

national museum of australia

MASTER PLAN OVERVIEW



national
museum
australia



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Exploring the past, illuminating the present and imagining the future

VISION

We live in a dynamic, technology-driven landscape where knowledge is the new currency, a world in which there has never been a greater need for a museum designed for the future. The Master Plan for the National Museum of Australia delivers an inspired vision for the twenty-first century and beyond — to be a museum like no other. A museum at the crossroads of the real and the virtual, embracing both. An institution at the core of the emerging knowledge economy.

The National Museum of Australia is recognised at home and around the world as the place where the story of Australia comes alive. As we approach the 20th anniversary of our opening in 2001, the Museum is poised to double its size and expand the range of its services to the public. The Museum is the only institution equipped to tell the complex and comprehensive story of Australia from 65,000 years ago to the present day. The story of our nation is a remarkable one, from the ancient and enduring histories of the world’s oldest living cultures to the achievements of modern Australia. It is a story that is ever evolving and growing — and it is a story for a nation and for the world.

Dr Mathew Trinca
Director

MASTER PLAN DESIGN

A premier global destination, bringing the world’s cultures to Australia and presenting Australia’s history, its culture and its place in the global community to the world

The future of the National Museum of Australia is enshrined in this Master Plan, which builds upon the institution's successes and achievements to date. This vision will see the Museum grow and develop its offerings, connecting onsite and online experiences as never before.

At its heart, this is a transformative plan to double the size of the Museum and to greatly extend the range of its public experiences by 2030, while taking its exhibitions and programs across the nation and around the world. These will meld real and virtual experiences, so that both realms are seamlessly integrated, giving the public the opportunity to participate in or create their Museum experiences.

We will begin by re-imagining our current spaces through major developments of the Museum’s entry Atrium, its Forecourt and its Galleries. With its generous ideas for integrated parklands and open gardens inspired by the Australian bush, and for interactive exhibitions, theatres and play areas all aligned to virtual content, the Master Plan reshapes the boundaries of the Museum, both physically and digitally — encouraging visitors from around Australia and across the globe to explore, linger, share and learn.

Four key themes underpin and connect the developments outlined in this Master Plan. We begin with the experience of **Welcome** woven through our planned expansive gardens, leafy Forecourt and Atrium, inviting visitors to share in the Museum’s journey through time and place. We then move on to the concept of **Storytelling**, in our permanent galleries and award-winning exhibitions and events, where the story of Australia — its ancient living cultures, its British foundations and law and its diverse multicultural peoples — is revealed. The sense of **Discovery** then unfolds in our interactive educational areas and digital content that will encourage visitors to take the knowledge they have uncovered in the galleries and draw inspiring connections with their own lives. Finally, our commitment to **Preservation** encapsulates our responsibilities as custodians of the National Historical Collection — the nation’s material record of its history and experiences. These spaces will give people opportunities to learn how we safeguard the nation’s heritage through cherishing and caring for our collection.

These new public spaces will be delivered as a series of projects through to 2030. They will establish the Museum precinct at Acton as a premier learning and experiential destination, and allow the Museum to connect with people across the nation and around the world using state-of-the-art digital technologies. All developments will incorporate public participation and active involvement, creating inclusive inter-generational and inter-cultural experiences. By 2030 the National Museum of Australia will be a global institution where people can meet, exchange ideas and celebrate their lives together.

The National Museum of Australia: where knowledge unlocks the future



1. WELCOME

The Australian bush in all its contrasting beauty will invite visitors into the new Museum precinct. Native trees, grasses and flowering bushes, sourced from across Australia, will provide a tranquil space for visitors and the local community to gather and enjoy the sublime surrounds of the Acton Peninsula. There will also be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Food Garden.

Visitors to the National Museum of Australia will be welcomed by the First Peoples of Canberra, the Ngambri, Ngunnawal and Ngunawal, by the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and then by the diverse cultures that call Australia home in the twenty-first century.

In the Atrium, visitors will be introduced to Defining Moments in Australian History, a suite of displays that showcase the breadth of the National Historical Collection. This dynamic layout will provide an interactive snapshot of the complexity and depth of the Australian story.

