

Australia unveils three dinosaurs

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Melbourne - Australian scientists today unveiled three new dinosaur skeletons, excavated from Queensland---two herbivores and one carnivore which roamed the land about 98 million years ago, one of the most significant discoveries in decades. Paleontologist and lead author Scott Hocknull, of the Queensland Museum, says in the past excavations in Australia haven't been considered important because there were so few of them.

“We've been able to prove that [view] completely wrong,” he was quoted as saying by ABC Science online.

Hocknull says all three skeletons are new genera of dinosaur, which show evolutionary links with dinosaurs from the northern hemisphere.

“Dinosaurs diversified and spread all over the world but Australia, being a very isolated place at the end of the world, developed its own unique fauna.”

Australia's biggest meat eater, the new genera of carnivore, named Australovenator by the researchers, is the most complete meat-eating dinosaur skeleton ever found in Australia.

Hocknull says Australovenator, nicknamed Banjo, was the cheetah of its time. “It was two metres from the hip, six metres long and built for speed,” he said. The plant-eaters, Clancy and Matilda, were both titanosaur sauropods.

“It was 16 metres high with a long neck and small head,” he said.

The skeletons of Matilda and Banjo were found together at the bottom of an ancient billabong.

“It not only presents us with two new amazing long-necked giants of the ancient Australian continent, but also announces our first really big predator - Australovenator,” Long said.

Hocknull says there are many more dinosaurs in the Winton site and they hope to find Australia's oldest mammals among them.

“There are at least 50 other sites we know that are yet to be excavated so the next 20 to 30 years in Australian dinosaur science will be very exciting.”

Clancy, Matilda and Banjo are now part of an exhibition in the Australian Age of Dinosaurs Museum, which opens today in Winton.