

Australian Museum

Highlights & snapshots 2010–2011

nature culture **discover**



Engaging with diversity



At the end of this year, I retire as both President and Trustee after almost a decade of involvement with the Australian Museum. In reflecting on this time, I am reminded of the enduring importance and relevance of the Australian Museum and the extraordinary contribution it will continue to make to our society.

The past year has once again been eventful and successful. The Museum continued to engage with its diverse audiences, initiate new programs and develop unique ways of seeing and understanding the natural and the cultural worlds. The Museum continues to explore new ways of engaging audiences, and this has been one of the focus areas for a new corporate strategic plan.

Over the past year, much discussion has taken place across the Museum to create this plan, setting priorities to underpin a vibrant and relevant long-term future. The plan commits the Museum to building its role as Australia's leading hub for learning about the natural sciences and about indigenous and world cultures. It also sets ambitious three-year targets for growing the Museum's reputation as a leading tourism destination of culture and science. Importantly, the plan recognises that one of the key roles of the Museum remains the active engagement with Australia's culturally diverse communities, and ensuring that our diverse collections are developed, preserved, accessible and widely used.

One of the distinguishing assets of the Australian Museum continues to be the respected and internationally acknowledged research undertaken across a broad sweep of disciplines and topics. Our longer term ambition is to ensure that the Museum's research and informed opinions are sought by decision makers, and that we are the partner of choice across the cultural, scientific and learning sectors.

CHANGE AND RENEWAL

This year saw considerable change and renewal in the composition of the Trust. We farewelled two of our long-serving Trustees, Dr Cindy Pan and David Handley, who both gave wonderful service to the Museum, and welcomed Paul Connor, Dr James Moody, Helen Wellings and Stephen Crittenden as new Trustees. Later this year, Dr Ronnie Harding and I both retire. I would like to pay particular tribute to Ronnie who has chaired the Research and Collections Advisory Committee for the Trust and provided great insight and support for the research and collections community of the Museum.

Change in the management team brought a new Assistant Director, Steven Alderton, who replaces Janet Carding, our former Assistant Director, Public Programs and Operations, who left to take up the directorship of the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada.

Exhibitions held during the year provided diversity and opportunities for a range of audiences to engage with collections. *Alive*, *Banana Kids*, *Yiloga! Tiwi Footy*, *Wildlife Photographer of the Year/My Photo Studio* and *Birds of Paradise* all achieved high visitor numbers, while the creation of a new gemstones display was just one of several updates to the *Planet of Minerals*.

I am delighted that our travelling exhibitions visited Canberra, Lithgow, Newcastle, Perth, Mooloolabah and Launceston, taking *Menagerie*,

opposite: Scenes from the *Alive* arena, celebrating the International Year of Biodiversity, and *Search & Discover*. Photos Carl Bento.

Wildlife Photographer of the Year, *Climate Change – Our Future, Our Choice* and *Frank Hurley – Journeys to Papua* to people and places remote from our College Street site in Sydney.

PHILANTHROPY SUPPORTING THE MUSEUM

Philanthropic support continues to grow at the Australian Museum. On behalf of the Trust I thank the Australian Museum Foundation, led by Diccon Loxton, for its strong and innovative support, which has raised much-needed resources for the Museum, and the Lizard Island Reef Research Foundation, chaired by Ken Coles, for its unwavering support for the Museum's research facility on the Great Barrier Reef.