FORECOURT

As visitors approach the main entrance, they will enter the Museum's re-designed Forecourt. The area will be an immersive sensory representation of the Australian landscape. Gums, wattles, native grasses and seasonal floral displays — the varied forms, colours and textures of the Australian bush — will impart a sense of the nation's vastness and sheer geographical diversity.

Designed as a mosaic, the garden will reflect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' practice of fire-stick farming, creating a canvas that reflects a landscape cultivated by fire, with the abundance and regeneration that follows flames, smoke and ash.

At the heart of the garden will be a physical welcome to Country from the First Peoples of Canberra. Words of welcome, spelt out in languages from across the globe, will sit near the main doors of the Museum and greet guests as they enter the Atrium, where their own journey will unfold.





ATRIUM

With its soaring curved ceilings that give a sense of space, light and wonder, and windows that open onto lush gardens and frame the waters of Lake Burley Griffin, the Atrium will envelop guests in the Australian narrative and provide a place to stop and plan their adventure within the Museum.

Suspended high above visitors in the Atrium will be a contemporary work of art by Reko Rennie, the renowned Melbourne-based Indigenous artist. Covered in neon-bright geometric patterns, this inimitably styled bogong moth will bring together traditional themes and the most modern of materials and artistic practices.

The overarching concept for the Atrium's design is Defining Moments in Australian History, and dotted around this space will be key objects from the Museum's core collection: dinosaur bones from a *Muttaburrasaurus*, an iconic 1955 FJ Holden and the dress worn by singer Jessica Mauboy in her history-making Eurovision performance in 2014 — to name just a few.

Another highlight of the Atrium will be the Defining Moments Interactive Wall, which will feature significant moments in history depicted in tiles along a wave-like timeline. Visitors will be able to reach out and touch history. They will be able to tap on a moment to get more information, or drag and group moments to find links between separate events. Images, movement, sound and colour will make this a key feature of the Atrium, drawing guests into the wonders to be uncovered in the galleries beyond. Our goal is to enable visitors to find their own stories, link them to others and marvel at those still left to discover.

The open, light-filled Atrium will also provide the ideal setting for a range of activities, including exhibition openings, performances and after-hours functions.

LAKESIDE PLAZA

The Master Plan makes clever use of the institution's enviable location, creating gardens and parklands where visitors and the public can pause to enjoy the beauty of the nation's capital. A tranquil pocket of parkland, the Lakeside Plaza will sit on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin looking over the water towards the city centre. Sculptures and objects will be carefully placed amid the greenery, inviting visitors to stroll along shaded, winding paths and find places to sit and enjoy a picnic with friends and family.

