



*Australian Museum*

**HIGHLIGHTS & SNAPSHOTS  
2011–12**

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## President's report

# BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS

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I am delighted to have this opportunity to lead the Board of Trustees of the Australian Museum. After six months here I have discovered what a vibrant organisation it is, with diverse programs and a robust collections and research base.



A significant part of my role is, I believe, to make this expertise and scope of activity more widely known throughout the community, and to ensure acknowledgement of and support for the nation's first and most revered museum.

### EXHIBITIONS

There have been great successes in the past year, not least of which rested on our successful partnerships with key organisations. *Yiwarra Kujju: The Canning Stock Route* exhibition opened in December 2011 and would not have been possible without the support of the National Museum of Australia, Canberra. It was also the inaugural exhibition in our newly refurbished and expanded ground floor gallery.

### LEARNING

Education is a cornerstone of the Museum's role, and we are continually developing programs and activities for students of all ages. Over 115,000 students benefited from interaction with the Museum. One third of these visited College Street, while video conferencing into schools and Museum in a Box programs reached almost 74,000 students across the State. Research and Collections staff have a strong role in supervising doctorate and other postgraduate research, while lectures, talks and behind-the-scenes insights are readily available.

### SCIENCE AND COLLECTIONS

This year staff took their expertise offsite to survey the biodiversity of Timor-Leste, the first combined terrestrial and marine expedition ever to that country and the

largest scientific expedition organised by the Museum in its 185-year history. Based on initial studies, we anticipate that hundreds of new animal species will be scientifically identified, and the results will assist Timor-Leste with its conservation planning. This expedition was made possible by a private donation to the Australian Museum Foundation (AMF).

### COMMUNITY AND SUPPORT

The life and reputation of an organisation rests on its staff, and Museum staff readily apply their knowledge and skills to provide significant benefits in science research, lifelong learning and visitor engagement opportunities. Every member of staff contributes to the quality of what the Australian Museum has on offer. I commend staff, in all their diversity, on their commitment to the future of the Museum and look forward to working with them.

The Museum is fortunate in its support base. This year, Australian Museum Members celebrated a major landmark in their history – 40 years and still going strong. My thanks go to our Members who provide wide-ranging support and advocacy on a variety of fronts. I also thank most sincerely the Museum's volunteer cohort, now numbering 678 and supporting programs both onsite, offsite and online. Their input on operations, research and collection management is invaluable.

The Chairmen and Trustees of AMF and the Lizard Island Reef Research Station Foundation (LIRRF) continue to work tirelessly for the benefit of the Museum. I particularly thank Ken Coles AM,

who retired this year after 18 years as Chairman of LIRRF, and welcome David Shannon in this role. Diccon Loxton continues as Chair of AMF, leading its programs and building relationships to expand the Museum's much-needed support base.

### TRUSTEES

My sincere thanks must go to my predecessor, Sam Mostyn. Sam retired at the end of 2011 completing her maximum term of office and leaving a team of motivated and committed Trustees which it is now my privilege to lead. Trustees who departed in 2011 were Michael Chaaya, whom we welcome to the AMF Board, Dr Ronnie Harding, who made significant contributions to science in her 10 years' of office, and Michael Alscher, who had chaired the Trust's Internal Audit and Risk Committee.

I welcome our new Trustees – Professor Merlin Crossley, Jason Glanville, Karina Kelly and Kim McKay AO. I look forward to working productively with all Trustees and to their ongoing contributions to the Museum's strategic priorities. We have now completed the first year of our three-year strategic plan, making good progress in science, research, learning and public program initiatives which will help us achieve our 2014 objectives.

**Catherine Livingstone AO**  
President  
Australian Museum Trust

# HIGHLIGHTS 2011–12

## 1 A HUB OF LEARNING

### ▼ OUTREACH

*Museum2you*, a community environmental education project, was announced in May. It has already helped to raise environmental awareness in several regional centres including Mulwala, Tamworth, Port Macquarie, Orange, the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury.



