

Submission
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INQUIRY INTO MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES

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PHYSICAL INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADE

For the past two years the Australian Museum has undergone significant transformation, which will continue into the future. The Australian Museum is currently revitalising public gallery space, visitor experience and engagement, with the goal to increase access to its collections and build audience visitation at the Museum. This is in line with the NSW Premier's State priority to increase visitation to cultural institutions by 15% by 2019.

- Stage 1 of the Australian Museum's transformation has been completed with the support of the NSW Government. The new works have helped increase the visitor experience and include:
 - the construction of a new accessible entrance and venue space – the award winning Crystal Hall which has re-oriented the Museum onto William Street.
 - Four new galleries including two new Indigenous galleries, a new Pacific cultural gallery and Wild Planet – 630sqm of new public gallery space.
 - A new rooftop café and venue space.
- Stage 2 of the Australian Museum's transformation is now underway. The Australian Museum's Long Gallery is the oldest gallery in Australia and is undergoing a \$9M refurbishment with the support of the NSW Government in partnership with corporate and philanthropic partners. The Westpac Long Gallery will re-open in September 2017 featuring the 200 Treasures of the Australian Museum. An additional temporary exhibition and program gallery will be part of the Stage 2 refurbishment as well as a refurbishment of education program areas and the Search and Discover public learning space.
- The NSW Government has also provided \$4.7M for the Australian Museum Master Plan which will be delivered by the end of 2016. The Master Plan will set the course for the Australian Museum for the next 30 years, creating a world-class Natural History and Culture museum for Sydney, Australia and the Pacific. It will provide 4 times the current public gallery space ensuring that the Museum can compete with other cities in the region for exclusive international exhibitions. The public will have more access behind-the-scenes to the extraordinary Australian Museum natural history and cultural collections and the significant scientific research that is undertaken by the Australian Museum Research Institute.

IMPROVED ACCESS

Access to the Museum and its collection has been significantly enhanced by a number of initiatives in recent years including:

- Kid's Free –the NSW Government announced Kids Free at both the Australian Museum and the Museum of Arts and Applied Science (Powerhouse) in June 2015. This has been a contributor to audience growth, up 7% in FY2016 to over 420,000.
- The Australian Museum toured six exhibitions in FY2016 to achieve an additional audience of 488,000 visitors across regional NSW and Western Sydney.

- The Australian Museum draws on its own collections to create home-grown exhibitions such as Trailblazers: Australia's 50 Greatest Explorers and the Scott Sisters botanical art exhibition. Additionally the Australian Museum has created two world-class exhibitions that will be exported and exhibited across North America in 2017-2019.
- DigiVol is a world leading digitisation program led by over 1,500 Australian Museum volunteers. Digitising the vast Australian Museum collection of over 18.5M objects gives public access to the collections to remote and regional communities across NSW as well as Australia wide and is a basis for international access and collaboration. The Museum digitises approximately 80,000 specimens per year. In 2015/16 over 4.9m people accessed the Australian Museum digital collection with over 57m data downloads of the Australian Museum's digital collection material. The DigiVol methodology has now been adopted by 22 leading institutions internationally.
- The Australian Museum's Youth Reconnection program has been successful in connecting Pacific Islander, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander at-risk-youth and youth in detention centres with their deep culture. In this world first project, Museum social workers work directly with Juvenile Justice, sharing the Australian Museum collections, and their stories with disconnected youth, bringing them a sense of pride and understanding of how they fit within their community.
- Similarly, across Western Sydney the Australian Museum has engaged with many Pacific and Indigenous communities at cultural festivals, national days and events, showcasing our cultural collections and fostering cultural understanding and learning.
- The Australian Museum has been a world leader in repatriating Indigenous secret and sacred objects and ancestral remains since 1974. Where objects cannot be returned to the traditional owners the Australian Museum remains custodian of these objects providing access to Indigenous communities.
- The new Museums Discovery Centre (MDC) that will be opened at Castle Hill in September 2016 is a collaboration between the Powerhouse, the Australian Museum and Sydney Living Museums and funded by the NSW Government. MDC will provide additional access to the museum collections for the people of Northwest Sydney and will specifically target school visitation while providing safe and secure collections management facilities.
- The Australian Museum provides long term collection loans, curatorial and scientific expertise to regional NSW museums. For example; the internationally renowned Sommersville collection owned by the Australian Museum is housed at the Australian Fossil and Mineral Museum in Bathurst. The Australian Museum is collaborating with Cabonne Council and the Age of Fishes Museum in Cannowindra to ensure the Australian Museum's fish fossil collection is accessible for many future generations.
- A 7% increase in audience growth from FY15 to FY16 is attributed to both the Australian Museum's transformation (improved visitor experience) and the Kids Free initiative, particularly significant as the Australian Museum did not stage a blockbuster exhibition during this period.

COLLECTIONS AS EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH RESOURCES

- The Australian Museum provides over \$420 million of research infrastructure to researchers and natural resource industries in NSW, with over 18 million specimens covering minerals and fossils through to vertebrates. These resources are used in biosecurity, fisheries management, conservation management, mining industry research and aviation safety.
- In addition to infrastructure, the Museum's research programme provides a hub for innovative research. In 2015 the Museum was involved in \$4.6 million of research and a grant success rate of 68%, drawing \$1.265 million into the institution. 41% of Museum research (as measured by publications) was international. 145 new species were discovered by the Museum in 2015 and 166 scientific papers produced.
- The Museum's education programme drew 43,000 school children to the Museum, about 3.7% of children in the NSW school system and a further 153,000 were contacted through outreach and remote area programmes. All Australian Museum education programmes are aligned with the Australian National curriculum.
- The Australian Museum has a long history in citizen science and established the Centre for Citizen Science in 2015 which aims to engage the public with science in a practical way. DigiVol and Streamwatch are two examples of citizen science projects that the Australian Museum manages, nurturing the importance of Australia's natural history and biodiversity.

VISITOR ECONOMY CONTRIBUTION

The Australian Museum's exhibitions and programs are designed to have a positive economic impact on the cultural tourism economy, and increasingly the night time economy, of Sydney's CBD.

- 40% of the Australian Museum's audience are tourists from outside the Sydney metropolitan area (on average 20% are international tourists). The Australian Museum contributes to both the overall cultural tourism economy and specifically the Chinese tourism economy with the largest proportion of international visitors to the Australian Museum now coming from China, closely followed by USA, UK and Japan.
- The Australian Museum increasingly opens the doors at night for talks, workshops and events contributing to Sydney's night time economy. Over 3,000 people attended the sell-out Trailblazers talks held over 21 weeks in FY2016. The popular Jurassic Lounge program specifically targets the 18-39 market providing a safe and unique after-hours experience.

The Australian Museum is committed to:

- Improving the visitor experience (for residents and tourists alike) and therefore contributing to the visitor economy.
- Providing increased access to the Australian Museum's world class collections and research activity across Regional NSW and in Western Sydney

- Improving educational access to the Australian Museum.
- Generating additional revenues from a wide variety of sources including commercial activity (retail, café, and venue hire) as well as sponsorship and philanthropy.