



# animal instinct

Bob Irwin has joined forces with RSPCA Qld for an exciting new project at Wacol. **Wendy Hall** put some questions to the famed wildlife champion.

**YOU'VE been involved in caring for animals and promoting related causes for such a long time. Was there a moment when it all 'technically' began?**

I guess my interest in wildlife started as a small child, living in the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria. My playground was the extensive natural forest and local creeks where I was able to catch trout, blackfish and eels, which for a small child was perfect. It really was the most stimulating childhood and I began to take a very real interest in the individual habits and behaviours of a vast variety of creatures.

**What part did animals play in your childhood?**

They were an integral part of my everyday existence. They were an almost all-consuming interest.

**What will your role be with the new RSPCA facility due to open at Wacol in January?**

My role will be, I hope, to assist where possible with the wildlife hospital proposed for the new facility and for any wildlife issues if I am needed. I think it's tremendously important that somehow humans and native wildlife learn to co-exist. Frankly it's a Herculean task but we must never give up.

**You'll be involved in the relaunch of the RSPCA's EMU (Education Mobile Unit) this month. What's that all about?**

The relaunch of the RSPCA's EMU is the most exciting education project for some time. The education of our children in the care and understanding of both native and domestic animals is crucial to our success in the future.

**What other projects are you currently involved in?**

I'm involved in the Wombat Awareness project in South Australia with the southern hairy-nosed wombat. These magnificent creatures have been badly affected by the drought and sarcoptic mange. Here in Queensland we've allowed our northern hairy nosed wombats to become the most endangered marsupial in the world. Do we want the same thing to happen to the southern hairy nosed wombat?

**Do you and wife Judy have pets at home?**

Yes one very small and much-loved dog and a cockatiel.

**What's one thing you would like to be remembered for?**

After I am gone, I would like someone to say "He tried to make it better!" ▀



## WORK IN PROGRESS

Work has begun on the transformation of the John Oxley Centre at Wacol into RSPCA Qld's new headquarters, with modern educational facilities and a wildlife hospital. The organisation is due to move in January from its Fairfield site, but not before celebrating 125 years of service on Saturday, August 23. The celebration will be an opportunity to hear presentations about the organisation's work, including one from Bob Irwin. Tickets are \$30 which includes lunch. Book on 3426 9932. Visit [www.rspcaqld.com.au](http://www.rspcaqld.com.au)