LAKESIDE LANDSCAPE

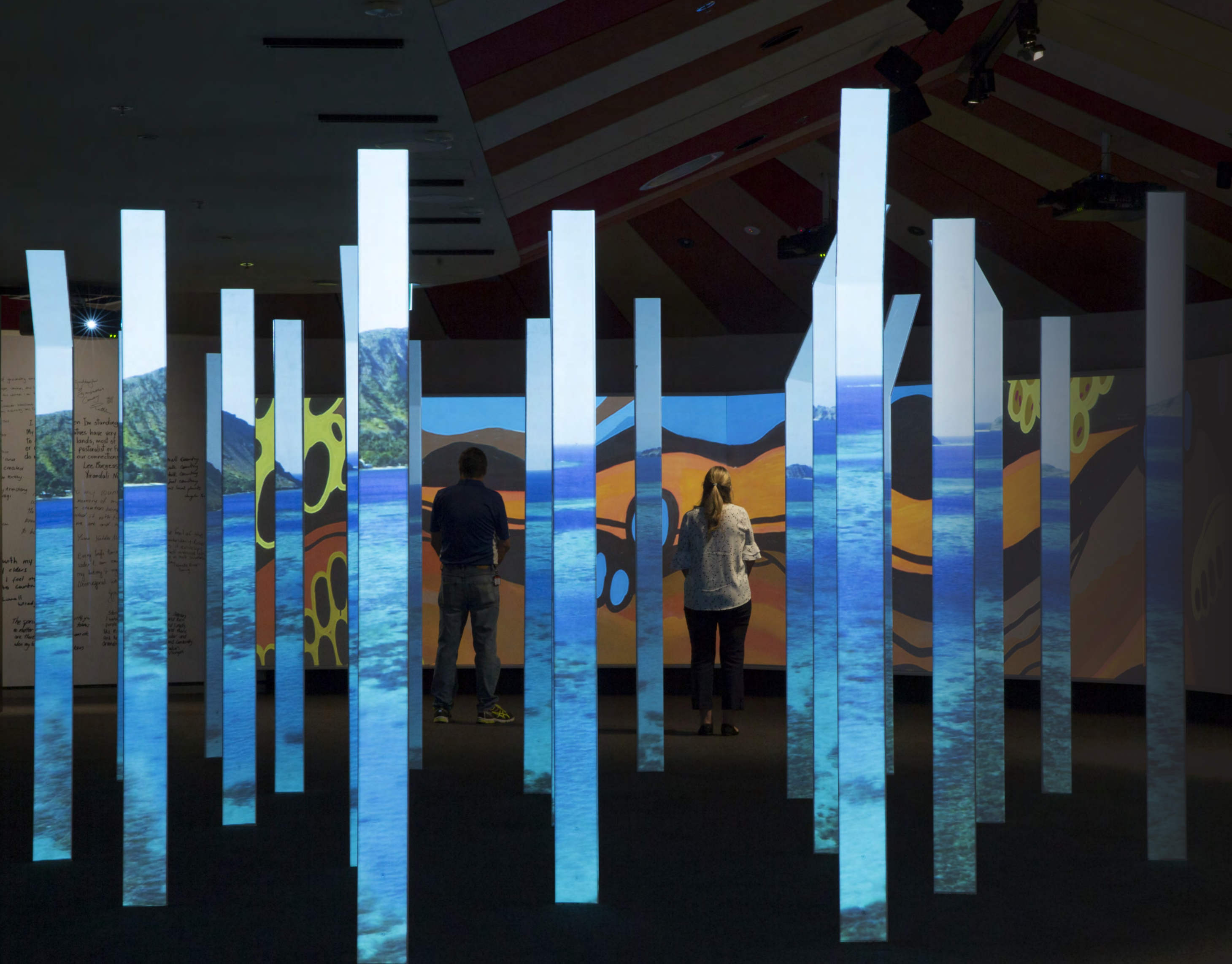
By embracing the overall architectural concept for the Acton precinct, the Master Plan takes into account every aspect of design, including the walkways and gardens that connect areas and attractions. These carefully planned spaces will encourage visitors to explore and uncover new stories from Australia's rich history.

Lakeside Landscape is one of these areas, linking visitors to the Lakeside Plaza and the Garden of Australian Dreams. With an inspired design that makes use of every inch of space, Lakeside Landscape will include an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Food Garden and areas where events can be held.

REFUEL

A new entry point to the National Museum of Australia will sit on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin. This café, which will enjoy panoramic views, will be a natural resting spot for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as for visitors to the Museum. From here they will be able to walk through to the reinvigorated Garden of Australian Dreams and Play adventure playground, areas designed for the young, and the young at heart.





