Family ensures that a year after his death...

Croc Hunter's legacy lives on

BY JANET FIFE-YEOMANS

HER dad was always larger than life and Bindi Irwin has ensured Steve Irwin’s legacy has not been overshadowed by his death.

Bindi has taken over living the legend of wildlife warrior, elevating her famous father’s vital conservation work to new levels in countries such as Indonesia and India as well as back home at his beloved Australia Zoo.

But even the youngster with her cut-down khakis will be taking today off from the world stage.

Widow Terri, Bindi, 9, and brother Robert, 3, will spend the first anniversary of the Crocodile Hunter’s death in a private location in the US. It is believed they are staying with Oregon-born Terri’s family.

A year since a sting ray fatally speared its barb into 44-year-old Steve Irwin’s chest while he filmed one of his nature documentaries on Batt Reef near Port Douglas, Terri Irwin wants the anniversary to be a “quiet, private day”.

Irwin’s beloved Australia Zoo, at Beerwah on the Sunshine Coast, which became a makeshift shrine in the days after his death, will operate as usual today with no special events planned, an Australia Zoo spokeswoman said.

Instead, the Irwins will celebrate his life on November 15, to be known as Steve Irwin Day, when fans will be encouraged to wear khaki, camp out in their backyards or visit the zoo for a number of special events.

“September 4 is a day for Steve’s family, friends and fans to reflect, whilst November 15 will be a day of celebration, just the way Steve would have liked,” a statement on the zoo’s website said.

While Bindi spreads her dad’s message while promoting her own clothing line, his legacy continues at Australia Zoo where construction work has started on what will be the world’s largest wildlife hospital.

As well, the zoo’s khaki army continues his research work with an annual crocodile research expedition to Far North Queensland and two key koala research projects.

In recognition of Irwin’s standing and contribution to science, the University of Queensland had been about to appoint him as an adjunct professor just before he died.

Professor Craig Franklin said Irwin had not known about the impending appointment. “He would have been honoured and at the same time would have probably passed it off with a typically Australian response,” Professor Franklin said.

“His outward expression, passion and love of animals, great and small, has empowered us all to be wildlife warriors and protectors of the environment.

“This is the legacy that Steve Irwin leaves behind and one we must continue for the sake of future generations.”

Sharing khaki memories

A CHAIN email circling the world has encouraged millions to don khaki today to remember Steve Irwin’s contribution to conservation on the anniversary of his death.

A north Australian environmentalist accidentally kicked-started International Khaki Day last year when he sent an email to friends.

Founder Andrew Tapsall, who yesterday said he despised mass emails, sent a letter urging all his contacts to wear khaki the night Irwin’s death was announced last year.

And just like the Crocodile Hunter’s legacy, it gained momentum internationally.

“This is about raising awareness,” Mr Tapsall said.