



**Bungarribee, Western Sydney**  
**THURSDAY 28 APRIL 2022**

Just 22 of us today, after a few members called in sick. Our McDermott Chartours coach left Penshurst at 9.00 am with Mal McDermott as our driver and it was great to see him again. Weather was cloudy.

A routine drive to Western Sydney, with Mal pointing out places of interest on the way to our morning tea stop at Bungarribee Park in Western Sydney Parklands adjacent to the Zoo: the Prospect Dam entrance, Raging Waters Sydney (which is just about to close for winter), the still-operational Blacktown Drive-in (ah we remember the drive-ins well!), the Eastern Creek Industrial area and its huge warehouses including



Hyundai. As well, a Go-Kart Park, Indoor MotoCross and Sydney Motorsport Park. We also passed the Arnott's factory in Arndell Park (Huntingwood) where production has been since 1997. By this time, it was raining, but fortunately there are a few shelters in Bungarribee Park so we were able to enjoy Liz's delicious morning tea under a large covered area. (The longish walk to the toilets required umbrellas though!) We spent a leisurely hour here – just a shame it was too wet to enjoy a stroll.

Sydney Zoo was a quick drive around the corner and entry was easy with pre-booked tickets. Staff handed us brochures which included the essential map, and our group then set off in different directions for the next three hours until approx. 2 pm. Lunch was not included, but there were a few eateries to choose from and prices were reasonable. Plenty of seating on the property too, if food was brought from home.

The \$55 million privately-owned zoo, occupying a 16.5-hectare (41-acre) site, is backed by private investors and run by managing director Jake Burgess, a former funds manager whose father founded the Sydney Aquarium. The zoo was founded in 2015 with an aim to create amazing experiences for the local and international community by introducing them to a range of animal species from all over the world, while also educating on animal welfare and conservation. The zoo has a partnership with the Western Sydney University and TAFE NSW, and is subject to the oversight of government agencies including the Animal Welfare Unit of the NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and the key zoo industry body in Australasia, the Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA). The zoo's social programs include school education programs and aboriginal employment. Specific infrastructure includes veterinary facilities, quarantine facilities, extensive feed preparation and storage areas, an educational amphitheatre and disability access. The zoo's exhibit sizes exceed NSW Department of Primary Industries standards by an average of 2.6 times. Sydney Zoo includes approximately 30 exhibits and a variety (110) of animal species including exotic and Australian animals.



Finally opening on 7 December 2019, Sydney Zoo attracted 300,000 visitors in its first 100 days and had planned to welcome one million visitors each year, but debt has ballooned after COVID-19 restrictions closed the gates in March 2020. It's certainly worth the visit and we do wish them all the very best in the future.

The dismal weather would've kept the crowds at home, but there were a number of pre-school and high school children visiting, all beautifully behaved. Some of our group enjoyed a few laps on the mid-size ferris wheel which allowed wonderful views of the property, but sadly it was too wet for decent photos.

Our time there was most enjoyable, but of particular interest were the unusual and rarely-seen capybara located in the Primates area near the entrance. This animal is native to South America and is the largest living rodent growing to be about 1.22 m and weighing upwards of 45 kg. Despite their size, they are



friendly and respond well to human contact. Of course, the primates themselves, particularly the young baboons, were very amusing. In the South-East Asia section, a large group of visitors gathered in a sheltered area for the talk on their two (male and female) ageing tigers, originally from Dreamworld on the Gold Coast and now retired from breeding. Today we saw just the male, as they are obviously kept in separate enclosures, but they quite happily socialise through the fence!

In the African section, it was delightful to see a particularly large healthy group of African painted dog. (Almost 25 yrs ago, this writer was very fortunate to see just one pack of these endangered animals in the wild where, even then, their numbers were few.) The two half-brother, mud-caked elephants kept us entertained, stretching their trunks to reach some treats (we think) deliberately placed up high to make a game of it. The two male lions were looking absolutely miserable, taking shelter from the rain in a large concrete pipe.



We probably could've done with at least another hour there and towards the end of our visit, some of us found ourselves rushing around the amazing Nocturnal and Reptile/Amphibian areas where they had trouble finding the exit. Well, that was their excuse for returning late to the coach! (Thanks to Jenny for her fabulous snake pic.)



A few minutes away was our last visit for the day, Chang Lai Yuan Chinese Gardens. Located within Nurragingy Reserve, Doonside, this exquisite garden was cooperatively designed and constructed by Blacktown City Council and Liaocheng Municipal Government in China, as a symbolic gesture of friendship between the two sister cities. The garden was named the Chang Lai Yuan, which was derived by adopting one character from each of the names Dongchang, which is the former name of the City of Liaocheng and

Blacktown, when translated from Chinese (Bu Lai Ke Cheng). Yuan is the Chinese translation for 'garden'. The architectural style of the structures within the garden is based on the Ming Dynasty and Qing Dynasty in China, and feature a Gateway, Seven Arch Stone Bridge, Light Mountain Pavilion and a Waterfall Gazebo. Unfortunately, the rain put a stop to an extended stay here, so it was only possible to partially view the area.



Leila and Glenda won the Lucky Seat Prizes and the return to Penshurst was an easy drive where we arrived just after 4 pm.