

South Australian Museum

Research Strategy

2026
-2030

Research to serve our community



Government
of South Australia



SOUTH
AUSTRALIAN
MUSEUM



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Part 1. Purpose

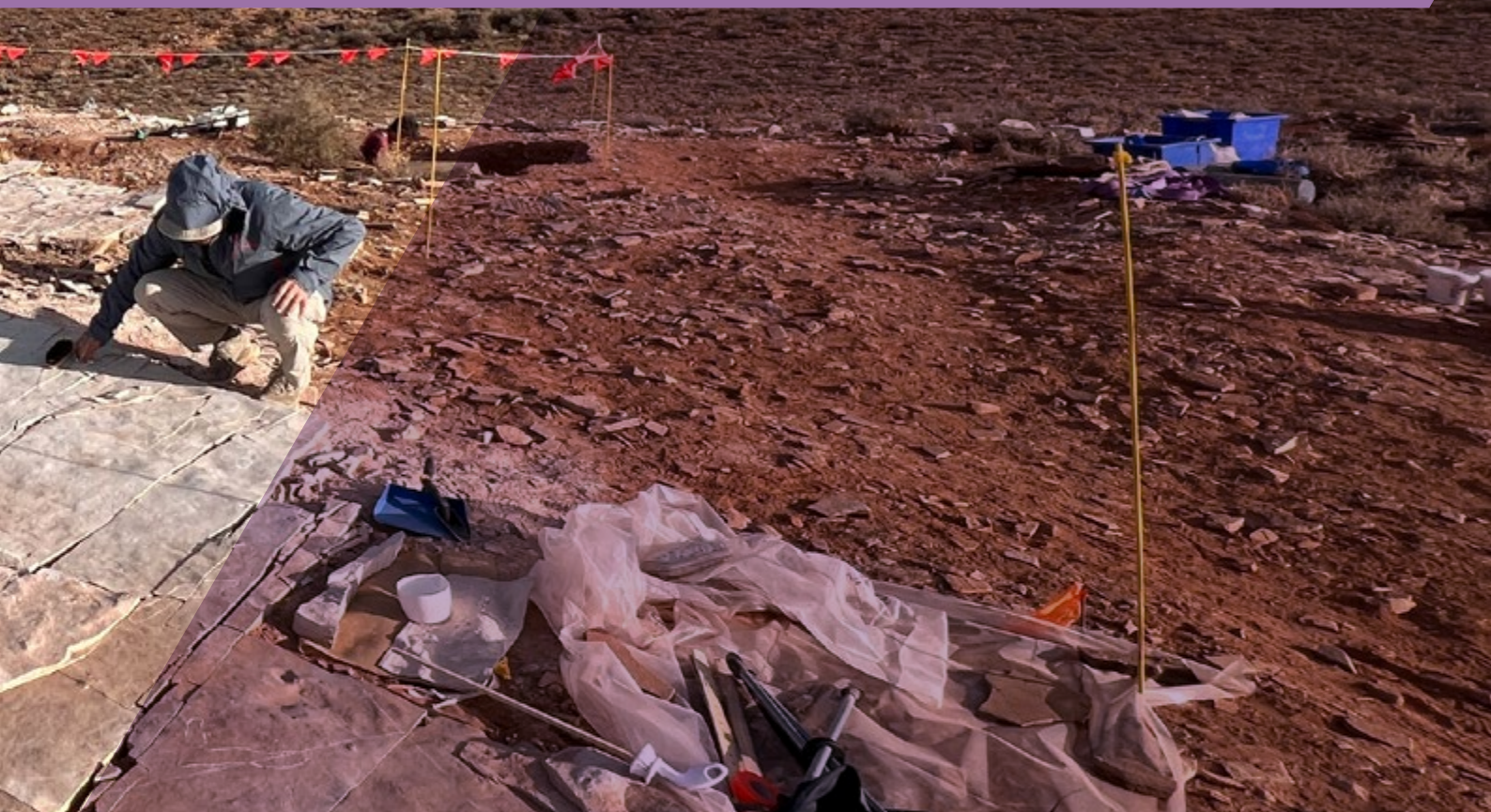
Our Impact Statement

A more informed South Australia, empowered to shape its future

The South Australian Museum (the Museum) exists to help South Australians understand the world they have inherited, the changes now underway, and the choices that will shape its future.

