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MEDIA RELEASE

Amazing ancient swordfish unearthed in Outback

Two Queensland families holidaying in the remote outback town of Richmond have together uncovered an exceptionally rare skeleton of a 100 million-year-old fish with an incredible swordfish-like head and monstrous teeth.

This amazing discover was made initially when the Johnston family from Margate unearthed the complete lance-like snout of a fossil fish at one of the free fossil hunting sites near Richmond. "At first we thought it was a tooth from some giant reptile, since it was so large and cone shaped" said Mirjam Johnston. "I wasn't until that night we showed the bone to a fossil enthusiast at our camp site that we realised it was the tip of a very pointy fish nose!"

A week later Tony and Gail Amos from Agnes Waters visited the same site and found the rest of the creature, including a complete skull, massive teeth, vertebrae, and the front fins. "When I put my shovel in the ground I wasn't expecting to find something so complete. I remember pulling up the layers of rock and realising there was bone poking out everywhere," said Tony.

Tony knew that what he had found was something special and immediately brought it to the attention of Kronosaurus Korner, the local fossil museum, to help identify the specimen. "When we got to the site I could tell straight away that these bones had come from the same fish", recalls Gary Flewelling, friend of the museum. "They were found in the exact spot where the Johnston's had been digging a week previously, and the texture of the bone matched perfectly."

"It great to see both these families working closely with the museum", said Dr Patrick Smith, curator of Kronosaurus Korner. "Without the help of guests, specimen such as this recent fish could easily been lost or destroyed"

The bones of this creature belong to a species called *Australopachycormus hurleyi*, a 3 m long, swordfish-like predator with a pointed snout that was probably used to slash or stun prey. "Although it appears similar to a modern swordfish, it belonged to an unrelated extinct group of known as the pachycormids," explained Dr Smith. "This is an excellent example of convergent evolution; whereby two organisms, which are not closely related, independently evolve similar characteristics after adapting to same environment."

"Fossils of *Australopachycormus* are exceptionally rare, which is demonstrated by the fact that the species was only discovered less than a decade ago," remarked Dr Smith. "Previous to this find we had no near-complete remains of the animal in our museum".

This remarkable fossil fish is currently on display at Kronosaurus Korner, in Richmond, QLD and is planned to be part of a new exhibit. Kronosaurus Korner is Australia's Premier Marine Fossil Museum, showcasing over a thousand well-preserved fossils from Australia's Cretaceous inland sea.

For further information, interviews or images please contact Dr Patrick Smith on 07 4741 3665, 0422 533 823 or curator@kronosauruskorner.com.au