2. STORYTELLING

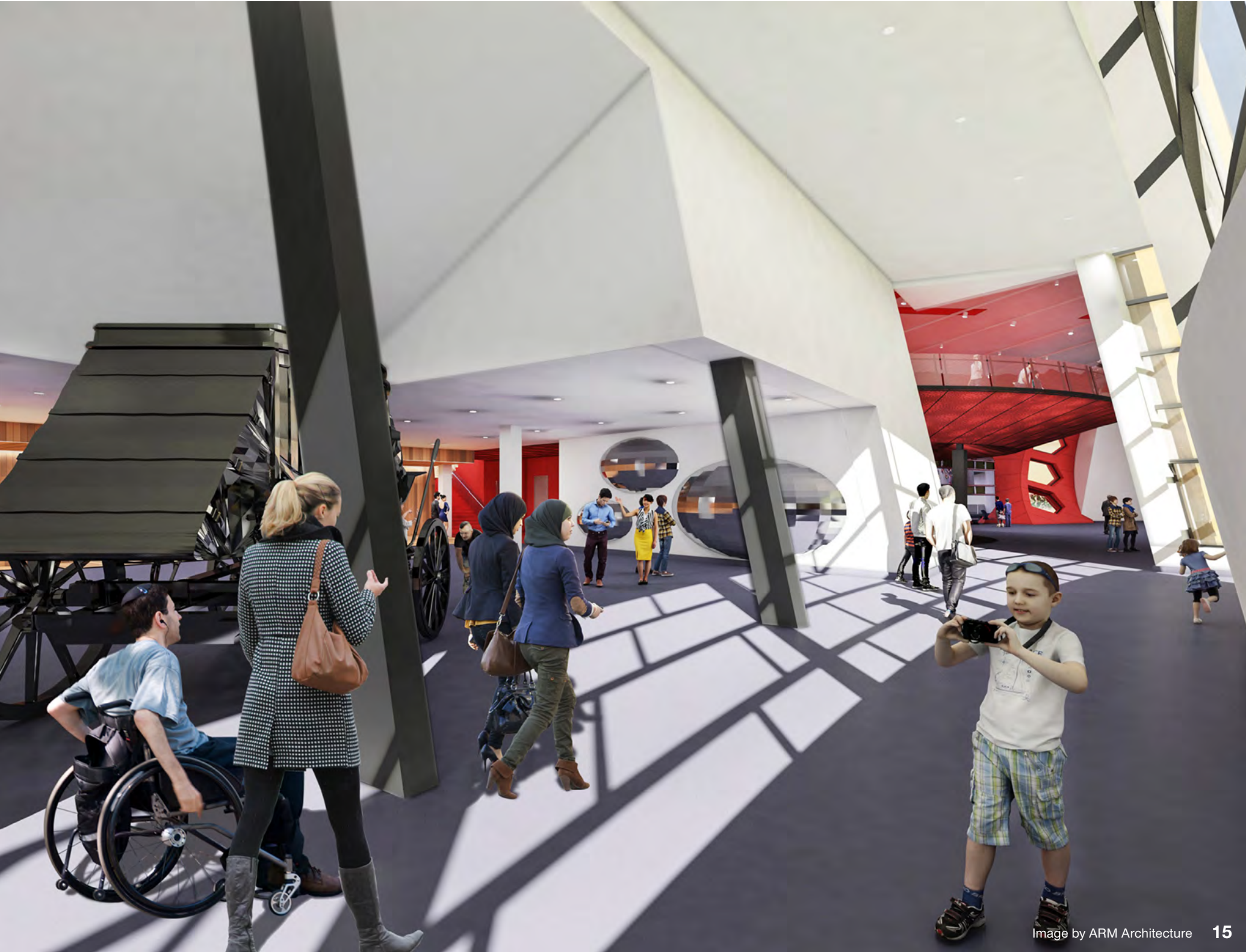
The Museum's galleries have been thrilling visitors since 2001. But our audience numbers are growing and demand is increasing, so the Master Plan outlines an expansion of these pivotal galleries. At its core are plans for redeveloped, expanded and technology-driven interactive gallery spaces — here visitors will be able to experience, physically and virtually, stories told through the prisms of people, land and place.

Over the life of the Master Plan, the main galleries will be redeveloped into three distinct zones which will create an easily navigable path through the Museum. The galleries will provide a linked narrative experience that clearly tells the story of Australia centred on 'Life in Australia', 'A Modern Nation' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples'. These themes were imagined in 1980 when the Museum was only a drawing on a page and a dream for many.

The gallery redevelopment will create a range of new visitor experiences. While these will still have the objects in the Museum's collections at their core, they will be supplemented with technology to enhance the interactivity and interpretive reach of their stories; they will draw on a range of emotions, from awe to sorrow and joy, and create a series of experiences which are thought-provoking and inspiring, but also fun. The integration of interactive technology and multimedia into the visitor experience will increase access opportunities through digital panels in multiple languages, and sound and tactile experiences.

GALLERY ZONE 1: LIFE IN AUSTRALIA

Housed in a single space, this gallery will help visitors better understand the diversity of the Australian environment: how it has challenged and changed lives, how it has encouraged innovation and how human settlement has affected the land. A greater appreciation of Australia's unique and diverse ecosystems, and of the character and agency of the non-human world, will help reveal our profound interconnectedness with the land, sky and sea and everything that lives in these realms. Here visitors will encounter giant prehistoric creatures, trace the monsoon's passage over northern Australia, peer into bubbles of air trapped in an Antarctic ice core hundreds of thousands of years ago or watch ecologists explore fragile estuarine lakes. They will learn about our history on this land, from deep time when the continent was formed through to the present day, and about the challenges we face in the twenty-first century.



