

## Co-op serves fig feast for Billabong Zoo's pandas

Hastings Co-op has donated 80 cartons of dried figs for Billabong Zoo's red panda population in a bid to support the popular tourist attraction through the challenges of the recent Covid-19 lockdown.

Chief Executive Officer Allan Gordon said: "there's no doubt the lockdown was tough on local businesses, so we really wanted to do something as a show of support for Billabong Zoo, which is such an important part of our local community, and loved by so many locals and tourists alike".

"The lockdown saw a halt to tourism and local visitation, but the animals still need to be fed and looked after every day," he said.

"We recognise that feeding the animals is a costly exercise and are so glad we could help in some small way.

"When we approached The Market Grocer they jumped to the rescue and we applaud their generous support."

Billabong Zoo's Operations Manager Blake Stone said his team were "firm believers in supporting local and share the love around wherever they can" by buying directly from local businesses.

"It's a bit like that old saying, what goes around comes around. For 20 years we've supported Hastings Co-op as they are our major supplier of fuel and grocery supplies for the zoo," he said.

"We even source our building supplies from their Mitre 10 as it's also just up the road. To have this further backing from a local business by donating such sought-after products is hugely beneficial to our back pocket and the bellies of some of our zoo animals.

"These kinds of donations help us future proof the zoo, as we are always striving to bring in new animals that are known to encourage continuous visitation, including exotic species like the Blue and Gold Macaws which are a great expense to feed. It makes our daily operations much more achievable when we have this kind of support from local retailers.

"It also means that we'll be able to obtain more exotic species in the not-so-distant future that we may not have otherwise been able to do due to the cost of feed for them, so we are immensely grateful for this contribution.

*Continued >*

“We believe this is just the beginning of what’s to come between the Billabong Zoo and the Hastings Coop, and we hope that we can build a stronger relationship with them moving forward.”

**Media contacts -**

**Hastings Co-op Executive Manager Sales and Marketing, Nicole Langdon,**

**Phone: 02 6588 8916, Mobile: 0498 111 353**

**Email: [nicolel@hastingscoop.com.au](mailto:nicolel@hastingscoop.com.au)**

**Billabong Zoo Operations Manager, Blake Stone**

**Mobile: 0431 622 788**

**Email: [blake@billabongkoala.com.au](mailto:blake@billabongkoala.com.au)**