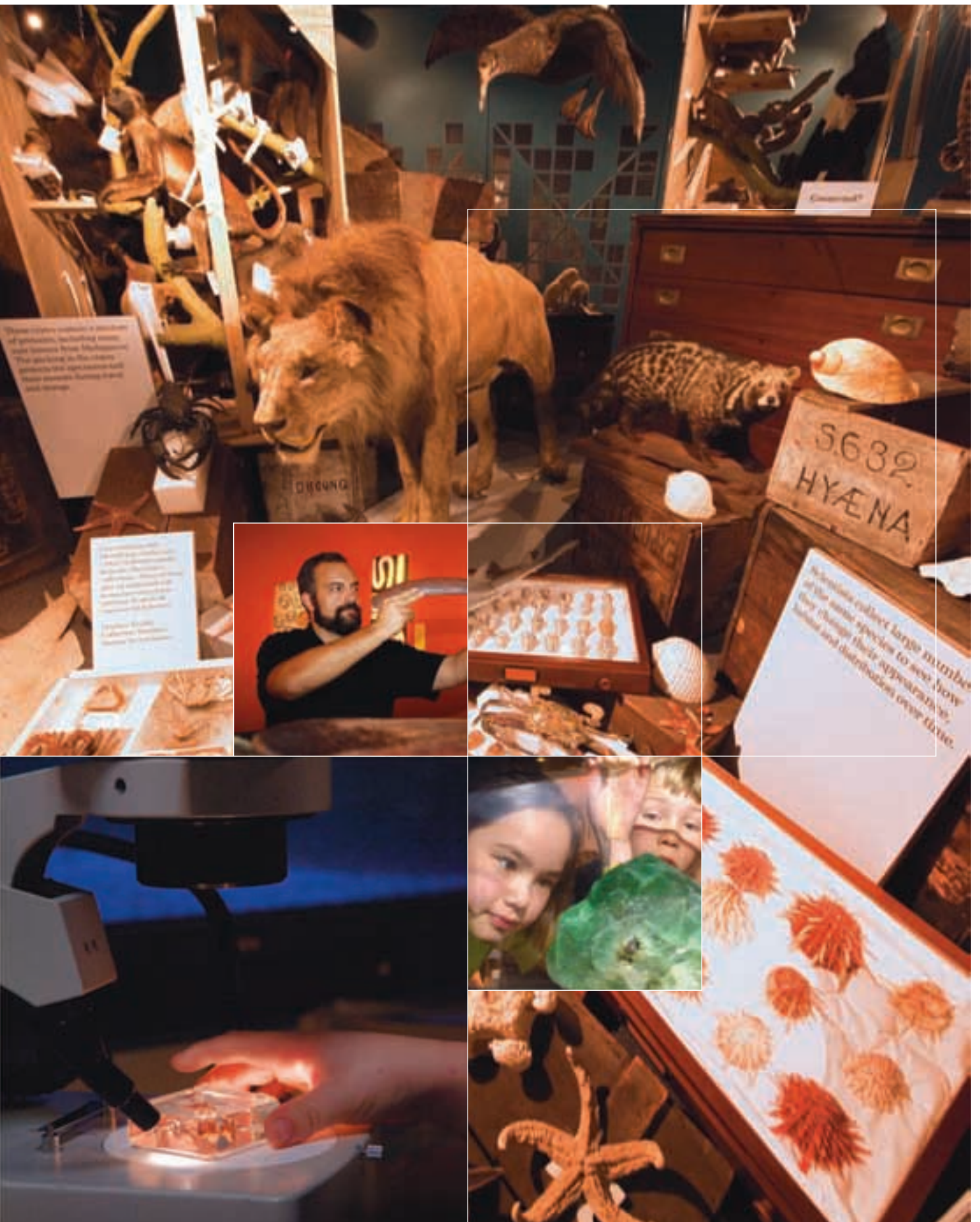
I would like to acknowledge and thank the real stars of the Australian Museum – the staff, volunteers and Members – who continue to show their commitment, enthusiasm and creativity, not just to their particular specialisations, but also to the ever-increasing challenge of doing more with less. They are respectful custodians of some of Australia's most significant natural science and cultural heritage collections, and are ensuring continued innovation in connecting with our broader and growing audiences.

I also thank my fellow Trustees for their advice and support during this year and throughout my time on the Trust. They have been generous and wise in their commitment to growing a strong and vibrant future for the Australian Museum. Thank you too to Director Frank Howarth and the senior management team of the Museum.

It has been a rare and special privilege to serve as President of this remarkable and important institution.

Sam Mostyn

President
Australian Museum Trust



Engaging with people



ENGAGING WITH REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

The Museum engages with regional Sydney, regional New South Wales and other remote stakeholders through innovative learning services, travelling exhibitions and rich online content.

▲ Connected classrooms

Video conferencing reached more than 8300 students in urban and regional New South Wales. Of these, 3000 participated in the Department of Education and Training's Country Areas Program to rural and regional schools bringing a Museum learning experience to students in the State's more remote areas.

