

**MEDIA RELEASE** – Wednesday 16 December 2015

## AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM PARTNERS WITH WESTPAC AND NSW GOVERNMENT TO TRANSFORM AUSTRALIA'S FIRST GALLERY FOR A NEW ERA

**(Wednesday 16 December 2015, Sydney, NSW):** The Australian Museum (AM) today announced an historic partnership with Westpac, and the NSW Government to restore the nation's first museum gallery, and to showcase its 200 most significant treasures, including two artefacts from Westpac's and the NSW Government's collections.

The \$9 million project is jointly funded by Westpac, the NSW Government and the AM's own philanthropic efforts, and it will transform the current Long Gallery into the **Westpac Long Gallery** in 2017, to mark the AM's 190<sup>th</sup> year and Westpac's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Australia's first bank note was presented to the Australian Museum today on extended loan from Westpac, as part of the new initiative. The note was issued on the day the Bank of New South Wales (now Westpac) first opened in April 1817.

The Maitland Bar Gold Nugget, the only surviving example of a large gold nugget from the early mining years of NSW, is also on extended loan from the NSW Government to the Australian Museum.

"These significant national treasures are too valuable to be hidden away inside vaults and it's fantastic that they will be put on permanent public display in the Westpac Long Gallery," **NSW Premier Mike Baird** said.

"This type of collaboration demonstrates the NSW Government's commitment to developing innovative models of investment in our cultural institutions,"

**Brian Hartzer**, Westpac Chief Executive Officer, said the partnership and restoration of the Long Gallery was an opportunity to share many facets of Australia's rich history.

"A partnership between Australia's first bank and first museum is a natural fit. Together, we are creating a new space to showcase Australia's rich educational, scientific and cultural heritage for many generations to come."

"We are delighted to be handing over Australia's first bank note to the Westpac Long Gallery."

The AM's Executive Director and CEO, **Kim McKay AO**, said the historic partnership had contributed renewed vision to Australia's first museum, with the Westpac Long Gallery set to become the 'must see' gallery in Australia.

"The incredible stories of the most significant treasures from the Australian Museum's collection of 18 million objects will be made available for current and future generations to discover the history of our nation and our region," she said.

"The Long Gallery is itself a treasure, having an uninterrupted history as a display gallery since 1857, and the announcement of its restoration marks the start of stage two of the transformation of Australia's first museum."

Heritage restoration of the Long Gallery is slated to begin in mid 2016 and it will be completed during Westpac's bicentenary in 2017. To enable the exhibition of the 200 treasures, the Australian Museum is offering donors the opportunity to support each of the priceless objects. Pledges have already been received for 23 of the treasures.

The treasures already supported include a rare and beautiful Kalani'opu'u cape collected by **Captain Cook** on his third and final voyage, while those yet to be pledged include the complete specimen of a **thylacine pup**, an object of immense scientific value for its intact DNA.

The Australian Museum recently completed stage one of its renewal with the opening of the new Crystal Hall entrance on William Street and a new permanent exhibition *Wild Planet*, along with three other new galleries.

### MEDIA CONTACT

Rohan Astley, Australian Museum

D 02 9320 6086 M 61 407 215 392 E [rohan.astley@austrmus.gov.au](mailto:rohan.astley@austrmus.gov.au)

Carey Withey, Westpac

D 02 8253 3036 M 61 466 485 136 E [carey.withey@westpac.com.au](mailto:carey.withey@westpac.com.au)

Mark Tobin, Office of the Premier

D 02 8574 5000 M 0417 497 368 E [mark.tobin@premier.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mark.tobin@premier.nsw.gov.au)

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### About the Australian Museum (AM)

The AM, founded in 1827 is the nation's first museum, and is an internationally recognised natural science and culture institution focused on Australia and the Pacific. As custodian of more than 18 million objects, the AM is uniquely positioned to provide a greater understanding of the region through its scientific research, exhibitions and public and education programs. Through the Australian Museum Research Institute (AMRI), the AM also has a leading role in conserving Australia's biodiversity through understanding the environmental impacts of climate change, potential biosecurity threats and invasive species.

### About Westpac

Westpac has a long and proud history of supporting Australians. As the nation's first and oldest bank, the Bank of New South Wales (now Westpac) was founded in 1817 by Governor Lachlan Macquarie to provide a stable and reliable economic system in response to the growth and development of the colony. Renamed Westpac Banking Corporation in 1982, the Bank expanded. As of June 2015 Westpac has five key customer facing divisions serving around 13 million customers. The five key divisions include: Consumer Bank, Commercial and Business Bank, BT Financial Group, Westpac Institutional Bank and Westpac New Zealand.

### Additional information

[australianmuseum.net.au/media](http://australianmuseum.net.au/media)

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**D** 02 9320 6086 **M** 61 407 215 392 **E** [rohan.astley@austrmus.gov.au](mailto:rohan.astley@austrmus.gov.au)

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**D** 02 8253 3036 **M** 61 466 485 136 **E** [carey.withey@westpac.com.au](mailto:carey.withey@westpac.com.au)

Mark Tobin, Office of the Premier

**D** 02 8574 5000 **M** 0417 497 368 **E** [mark.tobin@premier.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mark.tobin@premier.nsw.gov.au)

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