### SCHOOL STUDENTS

A total of 115,350 students gained support in their studies by participating in the Museum's highly regarded education programs both onsite and offsite through Museum in a Box and video conferencing.

### UNDER-5S

We launched two new under-5s programs, *Mini Explorers* and *Tiny Tot Explorers*, linked to the pre-school curriculum and attended by 424 children and parents. The Thursday Family Day program attracted a further 656 visitors.

## 2 EXCITING AND COMPELLING

### RENEWAL PLAN

A new space for temporary exhibitions opened in 2012, significantly improving the Museum's capability. The area can be configured as two smaller galleries or one large (1000 square metre) gallery, and has been designed using sustainability principles. The first exhibition to open in the space was *Beauty from Nature: Art of the Scott Sisters*.

### VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

A new display facility, the Project Space, provides opportunities to show objects from the collection. It has already featured *Big Cats* (taxidermied specimens) and *Spirit Faces* (dramatic masks from Melanesia).



### ▲ JURASSIC LOUNGE

A successful Jurassic Lounge (season 3) attracted 12,692 people, mainly in the hard-to-reach 18–35 year-old demographic, to enjoy comedy acts, burlesque and musical performances, presentations and demonstrations in the dramatic setting of the Museum's permanent galleries and temporary exhibitions.

## 3 ENGAGED WITH THE COMMUNITY



### ▲ RECONCILIATION NSW WEEK

The Museum hosted the launch of Reconciliation NSW Week in May 2012 in partnership with the NSW Reconciliation Council. It featured a display of selected artworks from a State-wide student art competition and a group of Indigenous weavers demonstrating their craft.

### PACIFIC YOUTH COLLECTION ACCESS PROGRAM

For the third year, the Museum is successfully using its collections to connect at-risk Pacific youth with their cultural heritage. The program is set to continue and expand in 2012, thanks to grant funding from the Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation and Australian Museum Foundation.

### REPATRIATION PROGRAM

We have returned ancestral Aboriginal remains and secret/sacred objects from the collection to communities at Yass, Grafton, the Clarence River area and Bourke, thanks to support from the Commonwealth Return of Indigenous Cultural Property program.

# HIGHLIGHTS 2011–12

## 4 INSPIRING COLLECTIONS

### DIGITISATION OF THE COLLECTION

The Museum took another step towards the collaborative digitisation of collections with other cultural institutions by engaging a consultant to develop a business case. Work is on track to create a short digital record of all objects in the cultural collections by the end of 2014.

### PHYSICAL AND ONLINE ACCESS

The NSW Government announced that it is investing in a new offsite collection facility to be shared with other major cultural institutions. When completed, this will result in greater physical access to collections. Planning for the facility has commenced. Online access to cultural collections on the Museum website has been improved with better indexing and grouping of stories.



### ▲ COLLECTION ACQUISITION

A major donation of Tongan material culture by retired teacher Miss Muriel Snell was accessioned collaboratively with the local Tongan community with support from the Porritt Bequest. Experts in intangible heritage from Tonga and Sydney's Tongan diasporic community helped document knowledge about the objects.

## 5 A TRUSTED ADVISER AND PARTNER

### ▼ SCIENCE IN THE CITY

The Museum's annual science festival, Science in the City, attracted 5175 secondary students to the Museum in August 2011. The festival raises awareness of science as a career option and is held in partnership with Charles Sturt University, the University of Western Sydney, Macquarie University and four other universities, with support from major sponsor 3M.



### SCIENCE IN THE BUSH

Science in the Bush at Charles Sturt University's Orange Campus and the Crossing Theatre, Narrabri (with the Careers Network and support from the local community) attracted 1400 students.

### SUBMISSIONS AND ADVICE

Museum experts provide comments, advice and recommendations to the NSW and Federal governments, this year making 20 submissions on topics such as national research priorities, marine park planning, biodiversity, climate change and conservation.