On the road

Museum travelling exhibitions such as *Menagerie*, *Climate Change*, *Up Close and Spineless* and *Frank Hurley Journeys to Papua* are reaching new audiences across New South Wales and interstate.

Cultural Collections Digitisation Project

More than 8100 digital photographs of objects from the cultural collections have been added to the collection database this year, allowing those indigenous communities with internet access to add intangible knowledge about the objects and the broader culture of the creator communities.

ENGAGING WITH CULTURES

Continuing its role as the leading Sydney venue for contemporary Indigenous Australian and Pacific cultures, the Museum presented visitors with a vibrant and changing program of exhibitions, displays and events.

Indigenous Australians

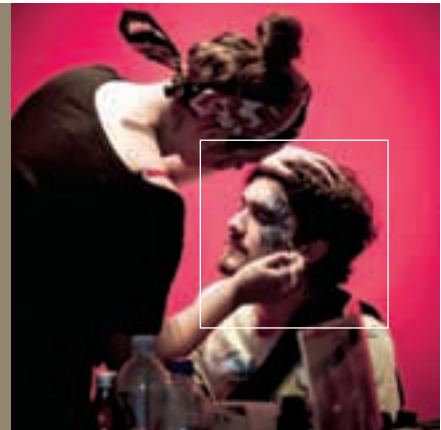
A program of edgy displays, such as *The Keeping Place* (an important collection of contemporary art looking for a home) and *Wrapped in a Possum Skin Cloak by the Lake* (a collaborative project celebrating the art of cloak-making) ensured that the Museum engaged its audiences with contemporary Australian Indigenous culture.

Finding meaning

A pilot program with the Department of Juvenile Justice, now in its second year, is bringing groups of at-risk youth from Pacific backgrounds into the Museum to provide a grounding in their cultural heritage and develop a sense of community.

▼ *Rituals of Seduction: Birds of Paradise*

This new exhibition combined the Museum's expertise in both natural science and cultural collections to engage with communities in Sydney and in the highlands of New Guinea to create an immersive, engaging exhibition with a contemporary edge.



ENGAGING WITH NEW AUDIENCES

Building on our core audiences of Australian Museum Members, sponsors and donors, regular visitors and schools, the Museum is reaching new audiences through innovative programming and new technologies.

▲ Jurassic Lounge

Jurassic Lounge, the Museum's pilot after-hours program, brought art, music and new ideas to around 12,400 visitors, many of whom were young adults and new visitors to the Museum.

Social media

Social media is integrated with the Museum's inhouse exhibitions, online programs and publications through a number of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts reaching new audiences.

Museum in a Box®

The ever-popular Museum in a Box program delivered 540 boxes to schools and community groups across the State, bringing real Museum specimens, teacher notes and activities to 62,250 students.

ENGAGING WITH THE PLANET

Museum research is highlighting the risks to biodiversity faced by coral reefs and elsewhere, so of course we aim to be environmentally responsible in all that we do.

Sustainable printing

We redesigned our flagship magazine, *Explore*, and calendar of events, *Your events*, to be even more environmentally responsible, with printing on carbon-neutral recycled paper and other sustainable production processes.

Eureka!

Almost 900 guests attended the 21st Australian Museum Eureka Prizes Awards Dinner, with media coverage reaching a global audience estimated by Media Monitors at 26 million. The 2010 Eureka program and associated events were carbon neutral, as determined by third-party auditing.

▼ Lizard goes solar

The Museum's research station at Lizard Island switched to solar power in February 2011, reducing its carbon emissions by more than 50%.



ENGAGING WITH LEARNING

Learning is central to the Museum's offering, with tailor-made programs for the under 5s, schoolchildren, families and the wider community.

▲ Search & Discover

Search & Discover attracted 228,000 visitors to view displays about topical issues, to interact with Museum specimens and question staff through face-to-face contact, email, phone and mail. *Search & Discover* processed more than 2500 enquiries in 2010–11.

Kidspace for under 5s

Staff in *Kidspace* developed and ran programs for the under-5 age group with 78 Family Day book readings and activities attracting 1400 children and 1200 adults. Booked programs included 38 workshops attracting 850 children and 52 visits from childcare centres totalling 1100 children.