GALLERY ZONE 2: A MODERN NATION

This gallery explores the nation's rich multicultural, political and social landscape by taking visitors on a journey through Australian history since the time of British settlement in 1788. Personal stories will help uncover the histories of those individuals who have travelled across this vast continent and left their mark, and of those who have journeyed from far-flung places across the world to make Australia their new home. Objects provide the centrepieces of stories about early explorers, the gold rushes, pastoral development, Australians at war, the arts and ideas, and leisure, sport and recreation. Told through the lens of place, stories and objects will be identified with specific locales spread across the country, allowing visitors to take a journey through time and place to understand more of Australia's modern story.



GALLERY ZONE 3: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

Visitors to this gallery will enjoy a rare opportunity to experience a traditional welcome to Country and to immerse themselves in the vast Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples cultures of our nation. The gallery will explore what the idea of Country means to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and will focus on the diversity of their experience across Australia — from urban to remote and regional communities. The stories told here will address critical contemporary issues, such as living on and off Country, civil and land rights, well-being, education, and cultural continuity and renewal. Objects and Country will be intertwined to reveal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' understanding of life in Australia stretching back millennia. Visitors will encounter ochre mined over 30,000 years ago, as well as bear witness to the reality of dispossession and resistance, and ultimately come see the world from a different and uniquely Australian perspective.



3. DISCOVERY

The Museum's new discovery areas will challenge traditional museum displays by being integrated into all aspects of the institution. Discovery encompasses a series of new spaces that will be scattered around the Museum precinct, encouraging visitors to take lessons and stories uncovered in the galleries and further explore them. These areas are designed around interactive fun; they embrace technology and encourage activity-based learning.

XPLORE: GARDEN OF AUSTRALIAN DREAMS

Sitting at the heart of the Museum precinct, the reinvigorated Garden of Australian Dreams will provide a lively place for visitors to gather, play, explore and ultimately have fun. This will be home to Play, the Museum's new adventure playground, designed to encourage learning through activity for children aged 1–5. The area physically links many of the Museum's key attractions, including the Discovery Centre and Read, a new library; it also provides direct access to Lake Burley Griffin and the Forecourt.

DISCOVERY CENTRE

The Discovery Centre, a new interactive space within the Museum precinct, will be designed to engage families and younger audiences. Filled with objects and activities closely linked to the gallery zones, it will be a place for people to visit regularly, stay longer, engage further and learn in authentic and surprising ways. The Discovery Centre, which will be the first of the new discovery areas to be developed, will comprise a series of zones that will cater for varying age groups, starting with hands-on, play-based educational activities for children up to the age of 5 but also providing more creative interactive activities for older children.

ENTERPRISE AND TECHNOLOGY CENTRE

The Master Plan includes designs for spaces that encourage visitors to think about the pressing issues facing us as a global community and to look to history to find possible answers. We live in a world grappling with the ideas of sustainability and clean energy. Set over Lake Burley Griffin, the Enterprise and Technology Centre will celebrate technology from steam through to renewables and look at its impact on Australian society; it will also pose the questions concerning where we will go in the future and how we will produce energy for the nation in the coming decades.

The PS *Enterprise* berthed within the building will provide a focal point for the function centre, which has been designed to sit sympathetically within the broader Museum setting. With unrivalled views of Lake Burley Griffin towards Black Mountain, the National Library and the Captain Cook Fountain, it will provide Canberra with its first function rooms overlooking the water.



READ

Read, a new open-access library, invites the public to an informal research area where they can explore a selection of texts — both paper-based and electronic — from the National Museum of Australia’s extensive library. The area will also display some of Australia’s oldest and rarest books from the Museum’s core collection. Access to these texts will be made available through regular sessions held by expert Museum staff. Here visitors will be able to make use of a specially designed private reading room where they can consult most of the Museum’s catalogue via a reservation system.

