



WESTPAC LONG GALLERY



THE AUSTRALIAN MUSEUM REVEALS THE NATION'S GREATEST TREASURES IN RESTORED WESTPAC LONG GALLERY

October 13, 2017 Sydney, Australia: The Australian Museum (AM) has unveiled one of the greatest collections of treasures in the nation's history in a new permanent exhibition, *200 Treasures of the Australian Museum*, in the restored Westpac Long Gallery.

The permanent exhibition celebrates the objects and people who have shaped the nation. The launch of the exhibition also marks the reopening of Australia's first museum gallery, after almost two years of restoration, conservation and exhibition design. Now known as the Westpac Long Gallery, its collection reveals intriguing stories about Australia and the world.

The \$9 million restoration and new permanent exhibition were funded in equal partnership between Westpac, the NSW Government and the Australian Museum Foundation.

The AM marks its 190-year history by showcasing 100 of the most important and intriguing items in its collection of more than 18 million objects, along with two objects on loan: Australia's first bank note, on loan from Westpac (which marks its 200th year in 2017); and a 10-kilogram gold nugget discovered in 1887, on loan from the NSW Government.

The 100 treasured objects are complemented by 100 people who have helped shape the nation through contributions to history, science, nature or culture, such as Cathy Freeman, Sir Donald Bradman and Professor Fred Hollows.

NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian said the partnership between the NSW Government, Westpac and Australian Museum Foundation donors to restore the Westpac Long Gallery has funded an excellent addition to NSW's arts and culture facilities.

"The Australian Museum, the first museum in the nation, has an unrivalled collection, which can now be viewed through the lens of the *200 Treasures* exhibition. I commend everyone involved in bringing such a remarkable gallery and exhibition to the people of Australia."

Westpac CEO Brian Hartzler said the partnership with the AM is a reflection of how Westpac Group continues to invest in and support the nation it has grown alongside for two centuries.

"Having just entered our third century of business, we are proud to help educate Australians and visitors alike on our nation's rich history through the restoration of Australia's first museum, and to share with them the fascinating treasures of the Westpac Long Gallery, like Australia's first bank note, which Westpac – then the Bank of NSW – issued on April 8, 1817, and was one of the key foundations in establishing the Australian economy."

Australian Museum Director and CEO Kim McKay AO said the *200 Treasures* exhibition was a fitting way to mark the AM's role as the nation's first museum, in its 190th year.

"It has been an ambitious journey to restore the Westpac Long Gallery to its rightful place as the nation's finest gallery, one that every visitor can enjoy. I am very proud that in our 190th year we can mark the Australian Museum's and our nation's achievements by restoring the Westpac Long Gallery and creating the *200 Treasures* exhibition. Collaborating with partners Westpac and the NSW Government as well as our donors allows us to bring this important exhibition to all Australians in a truly beautiful neo-classical gallery, unlike any other in the nation.

"It's estimated that the leading museums in the world, including the Australian Museum, hold at least 90 per cent of the planet's natural and cultural assets in their collections. The Australian Museum's natural science collections hold the unique fauna of the Australian continent, including many now extinct animals, while the cultural collections help us understand where we've come from and create a bridge to those living cultures today," McKay said.

Australian Museum Trust President Catherine Livingstone AO said the exhibition brought to life the AM's research and collections for everyone to enjoy.

"The Australian Museum is an important symbol of our nation's history – from its early days as a storehouse of the rare and exotic, to the now vast collections – an encyclopaedia of knowledge on Australia and the Pacific.

"Through the unique partnership and investment from Westpac and the NSW Government, as well as the generous support of museum donors, the new Westpac Long Gallery is a spectacular way to bring to life the Australian Museum's research and collections and to leave a rich and remarkable legacy for all visitors and Australians to enjoy."

The exhibition *200 Treasures of the Australian Museum* celebrates the reopening of the neo-classical Long Gallery, built between 1846 and 1855. The newly-restored Westpac Long Gallery is the nation's first and grandest museum gallery.

The AM's 100 treasures of history, science and culture from Australia and the world, include:

- The body of a preserved Thylacine pup, held by the AM since 1886.
- A wooden sledge and ice pick from Sir Douglas Mawson's expedition to Antarctica, from 1911-1914.
- A 120-million year old Australian pliosaur, nicknamed "Eric".
- A 2800-year old Egyptian mummy in a wooden coffin painted with mythological scenes.
- An ancient Irish elk skeleton with enormous antlers, discovered in peat bog deposits.

The *200 Treasures* exhibition was curated by **Dr Peter Emmett**, who has more than 30 years' experience working with major institutions around the world, including the AM and the Natural History Museum in London. "Astounding specimens and fossils of extinct animals, along with contemporary artefacts from Indigenous Australia and the Pacific, are among the treasures featured in the permanent exhibition", he said.

"To walk through this Westpac Long Gallery is like a journey through the museum's collections. And to explore those collections is like a walk through the world. Perhaps the most unique treasure is the Long Gallery itself – an amazing 19th century theatre of display, an architecture of wonder and delight now revitalised as a 21st century showcase of museum collections."

The 100 people in *200 Treasures* who have shaped Australia were selected by a committee of 14 people, including **Australian National University historian Dr Patricia O'Brien**. Among the 100 people are some who were born overseas, such as Sydney Opera House architect Jorn Utzon, and Australians whose influence and achievements extended well beyond these shores.

"The nominations had to reflect an inclusive picture of Australian society and an expansive view of what Australia was and is. Many of these people are intrinsic to our national life, while others are quiet achievers or we have only recently become aware of their contribution to this nation," Dr O'Brien said.

The resulting 100 entries are organised into six groups: Spirited, Innovators, Revolutionaries, Resilient, Curious and Underdogs. Among them are athletes, politicians, writers and performers, doctors and explorers, entrepreneurs, media moguls, aviators, agriculturalists, activists, artists and aviators.

The 100 people include 14 Indigenous Australians, 14 scientists, 12 politicians (including 7 former Australian Prime Ministers), 5 sportspeople, 3 architects and 1 music guru.

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Social Media: #200 Treasures

Twitter: @austmus

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About the Australian Museum

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, 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 Banking Corporation (Westpac) was founded in 1817 and was the first bank established in Australia. Today, the Westpac Group has branches throughout Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Papua New Guinea and maintains offices in key financial centres around the world including London, New York, Hong Kong, mainland China, Singapore and India. Westpac Group employs approximately 40,000 people and has five key divisions through which it serves more than 13 million customers.