

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, the Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes



Saturday, 13 November 2021

THE BIGGEST BABY NEWS FOR MELBOURNE ZOO

The pitter patter of not so small feet will be heard at Melbourne Zoo next year with three of the zoo's endangered Asian elephants pregnant.

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio today announced the three upcoming births, which are expected late next year, as an elephant pregnancy lasts 22 months.

The calves will be born at Melbourne Zoo before the whole herd is moved to Werribee Open Range Zoo's state-of-the-art home in 2024, following completion of an \$84 million expansion funded by the Andrews Labor Government.

All three calves were conceived naturally – a first for the Zoo. The opportunity for three calves to grow up together in the closely bonded Zoo herd is the work of adult breeding bull Luk Chai – the first elephant born at Sydney's Taronga Zoo 12 years ago – who arrived at Melbourne Zoo last December.

One of the pregnant females is Mali – the first elephant ever born at Melbourne Zoo 11 years ago. This first-time mum will be sharing her pregnancy journey with her own mum Dokkoon, 28, and Num-Oi, 20, who have both previously conceived via artificial insemination.

Melbourne Zoo is part of a regional breeding program for Asian Elephants, which are classified as endangered in the wild by the International Union for Conservation of Nature's Red List.

Zoos Victoria maintains an international partnership with Fauna and Flora International, which is undertaking extensive field work in Vietnam to establish wild elephant numbers and better understand the threats Asian Elephants face in the region.

Melbourne Zoo's elephant keepers are already busy preparing for the arrivals, working with Zoo vets to monitor the health and nutrition of the expectant mothers. The gender of the three calves will not be known until they are born.

Now is a great time to take kids to visit the elephants with the Victorian Government investing \$20 million in this year's budget for the *Kids Go Free program*, which means children under 16 get free entry to all three zoos during school holidays, on weekends and public holidays.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change Lily D'Ambrosio

"It's going to be a busy time for Melbourne Zoo's elephant keepers and veterinary team as they care for three pregnant elephants."

"It will be so exciting for all Victorians to watch this Asian Elephant herd raise three precious babies together at the Werribee Open Range Zoo's new state-of-the-art home in 2024."

Quotes attributable to Melbourne Zoo Trail of the Elephants Life Science Manager, Erin Gardiner

"Having three elephant calves growing up together is ideal for their social development, as a closely bonded herd is so important for elephants' welfare. This will further strengthen the already wonderful bonds within our elephant herd."

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