Face-to-face teaching

33,000 students visited the Museum, with 12,000 participating in lessons led by Museum educators. A further 6000 school students visited the Museum during Science Week to participate in Sydney's largest science fair for students, Science in the City, with a further 3000 students accessing offsite science programs.

ENGAGING WITH RESEARCH

Museum research is helping to answer key questions about the impacts of climate change, biological and cultural diversity, and pest species.

Research at Lizard Island Research Station

The Australian Museum Lizard Island Research Station played host to 134 researchers who conducted 93 projects in coral reef ecology and biodiversity, adding to our knowledge of reef biodiversity and contributing to the sustainable management of these unique marine ecosystems.

Journals of the Australian Museum

The Museum's peer-reviewed journals published descriptions of 77 new species and 3 new genera. Authors from 5 countries published 26 papers, comprising 693 pages, based on the Museum's collections.

▼ Kermadec expedition

Three Museum scientists participated in an expedition to the remote Kermadec Islands in May 2011 to collect fish and marine invertebrates from this little-studied area, thanks to financial support from the bequest of Mrs Patricia Porritt.



Engaging with the future



As Sam Mostyn has mentioned in her report, the Museum has just emerged from a triennial review of our corporate strategic plan. The review asked how we want the Museum to be in the year 2027 – our bicentenary. That may seem a long way off, but it has helped us to prioritise what we do over the coming years.

Reviewing the plan brought together staff, Trustees, volunteers and external stakeholders in vigorous debate about the key roles of the Australian Museum. From these discussions there emerged one theme in particular: learning. This central focus then informs the way we provide access, deliver outreach, conduct research and engage with our many stakeholders and communities.

MOBILITY

How we deliver the Museum's programs and activities is continuing to change significantly. Responding to the challenge of social media means we need to 'go where the people are' and integrate social media into the things we do. Already, our learning programs are incorporating the use of iPads and iPhones in curriculum-based activities for school groups. We also have Facebook and Twitter accounts for the Museum itself, for our Eureka Prizes, and for a range of Museum 'personalities' like Gagali the Gecko, Winny the Muttaborrasaurus and Mr Blobby the Blobfish. Our Twitter accounts include Search and Discover, Museum in a Box and 'amfishbits' (our fish collections).

In the online world, visitors are increasingly using mobile devices to access our website.

Responding to this trend, the Museum's Web Unit has completed our first smart-phone app, to be launched in spring 2011, and is developing a second app with financial support from the Australian Museum Foundation.

COLLEGE STREET

We have brought together two gallery spaces on the ground floor of our College Street site to provide the capacity and flexibility to host larger exhibitions. As construction work nears completion we have been able to develop a strong program for the next three years that includes special exhibitions based on our own research and collections through to larger international blockbusters.

Other priorities include a strategy for upgrading some of our much-loved permanent galleries. We are also working in earnest to develop a more extensive touring exhibitions 'business'. As Sam has noted, we have several terrific exhibitions touring Australia with more on the way. These provide a way of engaging with regional audiences, and some will travel to overseas venues over the next two years.

COMMON GOOD

Technology is constantly providing us with different ways of 'unlocking' the Museum's collections and placing this information in the hands of those who use it, particularly for the common good. With natural science collections, the benefits are clear. Collection information is being used to identify long-term trends in the environment and in species distributions, and to predict future changes. In this sense, the Museum's collections are an irreplaceable and growing resource to science and more widely to the NSW and Australian community.

And so too do the Museum's cultural collections play a significant role. We have come a long way from collecting artefacts just because they are contributing to a highly regarded museum collection, and we are finding new ways of using the

collection to engage with the diversity of cultures that make up contemporary Australia. For example, a pilot program with the Department of Juvenile Justice, now in its second year, is bringing groups of at-risk youth from Pacific backgrounds into the Museum to provide a grounding in their cultural heritage. Through access to artefacts in the collection, these teenagers are using creativity and imagination to build self-esteem, to develop social skills and a sense of community, and to find meaning in their lives. Being part of this program has already given many individuals a positive way forward – a wonderful demonstration of how we can put collections to work in the community.

TO THE FUTURE

The coming year will see President Sam Mostyn and Trustee Ronnie Harding retire from the Museum board. Sam and Ronnie have each provided years of exemplary service to the Museum. Whoever replaces them will have the benefit of taking the reins of a Museum which, thanks in no small part to Sam and Ronnie's dedication and hard work, knows its strengths and is striding forward to meet future challenges.