## 6 RESEARCH THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

### AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM EUREKA PRIZES

The Australian Museum successfully presented the 2011 Eureka Prizes dinner in August 2011 to celebrate and reward excellence in science. It achieved wide success in scientific and media circles with major mainstream media coverage. Events for the Eureka Prizes followed a carbon-neutral, environmental sustainability policy.

### DNA BARCODE CENTRE

The Museum is developing plans to establish a new DNA barcode centre at the Museum, to be known as the Australian Centre for Wildlife Genomics. The Centre will expand the role of the DNA laboratory, which this year has applied for NATA accreditation.

### ▼ BIODIVERSITY SURVEY OF TIMOR-LESTE

In May 2012, the Museum completed the first of two planned faunal surveys in Timor-Leste, thanks to a private donation to the Australian Museum Foundation. The surveys will provide essential information for biodiversity conservation planning in the emerging nation.



**7 CULTURE AND COMMITMENT**



**▲ STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

A new online corporate training program is improving staff skills and knowledge in topics such as workplace health and safety, managing stress and managing workplace conflict, complemented by face-to-face courses.

**SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT**

Changes to position responsibilities and resourcing this year have aimed to optimise the delivery of IT, Finance, Human Resources, Building and Security services.

**WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY**

Focusing on the safety of our staff, volunteers, contractors and visitors, we have integrated new workplace health and safety legislation into our procedures, and have trained staff in the new legislation. The Museum exceeded State safety targets in most instances and is actively working to make improvements in the few areas where targets were not achieved.

**8 BALANCED RESOURCES**

**SHOP**

Turnover at the Museum Shop exceeded \$1.11 million with an average income per visitor of \$3.12. Exhibition-themed merchandise and wide distribution of a Christmas brochure via *The Sydney Morning Herald* helped us achieve high sales.

**CATERING**

Restaurant Associates, the Museum's contracted catering partner, continued operations of the Cafe and Venues functions with increased income for both businesses. The Night Parrot, the Museum's latest function space (on the ground floor of the refurbished former National School Building) launched successfully in May to a receptive events marketplace.



**▲ CONSULTING SERVICES**

Australian Museum Business Services (AMBS) achieved revenues of over \$2.7 million, the best financial performance in its 20-year history. AMBS provides consulting services in the fields of ecology, archaeology and heritage.

**9 ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE**

**▼ SUSTAINABLE EXHIBITION DESIGN**

The Museum re-uses and recycles exhibition components where possible. This year we re-used wall panels in *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* and *Deep Oceans*, a theatre structure in *Yiwarra Kujju: The Canning Stock Route* and *Deep Oceans*, and a large globe model in *Deep Oceans*.



**ENERGY EFFICIENCY**

The Museum reduced overall electricity consumption by approximately 203 MWh, or 4% of total consumption, through more efficient use of air-conditioning in collection storage spaces, including programmed shutdowns in periods of low use.

**COMMUNICATING SUSTAINABILITY**

A redesign of *Explore* magazine in 2011 specified the use of 100% recycled paper, vegetable inks and carbon-neutral production processes to certified environmental standards.

With a year of substantial achievements behind us, we have a solid base for exciting years ahead. *Alexander the Great: 2000 Years of Treasures* opens at the Museum in November 2012 in our new, larger gallery space. As this is the first time the State Hermitage, St Petersburg, has toured a major museum collection to Australia, it is a privilege for the Museum to be the host organisation, with support from the State government and major sponsors. Our forward planning for major touring exhibitions now stretches into 2014, largely thanks to our new gallery space.

A considerable part of early 2012 was dedicated to the Museum's master plan. In December 2011, the NSW Government Architect's Office completed an urban design study focused on the under-utilised Yurong Street (eastern) end of the site to determine development options. A project manager was then appointed to integrate Museum-wide staff input on functional and accommodation needs, to define the challenges of navigating the site as a whole and to determine the best possible uses for the new 'Gateway' development.

