A highlight of the Billabong Camp experience is the exclusive guided tours and animal experiences, not only will you meet some friendly residents at the Zoo and get up close and personal, you will also be treated to walking tours where you will meet a number of Australian and Asian animals. You’ll have a Discovery Host as your guide for the entire experience whose knowledge and unique stories about the animals will allow you to get to know the animals more intimately.”

Jodie was studying coaching, science and sports management at University when she first experienced being a tour guide at the

Australian Institute of Sport. “I absolutely loved being a guide, it was fantastic work and it really related to my degree,” she said.

“I have a background in hospitality and event management and studied environmental science, so when the position came up at Taronga Western Plains Zoo – it was perfect.”

Jodie is also very passionate about the youth programs that are being conducted at the Zoo and has a hands-on role in their coordination.

“The Zoo runs several programs aimed at school-aged children. There is the Zoo Snooze where school groups come and stay overnight and also the Youth at the Zoo program for kids aged 13 – 19. These programs are very rewarding as the children are so enthusiastic about being involved with the animals,” she said.

“We have another specially-developed conservation education program called ‘Endanger Ranger’, which targets kids from Western Sydney. The students catch the train out and stay overnight. The program includes elements of both African and Aboriginal culture and the students are exposed to everything from Australian reptiles through to African Rhinoceros and apes during their overnight visit.”

Jodie said the Endanger Ranger program was very exciting as some of the students had not been outside a metropolitan city environment.

“Some of the students have never seen a cow before, let alone some of the exotic animals that are here in the Zoo, many of the kids have never had an opportunity to even see stars in the sky – it is a wonderful



program and a great opportunity for the students involved,” she said.

Taronga Western Plains Zoo is Dubbo’s most renowned tourist attraction, with 70 per cent of people visiting the City coming to see the Zoo. It attracts more than 200,000 visitors each year.

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