Probably the biggest challenge of all in the Museum's future years will be to continue growing our funding base. We will continue to explore alternative sources, ever reliant on our creative and committed staff to find sustainable ways of pursuing our business.

That said, we are concluding the 2010–11 year in a relatively strong position financially, and my thanks go to all staff and Museum Trustees for their support in getting here. I would also like to offer a special thank you to our volunteers, Members, visitors, sponsors and donors for their continued support in so many areas of the Australian Museum.

Frank Howarth

Director
Australian Museum

Learning through engagement

The Museum is building its role as Australia's leading hub for learning about the natural sciences and indigenous and world cultures.

NEW HORIZONS

All of the Museum's interactive areas – *Kidspace*, *Search & Discover* and our new, customised and flexible learning spaces, *Nature Space* and *Culture Space* – are now located together on Level 2 of the Museum. This not only allows greater synergy and sharing of resources, but brings together a wider range of resources and opportunities for visitors of any age wishing to discover more about the world around them.

PROGRAM DELIVERY

Visitation was down just one per cent on the five-year average of 334,504 (Figure 1.1). This result was achieved despite several constraints including:

- ▶ the closure of Level 2 for renovations, which affected the Museum's ability to attract visitors
- ▶ a program of smaller exhibitions
- ▶ natural variation between years, due to the size, content and scope of exhibitions and public programs on offer and to a range of external factors.

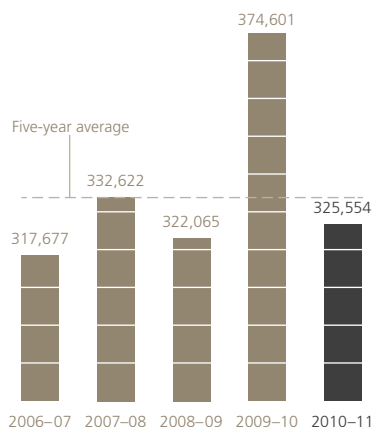


Figure 1.1 Onsite visitation to the Australian Museum, 2006–07 to 2010–11

FOCUS ON LEARNING

More than 10% of visitors to the College Street site are schoolchildren and students with an even greater number served through offsite programs.

Onsite services

The numbers of students served onsite by the Australian Museum has been maintained at levels comparable to those of previous years (Figure 1.2), despite disruptions to services from building works, with:

- ▶ onsite school and tertiary excursion visitors totalling 39,000 students
- ▶ Museum educators leading sessions on site for 12,000 students
- ▶ a professional development program completed for 80 teachers, 12 trainee teachers, four interns, and two museum officers from Papua New Guinea.

Regional services

Services to regional areas increased in 2010–11 thanks largely to videoconferencing in Connected Classrooms with 8321 students reached across NSW. Of these, 2915 were part of a program delivered for the Country Areas Program (CAP) to rural and regional schools.

The Museum's ever-popular Museum in a Box continued to grow, with 540 loans of Museum boxes to schools, community groups and events across NSW reaching 62,250 students. The program attracted new levels of sponsorship for boxes about water supply catchments (funded by Sydney Water) and national parks (funded by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service).

Other regional audiences were served with:

- ▶ social media development of Facebook and Twitter entities from a learning perspective with over 600 followers
- ▶ Science in the Bush, which brought workshops, shows and talks to thousands of students in Albury and, for the first time, Dubbo
- ▶ Evolution of the *Australian Biota* program sessions for 1200 HSC Biology students in Dubbo, Coffs Harbour, Mount Annan and Mount Tomah, with an additional 2000 students served in Sydney, delivered in collaboration with the Royal Botanic Gardens and Taronga Zoo.