COLLABORATE

Collaborate will deliver a new model for interaction between the Museum and its partners, existing and future. Meeting rooms and open-plan areas will create a space where knowledge and ideas held within the Museum can be further explored with industry, government and academia. This creative hub will help harness new concepts and opportunities that will benefit the entire nation.

DIGIPLAY

Building on the success of the Museum’s award-winning interactive children’s adventure game Kspace, which is targeted at primary school-aged children, Digiplay will encourage our young digital natives to immerse themselves in history through the use of cutting-edge technology. By so doing, it will connect the next generation with Australia’s history — their history.





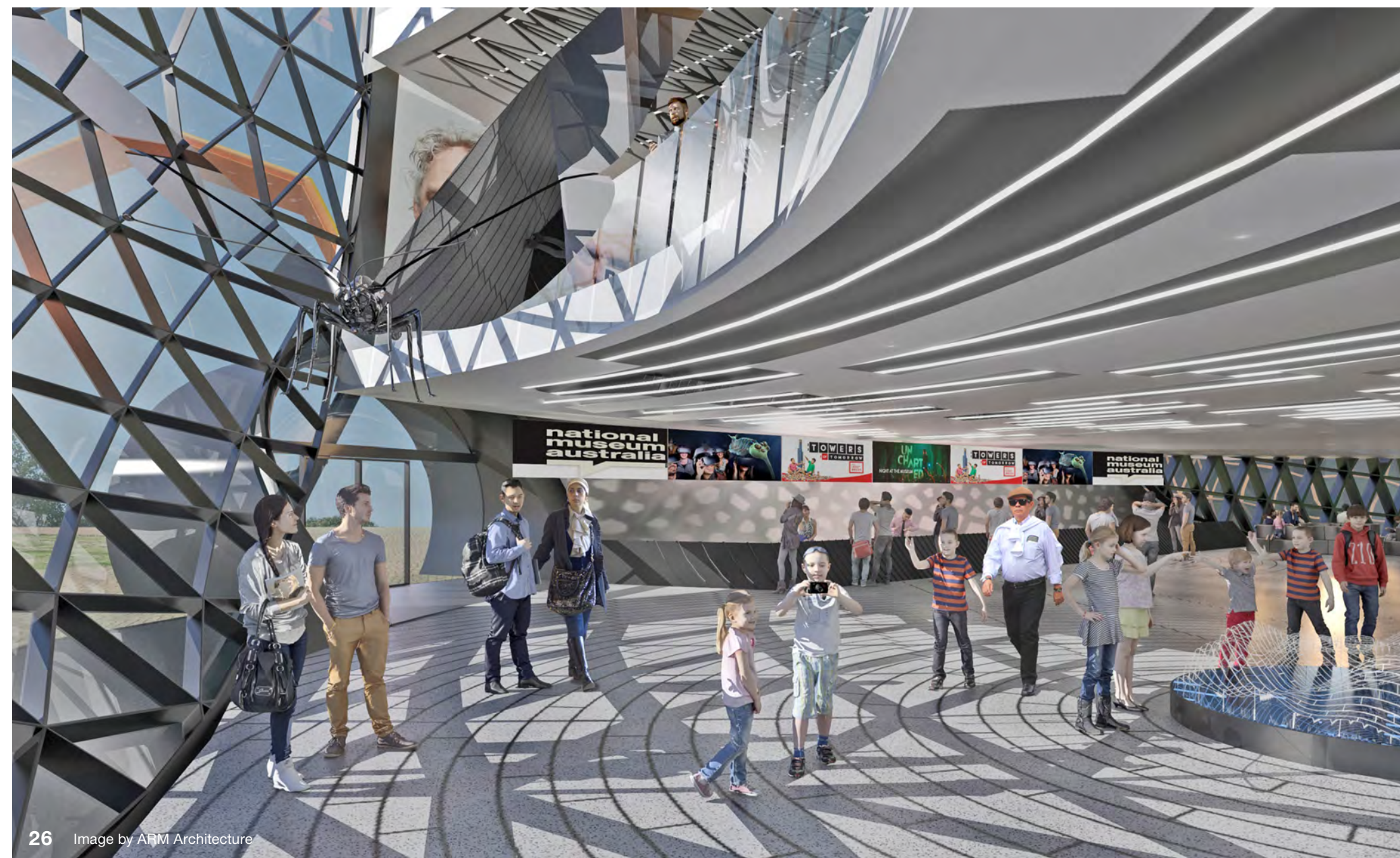
THEATRE OF THINGS

With design concepts that include a dome-shaped building resembling an Australian opal — complete with shimmering outer skin and faceted windows — the Theatre of Things will double the Museum's current exhibition space. It will sit at the crossroads of the real and the virtual, cleverly uniting the two. Key items and large objects drawn from the Museum's core collection will be on display in this digitally networked area, welcoming both physical and digital visitors to mingle, explore and share the gallery's broad range of content. This will be a live fully networked space with integrated augmented reality that can be accessed remotely and is therefore available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, around Australia and the world.

The new gallery will provide the Museum with a unique opportunity to integrate its collections with others from the National Estate; for example, the National Film and Sound Archive, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the National Library of Australia and the Australian War Memorial. By bringing together objects and film and sound, the gallery will deliver new integrated visitor experiences; it will provide Australians who may not be able to visit the Museum in person with unprecedented access to their history, and introduce Australian history and culture to members of the international community.

The Museum's existing three main galleries are designed to reflect the three key themes outlined in the *National Museum of Australia Act 1980*. The Theatre of Things, however, will provide the opportunity to curate individual objects, or groups of objects, in ways that draw together the three themes in new exhibits which will reveal how an understanding of the past can assist the challenges of the present. Connecting objects with other cultural materials from the National Estate will shine new light on the Australian experience, add energy and dynamism to gallery visits and open up the possibility of dialogue and an exchange of ideas.

