

20 April 2015



MEDIA RELEASE

Grazier discovers fossil of ancient marine predator

A Queensland grazier has unearthed the 1.6 metre long fossilised mandible (lower jaw) of a *Kronosaurus queenslandicus* – the enormous apex predator that dominated Australia’s great inland sea over 100 million years ago.

“The specimen represents the most complete mandible of a *Kronosaurus queenslandicus* in the world, with most other examples being weathered, crushed or incomplete. This is the real deal,” reported Kronosaurus Korner’s Curator, Dr Timothy Holland.

The huge specimen, with tooth sockets wider than a 50c coin, was recently found by Mr Robert Hacon on Euraba Station, near Nelia, Outback Queensland. “I’ve been looking for something like this all my life but never thought I’d find such an amazing fossil!” Mr Hacon exclaimed.

Mr Hacon recalled, “I was out poisoning prickly acacia and saw some objects shining in the distance. At first glance I thought they were fossilised mussel shells, so I drove away. Ten minutes later my curiosity got the better of me and I turned back. I jumped out of my buggy and cast my eyes upon these enormous pieces of bone. I thought to myself ‘my gosh, what have I got!’ I grabbed a few pieces and raced home. I could not get there fast enough.”

Mr Hacon contacted Kronosaurus Korner, Australia’s premier marine fossil museum, and invited Dr Holland to the site. Mr Hacon delicately scraped away soil with a loader which revealed more bones hidden underground. During this process his family and Kronosaurus Korner staff listened for contact to be made with bones. Dr Holland described, “We would hear suspicious ‘clangs’ and everybody would excitedly wave and shout ‘stop!’”

“The mandible is just so robust, measuring 18cm deep in some places. The scary thing is that this creature wasn’t even an adult when it died. It still had a lot of growing to do. If that wasn’t frightening enough, there are large indentations on each side of the mandible to accommodate enormous overhanging teeth from the upper jaw. I doubt a lot of animals would have escaped the jaws of *Kronosaurus* once within biting distance,” explained Dr Holland.

Kronosaurus was an 11 metre long marine reptile, known as a pliosaur, which lived between 115-110 million years ago. It had a crocodile-like head and a body with four powerful flippers. The jaws of *Kronosaurus* were twice as powerful as those of a saltwater crocodile, with curved teeth the size of bananas. *Kronosaurus* preyed upon long-necked plesiosaurs, sea turtles, squid and sharks.

“We are thrilled to display the specimen at Kronosaurus Korner. It’s a great reminder of the rich geo-heritage of our state, and I marvel to think of what else lays waiting to be found. It’s vital that we collect and conserve such fossils for generations to come,” said Dr Holland.

For further information, interviews or images please contact Dr Timothy Holland on 07 4741 3665, 0431 152 860 or curator@kronosauruskorner.com.au