The Museum manages a critical piece of South Australia's knowledge and research infrastructure, comprising collections of exceptional cultural, scientific and public significance that support research, education, environmental stewardship, cultural continuity, public understanding and evidence-based decision-making across government, industry and communities. It holds and cares for records of deep time, biodiversity, geology, species, ecosystems, human history, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and Knowledges, archives, language, material practice, environmental change and relationships to Country and place. They are not simply things held in storage. They are irreplaceable resources of life,

witnesses to change, and responsibilities held for the future. Part of that responsibility is truth-telling. The Museum acknowledges that its research has, at times, caused harm to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous peoples, through the collection and use of cultural knowledge and material without full consent or understanding. We seek to address that with our commitment to Aboriginal cultural authority made in the overarching South Australian Museum Strategic Plan 2025-2030, in this Research Strategy and the accompanying Collection Management Plan (CMP).



The Museum's collections and research are mutually impacting components of the Museum. Collections give research its foundation. Research gives collections meaning, context, use and value. Together they enable South Australians to ask better questions about the world around us: what has changed, what is at risk, what should be protected, what should be returned, what should be better understood, and what knowledge is needed for the future. This document presents a strategy for retention and growth in the South Australian Museum's research capacity. It is best read alongside the accompanying CMP, recognising the importance of the Museum collections as a South Australian and Australian research infrastructure resource.

As a key component of the State's essential knowledge and research infrastructure the Museum's collections, data, research, expertise, archives, laboratories, relationships and digital systems support work far beyond the Museum's walls. They are used largely by South Australian communities,

researchers, business and industry, schools, universities, government agencies, land managers and cultural practitioners, but they are also extensively used by a wide range of national and international organisations. The collections support environmental management, species identification, biosecurity, cultural renewal, provenance research, repatriation, education, tourism, regional identity, health and wellbeing, workforce development, industry planning and public understanding.

The Museum's purpose is to help South Australians throughout their lives, from early learning and family discovery, through school, tertiary education, professional practice, community research and lifelong learning, to respond to issues that matter now and into the future. Research is central to achieving this, as research generates new knowledge that adds value to the collections and better informs decision makers and the public.

1. Why this matters now

The Museum operates in a period of rapid environmental, cultural and technological change. Climate disruption is accelerating biodiversity loss and threatening landscapes. The biodiversity crisis demands better, faster evidence. Critical minerals are emerging as a national priority. South Australia needs higher levels of STEM - trained graduates for its future workforce. Governments and communities expect greater transparency, participation, societal relevance and impact from cultural institutions and need support to recognise misinformation.



This strategy responds to these needs by supporting core long-term research capabilities while directing new investment to areas where the Museum's collections, relationships and expertise give it unique and irreplaceable roles within essential South Australian research. It also commits to promoting an interest in research to inspire the next generation to continue studies in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and to educate the public about distinguishing evidence-based information from disinformation. We have made deliberate choices to:

- Protect and sustain the core research activities that are irreplaceable and long-term in nature.
- Selectively invest in emerging areas where our research:
 - draws on the collections
 - addresses a significant South Australian, national or global question
 - creates distinctive value the Museum is uniquely placed to deliver
 - respects and advances Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural authority and community-defined priorities

- extends reach through digital access and external research use of the collections
- has a credible pathway to impact in research, policy, practice, cultural renewal and/or public life.
- Decline or deprioritise areas where other institutions are better placed, or where the collections do not provide a strategic edge.

South Australia's long-term priorities, across research and innovation, environmental management, minerals and resources, STEM workforce development, and truth-telling and treaty, reflect exactly the areas where Museum research creates value. The Museum does not depend on a single funding stream to deliver this contribution. Its core research capability is sustained through public investment in the institution itself, with partnerships and external funding extending reach and impact where opportunities align. This strategy is designed to protect that core while building the connections that amplify it.



2. The contribution we make

The Museum contributes to South Australia through six connected forms of public purpose. Through its collections, research and partnerships, the Museum creates cultural, social, environmental and economic value for South Australia. These forms of value are interconnected and together contribute to a more informed, resilient and thriving society.

Creation of new knowledge through research

The Museum uses its extensive research infrastructure to generate new knowledge that impacts our understanding of South Australia's past and present and allows us to better respond to present and future challenges.