**WORKING TOWARDS 2027 – OUR 200TH ANNIVERSARY**

While fulfilling a range of critical goals in the NSW State Plan, the master plan also considers how the future physical transformation of the site will facilitate meeting the goals of our Corporate Strategic Plan. These include establishing a 'Hub of Learning', with the Australian Nature and Learning Centre, that builds on our existing, and extensive, formal and informal learning programs.



**COLLECTIONS, RESEARCH AND SCIENCE**

Our 'Inspiring Collections' are increasingly being unlocked for wider use through the Museum's DigiVol (volunteer collection digitisation) project, which is supported by 70 volunteers onsite and 250 web-based virtual volunteers. Since its inception in May 2011, DigiVol has increased the rate of natural history collection digitisation by around 100% (to 80,000 specimens) a year. Based on this success, the Australian Museum Foundation will continue funding DigiVol in the coming year as we meet the challenge of increasing numbers of collections queries from around the globe.

The Museum's Research and Collections staff continued vital 'Research that Makes a Difference', providing formal advice on a wide range of national and State concerns. These included 20 submissions on policies and programs around biodiversity and climate change, national research priorities, marine park and protected environment planning and, for example, the role of science in fisheries and aquaculture management. A recent staff restructure will allow the Museum to better leverage this research expertise in the future, through Australian Museum Business Services (AMBS) and elsewhere. Increasingly, our DNA facility, now called the Australian Centre for Wildlife Genomics, is industry's and government's first port of call for wildlife identification, with direct applications in border security, law enforcement and bio-security.

We also continue to recognise and reward excellence in science across Australia with the 2011 Eureka Prizes reaching a global audience estimated at 24 million.

**BALANCED RESOURCES AND SUSTAINABILITY**

We are increasingly aiming for 'Balanced Resources' in our support base. This includes donations through the Australian Museum and Lizard Island Reef Research foundations, as well as sales through our shop and food and beverage outlets. In addition, AMBS has achieved revenues of over \$2.7 million, the best performance in its 20-year history.

Through judicious experimentation with heat and humidity controls in our more modern and stable collection storage areas, we achieved a reduction of approximately 4% in electricity consumption – a step towards our long term goal to be 'Environmentally Sustainable'.

Having exceeded safety targets in most areas, we are working to maintain and build a positive 'Culture and Commitment' among staff. We are building a flexible and innovative workforce, ready to take up the challenges of managing and promoting a significant cultural institution in the 21st century.

My thanks go to all Museum staff and Trustees for their outstanding contributions during the year, which have given once again a strong base to build on. I also give special thanks to our supporters among Members, volunteers, sponsors and donors, without whom we would not be celebrating such a level of success. I look forward to progress in the year ahead.

**Frank Howarth PSM**  
Director  
Australian Museum

# Performance 2011–12

## VISITORS

At College Street, we exceeded our target of 335,000 visitors, with 335,596 viewing and interacting with our exhibitions and programs. Students, 38,286 of them, made up over 10% of visitors.

Our major special exhibitions for this period included *Rituals of Seduction: Birds of Paradise* which exceeded its visitor targets. Over 26,000 daytime visitors bought tickets to *Yiwarra Kuju: The Canning Stock Route*; although this was below the target of 30,000, a further 10,000 Jurassic Lounge visitors had free access to the exhibition.

A new special exhibition, *Deep Oceans*, attracted 7689 visitors in the last two weeks of June, on track to meet its target of 62,000 visitors over its full 16-week run.

We achieved these targets despite a fall in international visitation (from 101,835 to 71,233) in line with patterns of inbound tourism to the State. The ongoing global financial crisis and the Fukushima earthquake and tsunami in March 2011 influenced the lower than expected numbers.