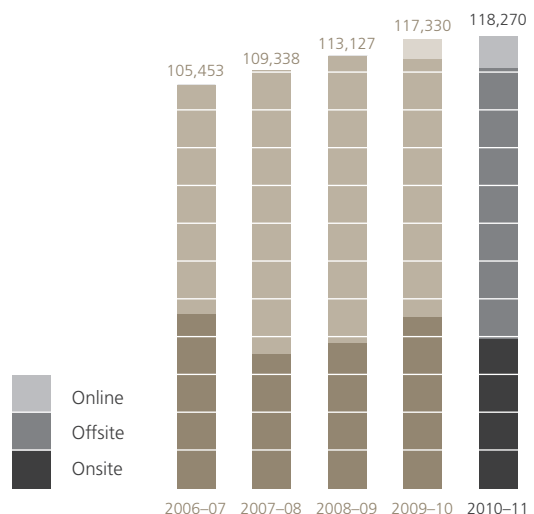


Figure 1.2 Number of students served across New South Wales, 2006–07 to 2010–11

Performance 2010–11

INCOME GENERATION

Museum revenue is provided largely by an annual NSW Government grant. Total revenue this year increased to \$41.5 million (Figure 1.3), an increase of 7% over the previous year's total of \$38.8 million, thanks to NSW Government funding for minor capital works. Recurrent funding (salaries) fell 1.5% in line with the government's annual efficiency dividend.

Museum-earned revenue (Figure 1.4) fell 1.2% but remained well above the five-year average (Figure 1.5). The refurbishment of spaces on Level 2 and the ground floor reduced the space available for exhibitions and public programs, resulting in fewer visitors and less revenue. However, the completed refurbishments will contribute to improved public programming and revenue generation in future years.

This year, the Museum raised around \$11.5 million (28%) of its revenue through:

- ▶ admissions to exhibitions and public programs
- ▶ catering, functions and shop sales
- ▶ grants for scientific research, public programs or other purposes
- ▶ donations and sponsorship.

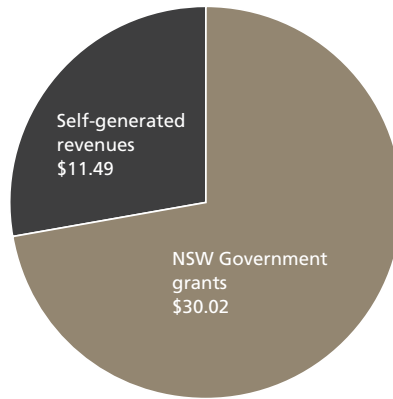


Figure 1.3 Total Australian Museum revenues, 2010–11 (millions)

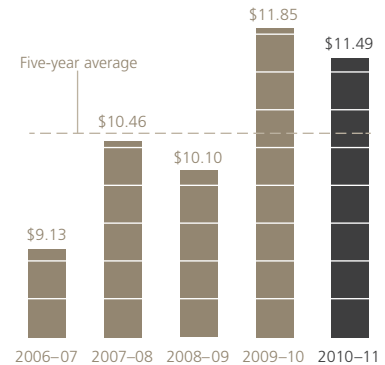


Figure 1.5 Revenue earned by the Australian Museum, 2006–07 to 2010–11 (millions)

Chart and five-year average excludes insurance recovery of \$2.8 million in 2008–09.

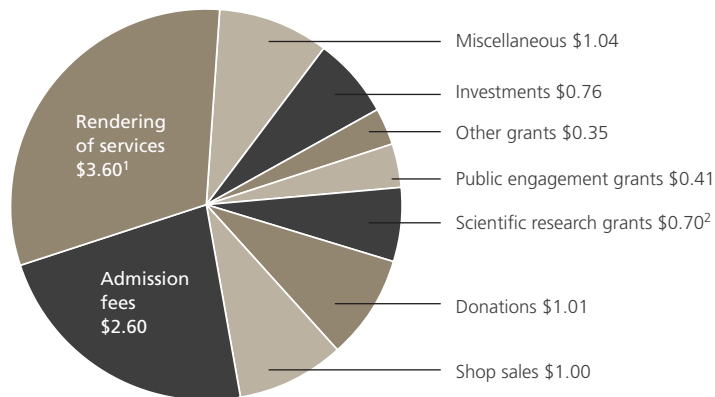


Figure 1.4 Revenue earned by the Australian Museum, 2010–11 (millions)

¹ Includes venue hire and consulting revenue

² Federal and State government research grants only

front cover: Goroka University's Dr Michael Mel (right) and PNG Highlander Tukas Panda (left) joined the opening of the Museum's *Rituals of Seduction: Birds of Paradise* exhibition in April 2011. Photo Stuart Humphreys.

Environmental responsibility

This report is printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper using vegetable-based inks.

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