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MEDIA RELEASE

Lost Australian dinosaur rediscovered after 80 years

For the first time since the 1930s new remains of *Austrosaurus mckillopi*, the first Cretaceous sauropod dinosaur ever found in Australia, have been unearthed on a remote outback property.

The recently discovered fossils, which include a series of 1.6 metre-long ribs and fragments of backbone, belong to a long-necked sauropod dinosaur which would have had a barrel-like body and four pillar-like legs. These new bones likely represent missing parts of a dinosaur named *Austrosaurus mckillopi*, which was discovered in 1932 at the same site by Mr Henry Burgoyne Wade on Clutha Station near Richmond, QLD.

“Attempts to find more of the original *Austrosaurus* specimen in the 1970s and 1990s were unsuccessful, which led to the assumption that the site was lost, and along with it, the chance to learn more about *Austrosaurus*,” explained Dr Timothy Holland, Curator of Kronosaurus Korner. “

This notion changed in 2014 when Richmond Shire Mayor Cr John Wharton searched Clutha from a helicopter and located two wooden posts marking the original dig site. On rediscovering the posts, Cr Wharton found several pieces of dinosaur bone sitting on top of the soil.

“Rediscovering a historical dinosaur dig site is almost more exciting than finding a brand new one,” remarked Dr Steve Poropat, a Research Associate from Australian Age of Dinosaurs. “Once we knew where the site was, we knew we had the chance to find more of the same *Austrosaurus* specimen, and all that was separating us from it was a metre or so of black soil!”

In July 2015, a Kronosaurus Korner dig team of 13 people, led by Dr Holland and Dr Poropat, renewed excavations at the *Austrosaurus* site. A backhoe was used to carefully scrape away thin layers of soil to avoid possible damage to bone hidden underground.

“Slowly but surely, more than 80 segments of large, pink-coloured ribs emerged from the soil. We couldn’t wait to get them back to the lab to start joining the pieces back together,” stated Dr Holland.

“To see the ribs in the ground, lying side-by-side, was breath-taking,” remarked Dr Poropat. “All that had been collected in the 1930s were a few chunks of vertebrae, so to find the ribs that went with them was fantastic.”

Austrosaurus was a land-dwelling herbivorous dinosaur that grew up to 15 metres in length. The bones of this sauropod were extracted from 104 million year-old marine sediments, which suggests that the body of this dinosaur had drifted out to sea after it died.

The new *Austrosaurus* bones will be unveiled this weekend at Kronosaurus Korner in Richmond to coincide with the museum’s 20th anniversary.

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