Ecological responsibility

The Museum provides critical long-term evidence required for biodiversity conservation, species identification, biosecurity, climate adaptation, environmental monitoring, landscape management and care for Country.

Cultural vitality

The Museum supports truth-telling, cultural continuity, language and practice renewal, provenance research, repatriation, restitution, creative practice and more complete public understanding of South Australia's histories and identities.





Social equity, health and wellbeing

The Museum widens access to knowledge, strengthens belonging, supports lifelong learning and creates pathways for communities to access, shape and see their histories, environments and futures reflected with care. Museum collections and research also contribute directly to health and wellbeing: they support understanding of toxins, pathogens, parasites, allergens and food systems, document the environmental conditions that shape healthy communities and landscapes, and sustain the cultural connection and continuity that underpin individual and community wellbeing.

Economic resilience

The Museum supports more informed decisions in government and industry, contributes to tourism and regional development, strengthens World Heritage interpretation, attracts research partnerships, and helps build the knowledge and skills South Australia needs for the future. It contributes to the future workforce of South Australia through research training, student supervision, internships, placements, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researcher and curator development, technical capability building, and pathways for early career researchers, educators, conservators and collection specialists.

Trusted knowledge and public capability

The Museum helps people make sense of complex issues by connecting collections, research and Knowledges. Its role is to inform people and thereby combat misinformation by building trust in and understanding of the use of research while strengthening their capacity to identify disinformation, question, discover, explore and act.

3. Our strategic research focus

Over 2026–2030, the Museum will focus research where it can create the greatest public benefit.

We will focus where the Museum has distinctive strengths, significant collections, community need, research advantage and is aligned with state and national priorities.

Our priorities will be guided by significance, potential for impact and public need. In this context, significance asks what questions and stories matter most for South Australia, its communities, and for national and

global knowledge. Impact refers to the contribution and positive difference that research makes, whether that be economic, health, environmental, cultural or influence on policy challenges. Public need recognises the priorities of communities, governments and other public institutions, and the issues the Museum is uniquely placed to address through its collections, research infrastructure and expertise.

The Museum will organise its research through three connected themes

Caring for Country and Place	Using collections, research, data and knowledge systems to understand biodiversity, geology, environmental change, deep time, extinction, resilience, the sustainability of life on Earth, and human relationships with place.
Knowledges, Culture and Truth-Telling	Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Indigenous communities to carry out research that supports cultural authority, provenance, repatriation, restitution, knowledge renewal, shared custodianship and truthful interpretation of the past.
Public Understanding and Action	Making research and research infrastructure accessible, trusted and usable so that communities, educators, researchers, government, industry and the broader public can understand research, use knowledge with confidence and act on complex issues.



Part 2. Strategic themes

The Research Strategy is organised around three trans-disciplinary themes.

Theme 1 - Caring for Country and Place

We use our exceptional collections and research infrastructure to understand biodiversity, extinction and environmental change, providing knowledge that underpins care for Country and Place through conservation, biosecurity, environmental monitoring and decision-making. This knowledge also underpins understanding of the environmental conditions that shape human health, from the species, pathogens and toxins present in a landscape to the food systems and ecosystems that sustain healthy communities. This theme draws on the Museum's strengths in palaeontology, zoology, geology, genomics, Environmental DNA (eDNA), cultural collections and long-term data to address urgent challenges in South Australia and beyond. It encompasses our natural history and cultural collections that document human relationships with environments, species and place over time. The deep-time record we hold in the collections is not only a scientific record; it is part of the memory of Country. Understanding it is part of caring for it.

Priority questions:

- Where are the most critical gaps in our knowledge of South Australia's biodiversity?
- How are South Australia's species, ecosystems and environmental baselines changing over time?
- How can Museum research infrastructure and data support caring for Country initiatives through biodiversity monitoring, conservation planning, environmental management and response to change events such as algal blooms or species decline?
- What can South Australia's deep-time record tell us about resilience, extinction and adaptation?
- How can the Museum's geological collections contribute to critical minerals research and the resource discoveries that underpin the renewable energy transition?
- How do our cultural collections document change in human relationships with place, environment and identity over time, and what can that tell us about the challenges communities face today?



Why is this a priority?