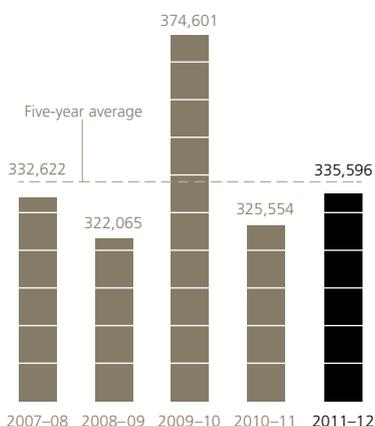


Figure 1.1 Onsite visitors to the Australian Museum, 2007–08 to 2011–12.



Photos: opposite and this page Carl Bento

# REVENUE

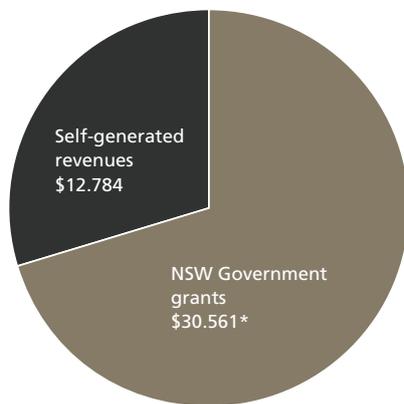
The Museum is principally funded by the NSW Government and strives to achieve a balance of revenue from government, philanthropic and commercial sources to achieve its goals.

Revenues in 2011–12 totalled \$43.3 million (\$41.5 million in 2010–11) (Figure 1.2), including \$28.9 million in NSW Government grants and \$1.6 million for the reimbursement of Crown costs (superannuation and long service leave).

The Museum generated around 29.5% (\$12.8 million) of its revenue (Figures 1.2 and 1.3) largely from:

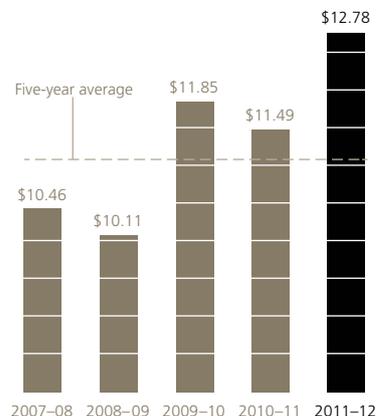
- ▶ services rendered (consulting and venue hire)
- ▶ admission fees
- ▶ shop sales
- ▶ grants for scientific research and public programs
- ▶ donations received.

This increase of \$1.3 million of total revenue over the previous year (Figure 1.4) is largely due to income from consulting services and research grants.

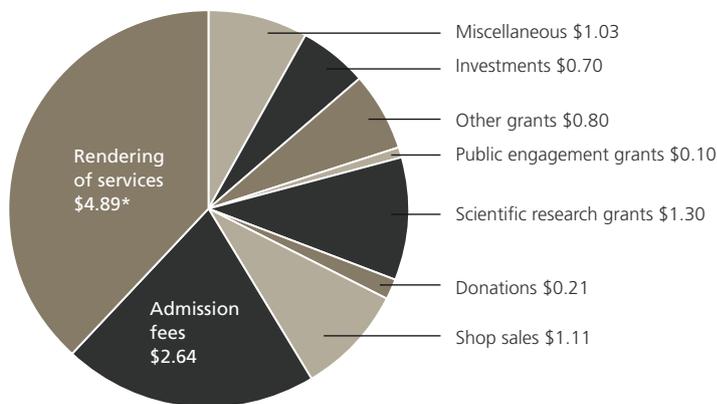


**Figure 1.2 Total revenues to the Australian Museum, 2011–12 (millions)**

\* See text



**Figure 1.4 Self-generated revenue to the Australian Museum, 2007–08 to 2011–12**



**Figure 1.3 Sources of self-generated revenue for the Australian Museum, 2011–12 (millions)**

\* Includes venue hire and consulting revenue

front cover: Conservator Kate Jones with the restored Rover Thomas painting *Canning Stock Route* (1984). Photo Stuart Humphreys.

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

Australian Museum Highlights & Snapshots 2011–2012  
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## Australian Museum

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