By interpreting objects differently, the Theatre of Things will undertake a new type of engagement with visitors. They will be able to focus on individual objects or tailor their experience to their specific interests. It will also allow for regular changeovers of single objects, or small groups of objects, thereby providing a series of new experiences for repeat visitors.



4. PRESERVATION

CENTRE FOR MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

This Master Plan reflects the Museum’s aim to be the world leader in collection management, and to set new standards in object care and preservation. Realising this vision begins with creating superbly well designed storage buildings.

Rigorous research undertaken in conjunction with the University of Copenhagen has led to plans for a sustainable facility built from local materials that promise a 200-year lifespan. Research has also shown that Canberra’s dry climate lends itself perfectly to a building that can maintain its own heating and cooling, thereby reducing our carbon footprint and minimising ongoing operational costs.

The new bespoke facility will be able to expand with the growing needs of the collection and to respond to breakthroughs in international practices regarding object storage and preservation. Integrated registration and conservation offices and laboratories will promote collaboration and efficiency. The facility will also provide opportunities for public access programs and for the Museum to work with other institutions with similar requirements or to offer facilities and services to other organisations (public or private) who share common interests.

SECRET SACRED AND REPATRIATION

Sensitive to the fact that we all view objects in different ways — that one and the same object can hold a different significance for each of us — the Master Plan incorporates the cultural sensitivities of many different societies, but mainly those of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. This is made possible through specially designed spaces, such as the Secret Sacred and the Repatriation guest facilities.

Specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples visitors, this welcoming area will provide a space for them to connect with treasured, secret and sacred objects, and with repatriated human remains from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.



5. IMPLEMENTATION

The National Museum of Australia is an institution that relies on substantial funding from the Australian public. As such, this Master Plan continues to develop opportunities to increase value for all Australians through a range of activities, including improving access to collections and information, allowing greater use of assets, and identifying a more diverse range of funding sources.

The implementation of the Master Plan will be a staged process, supported by a funding strategy and schedule. It will also be dependent on the delivery of infrastructure under the Acton Peninsula Precinct Structure Plan by the National Capital Authority, particularly the provision of additional car parking of visitors and other facilities to activate the Acton Peninsula as a destination.