Museum collections, taxonomic expertise and biological research of this theme underpin South Australia's ability to meet its environmental and biosecurity obligations demanded by the:

- *SA Biosecurity Act 2025*
- *Landscape SA Act 2019*
- Greater Adelaide Regional Plan
- *Marine Parks Act 2007*
- *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*
- State of the Environment reporting
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Our long-term baselines (we document, through our research, more than 500 million years of environmental change and geological history in South Australia), species identification capacity, and biodiversity data are actively used by government agencies across environment, heritage, planning, primary industries, Aboriginal culture, health, tourism and education.

They also hold rich records of human experience, knowledge, and connection to place across South Australia. South Australia's ability to meet environmental, cultural heritage and resource management obligations is strengthened by the research infrastructure, partnerships, expertise and research capacity of the Museum.

The Museum is not a passive repository. It is an active scientific, cultural and research infrastructure that government agencies, land managers, primary industries, and communities draw on to do their work. Collections-based taxonomy is also economically significant: Deloitte Access Economics found that every dollar invested in taxonomy generates approximately \$4.35 in value through improved biosecurity, agriculture, biodiversity and conservation outcomes.

Museum research and infrastructure relevant to this theme directly support human health and wellbeing. They underpin understanding of species distribution, toxins, parasites, pathogens, allergens and food systems, and of the environmental conditions that shape healthy communities and landscapes. This evidence base, built from the collections and the expertise that interprets them, holds the records needed to understand the links between environment, Country and health. This is an area of growing public and policy importance, and one where the Museum gives South Australia a distinctive capability.

Furthermore, Museum research in this theme supports economic growth, for example in primary industry through collections-based identification and environmental baseline data. Research on critical minerals in South Australia supports the global renewable energy transition. Museum research underpins and is required for successful World Heritage inscriptions and reconfirmations (e.g. Proposed inscription of a Flinders Ranges World Heritage site, future reconfirmation of the Naracoorte Caves World Heritage site) and the tourism economy linked to them.

Theme 2 - Knowledges, Culture and Truth-Telling

We work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Indigenous communities to strengthen cultural authority, support continuity and renewal, and bring together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges, scientific research and collections to create richer understandings of place, history, life and responsibility. This includes provenance, repatriation, restitution, language and practice renewal, and research that contributes to community-defined priorities. Truth-telling is not only an institutional responsibility. It is an act of caring for Country and Place, restoring the memory and stories that belong to communities and the lands and waters they are connected to.

Priority questions:

- How do we create conditions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead, govern and benefit from research connected to their Knowledges, heritage and Country?
- How can we inspire and support new and current Aboriginal researchers and cultural practitioners?

- How can the Museum contribute to cultural regeneration, language and practice renewal and contemporary cultural expression where invited?
- How do provenance, repatriation, restitution and truth-telling become research strengths as well as acts of caring for Country and Place?
- How can we bring together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges, scientific research and collections to build a richer and more complete understanding of South Australia's environments, histories and cultures?

Why is this a priority?

Culturally-led research connected to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander collections in the Museum's care will play a critical role in truth-telling, cultural continuity, repatriation, restitution and community access. These collections and archives may support people reconnecting with family, culture, language, Country and story. The knowledge, histories and cultural responsibilities associated with them may also sit outside conventional research categories.



Theme 3 - Public Understanding and Action

We make research and collections accessible, trusted and usable so that communities, educators, researchers, government, industry and the broader public can understand research, use knowledge with confidence and act on complex issues. This theme includes education, regional engagement, public participation in research, digital access, place-based interpretation and the translation of collections-based evidence into forms that are meaningful for different users.

Public understanding is not a one-way transfer of information from the Museum to the public. It is a relationship: people use, question, contribute to and reshape knowledge. This relationship includes citizen science, community data, digital collections use, cultural access, co-designed interpretation and lifelong learning.

Priority questions:

- How do we translate collections-based research into forms that are genuinely useful for educators, decision-makers and communities?
- How do we connect Museum research with citizen science and community data collection programs to build a richer, more participatory evidence base that is used by researchers and decision-makers?
- How do we strengthen public, government and industry trust in research-based knowledge at a time of growing misinformation?
- How do we reach audiences who are currently underserved or disengaged, ensuring our knowledge is accessible to all South Australians?
- How can we increase engagement in research and knowledge-making so people feel informed, involved and represented?

- How do we empower regional communities to engage with and contribute to their own heritage stories?
- How do we empower the public, government and industry to engage with complex cultural and scientific issues through accessible, trustworthy and culturally informed knowledge?

Why is this a priority?

- South Australia needs people who can work across knowledge systems and respond to complex cultural, scientific and environmental challenges. The Museum contributes to this capability from early childhood through school, tertiary education, professional practice and lifelong learning.
- Young South Australians need to be inspired by science to take up advanced STEM study and join the workforce that critical South Australian industries, including defence, energy and the environmental sector, depend on. With its wide-ranging public engagement and high level of public trust, the Museum holds a unique position to contribute to this through its collections, research and public engagement.
- By connecting collections, research, exhibitions, digital access and public programs, the Museum helps build curiosity, critical thinking, scientific and cultural literacy, and the future workforce needed across environment, education, defence, energy, tourism, heritage, research and industry.
- Engagement with science and research through the Museum is an opportunity to reach community, industry and government and emphasise the importance of information based decision-making, validating information and debunking misinformation.

Part 3. Delivery and capability

4. How we will work

The Museum will be guided by six principles.

These principles are shared with the CMP and apply across both documents.

Impact

Research and collections activity will be designed for use: by communities, government, researchers, educators, industry, visitors and future generations.

Custodianship with authority

The Museum holds collections in trust and recognises the authority, rights and responsibilities of communities connected to them.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority will be considered in research design, collection care, access, digitisation, interpretation, governance, staffing, partnerships and measures of success.

Ethical digital access

Digitisation will address metadata, language, search, consent, Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, cultural permissions, data quality, harmful historic records, AI-readiness and appropriate access conditions.

Partnership as a way of working

Durable partnerships with communities, government, universities, industry, schools, cultural organisations, conservation partners and national research infrastructure will enhance the Museum's impact.

Place-based and interdisciplinary practice

The Museum will bring disciplines together around places, collections, questions and communities.



5. The Museum as critical research infrastructure

The Museum's collections, research facilities, expertise, data and relationships constitute critical research infrastructure for South Australia.

This infrastructure supports work across biodiversity, environmental management, biosecurity, cultural heritage, provenance, repatriation, education, tourism, regional development, industry, public policy, health and wellbeing, and community life.

This infrastructure cannot be recreated quickly. It has been built over generations through collecting, research, fieldwork, community relationships, documentation, conservation and interpretation. Its value lies not only in the strength of its researchers, the significance of its research capabilities and the scale of the collections, but in the continuity, context, care and use of the collections.