FUNDING STRATEGY

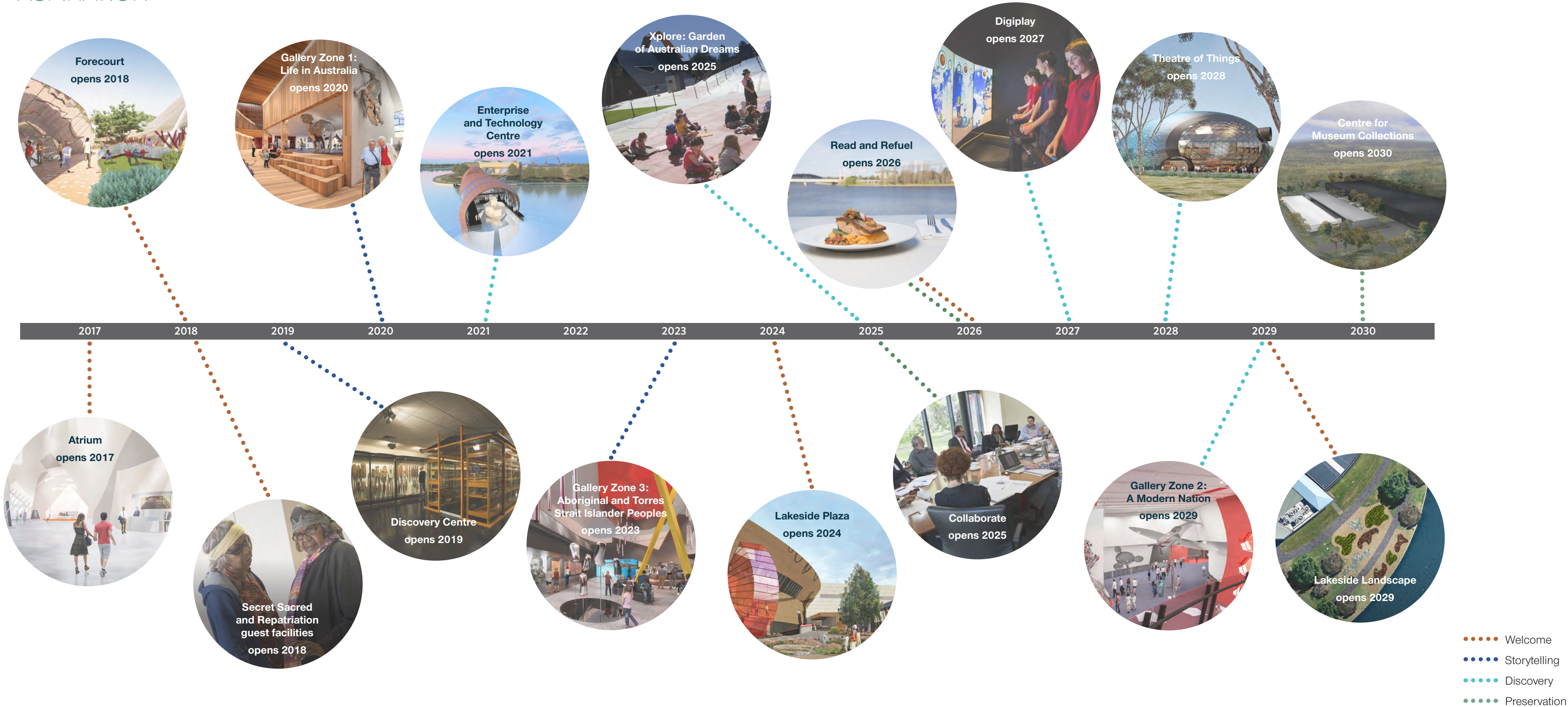
The projects outlined in this Master Plan will be funded through a multi-pronged strategy, incorporating the capital reserves of the Museum and revenue generated by business activities, partnerships, applications to the federal government and general fundraising. Given that the core business of the Museum is telling Australian stories, the implementation of the Master Plan will be prioritised in accordance with these activities, with expenditure of capital reserves focused on the Welcome and Storytelling precincts.

A detailed capital plan is being developed, which will see the Museum continue its ongoing role in managing its core assets, alongside the delivery of the Master Plan projects.

SCHEDULE

The implementation of the Master Plan is scheduled to be achieved by 2030, through a staged delivery process. This will result in a notable expansion of visitor experiences and amenity upgrades, in alignment with expected growth in visitor numbers. This growth is expected to come from increased population, national and international visitor growth, and the development of the West Basin and Acton Peninsula, which is expected to draw more visitors to the area and increase the likelihood of repeat visits.

ASPIRATION





Photograph by National Museum of Australia



Photographs by National Museum of Australia



Cover Image by ARM Architecture