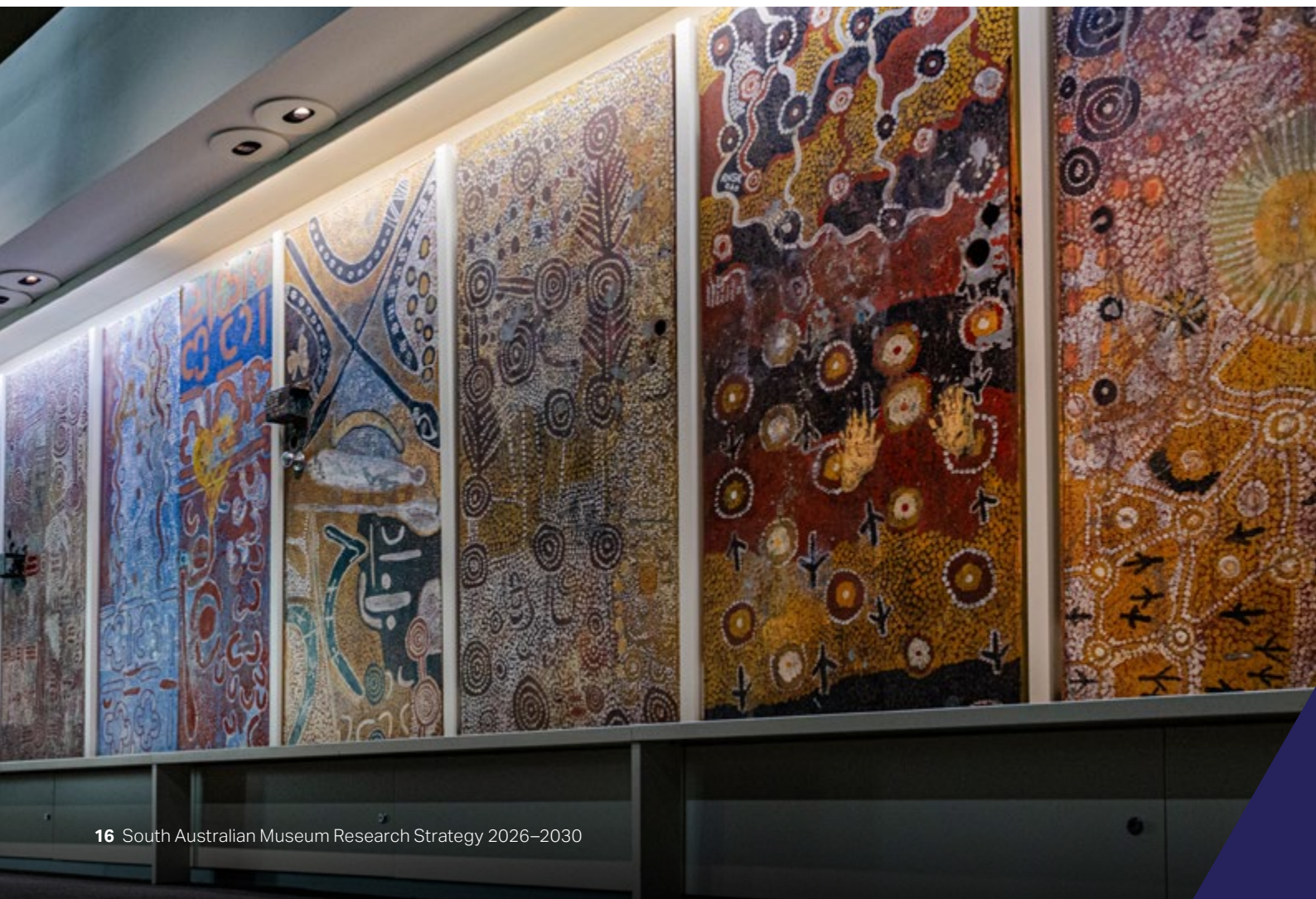
The Museum's responsibility is to use this infrastructure ethically and make its research useful: for communities reconnecting with heritage, for government agencies making decisions, for researchers asking new questions, for industries managing risk, for educators building knowledge, and for people of all ages learning how to understand the world around them.



6. Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Authority

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges will contribute to research, conservation, education and public understanding. In recognition of this, we will:

- Work in ways that recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority over Knowledges, heritage, country and story, and that respect community-defined priorities, cultural protocols and permissions.
- Embed Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) protocols in our policies, agreements and day-to-day practice across research and collection care.
- We will strengthen governance and decision-making across all research and collection decisions, with shared expectations around consent, access, authorship, attribution, benefit and long-term care of knowledge. These arrangements give particular weight to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges and material, recognising the cultural authority, community responsibilities and statutory obligations attached to them.





Language

The Museum works with communities whose knowledge, heritage and history are connected to collections in the Museum's care.

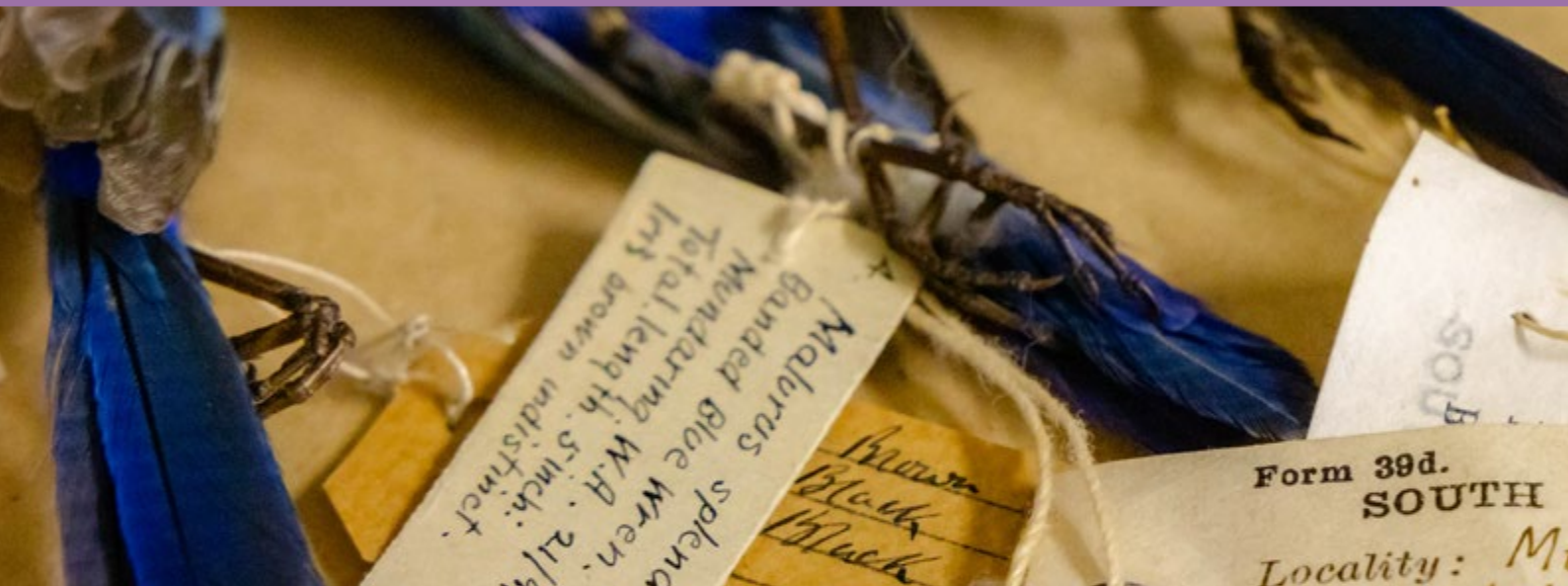
When referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in an Australian context, we use the full term "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander." We do not shorten this to "Aboriginal" alone except when referring specifically to South Australian Country-focused work with named communities. We do not use the acronym ATSI.

When referring to Country-focused work with specific communities, we use the name of that community or communities where known and appropriate.

When referring to Indigenous peoples from colonised groups outside the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context, including communities connected to the Museum's Pacific and international collections, we use "Indigenous Peoples."

We use "Knowledges" in the plural when speaking broadly about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, to reflect the diversity and distinctiveness of knowledge held by different communities and peoples.

Across this strategy, the Museum will avoid language that implies simple ownership where cultural authority, community connection or repatriation interests may exist. Preferred terms include "the collections", "collections in the Museum's care", "collections held by the Museum" and "collections stewarded by the Museum".



Part 4. Delivery strategies

This section sits between the strategy set out in Section 1 and the operational documents that put it into practice. It describes how the Research Strategy will be delivered without duplicating procedural detail that belongs at the operational level.

7. Research priorities

Sustaining research strengths

Sustained, long-term research in areas where the Museum has established capability and collection depth that requires continued investment in research to maintain the value, significance and impact of the collections.

- Biodiversity discovery, taxonomy, systematics and comparative anatomy, including genomics, bioinformatics, eDNA and molecular research linked to collections.
- Earth sciences, mineralogy, meteoritics and deep-time research.
- Environmental change, baselines and ecological monitoring.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledges and cultural collections research.
- Provenance, repatriation and restitution research.
- Collections-based research translation for policy, education, industry and community use.

Building future capability

Particular focus on issues of growing importance where the collections provide a distinct advantage.

- Environmental and cultural response to major change events.
- World Heritage and nationally significant landscapes.
- Marine, coastal, arid and urban systems monitoring.
- Critical minerals, geochronology, meteoritics and mineral prospectivity.
- New models of research translation, lifelong learning and public participation.



Enabling conditions for success

a) People and sustained research capability

Publicly funded organisations that carry out research invariably have continuing core funded researchers who ensure an appropriate level of expertise and experience that can maintain key research activities. These researchers can also grow research through winning external funding or gaining philanthropic support. It should be understood that external funding supports short term costs, such as consumables and perhaps short term contract postdoctoral and/or technician costs.

Our research workforce includes curators, research scientists and associated academics whose specialist knowledge has taken decades to build. Resources to support them have dwindled substantially over recent years, a trend that will need to be reversed to maintain this critical research and education resource for South Australia. Sustained investment is required to maintain these capabilities for South Australia and the Museum will make the strongest possible case for funding for the Museum that maintains these capabilities.

b) Capability investment priorities

Other capability gaps that the Museum will need to address over the period of this plan include:

- Sharing research and Knowledges: establishing the capacity to turn research into policy advice, exhibitions, education, digital content and public understanding.

- Developing productive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous Peoples partnerships and leadership.
- Maintaining field survey, environmental monitoring and collection development capability requiring staff time, safety systems, training and equipment to maintain core scientific functions.
- Maintaining genomics, eDNA, bioinformatics and AI capability to respond to growing demand for environmental, biodiversity and digital analysis.
- Digital collections and data governance, with the capability to improve metadata, discoverability, cultural permissions, digital preservation and research reuse.
- Access to specialist research infrastructure for imaging, genomics, AI, eDNA, geochronology, crystallography, mineral analysis and ultra-low temperature storage.

The Museum will seek to bridge these capability gaps through partnerships, commitment of internal funding where available, attracting external research funds and philanthropy.

c) Recruiting, retaining and developing outstanding researchers

The quality of Museum research requires there to be outstanding researchers on staff. The Museum commits to appointing researchers of the highest quality in areas aligned with this strategy.

Where appropriate, the Museum will seek agreements with partner research institutions, including universities, to allow the co-appointment of researchers where doing so directly advances the Museum's strategic research goals and strengthens its capacity to deliver against this strategy. The Museum will provide professional development support for all researcher employees to enhance their career growth and therefore improve their likely retention.

The Museum recognises that research capability is currently held by a small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers. Growing this workforce, as set out in the South Australian Museum Strategic Plan 2025-2030, is essential to the Museum's ability to meet its responsibilities.

Such Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff also carry cultural knowledge, lived experience and community connection that are central to ethical practice, cultural safety and the safeguarding of the collections, so their impact will extend well beyond research.

d) Research infrastructure and partnerships

For this strategy to be effective, the Museum will need to enhance core computational, data and laboratory capability where it is essential to collection, or collections-based research and stewardship. Partnerships between the Museum and other research institutions are critical to ensuring the highest quality research and impact. To achieve this, the Museum will establish agreements with other institutions that enable students to carry out research degrees at the Museum and allow Museum researchers to access high-end analytical infrastructure, including advanced imaging, genomics, geochronology, crystallography and mineral analysis. In turn, the partner will benefit from access to the research and supervisory expertise and facilities of the Museum.



8. Enhancing research through Honorary Researcher and volunteer contributions

Honorary Researchers and volunteers make a valued contribution to Museum research and to applying their expertise through engagement with other government bodies, industry and the public.

The Museum will maintain a clear framework for honorary appointments, including criteria for appointment, renewal and cessation. Appointments will be based on alignment with the Museum's strategic research priorities, contribution to the Museum's goals, and conduct consistent with the Museum's values and policies.

Funding model

The Museum maintains core research capability through its sustained investment in research staff, infrastructure and collections. It can further expand its research capability and impact by actively seeking to leverage this core capability through

external competitive grants, research partnerships, philanthropy and donations. Museum researchers will seek and apply for funding from competitive schemes such as those of the Australian Research Council, which has a strong history of supporting major Museum research collaborations. The Museum will also continue to pursue philanthropic support through mechanisms including the South Australian Museum Foundation and Waterhouse Club. External funding extends and amplifies the Museum's research impact. It does not substitute for the Museum's own commitment to sustaining research as a primary institutional function.

9. Partnerships

Partnerships with other research institutions have been discussed above, but the Museum's research and collection priorities will also be delivered through partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, other government agencies, industry, regional communities, schools, cultural organisations, conservation partners, philanthropic supporters and national research infrastructure.

Priority partnerships will be mapped and reviewed annually, including relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, state government agencies, South Australian universities, national collecting institutions, Atlas of Living Australia (ALA), National Collaborative

Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS)-enabled infrastructure, Artlab Australia, tourism and regional partners, philanthropic supporters and industry users of Museum expertise and data.

A substantial portion of the Museum's research impact is delivered digitally. Over the past five years more than 14,000 high-end digital users have drawn on the Museum's collections, the majority of whom are based elsewhere in Australia or overseas. In the digital environment the collections themselves are the research output. This is a core part of how the Museum delivers public research infrastructure.

Part 5.

Accountability and impact

The measure of this strategy is not only what the Museum discovers, collects or preserves. It is what this work enables.

At its strongest, Museum research helps people understand themselves, their identities, their responsibilities to Country and place, and their position within the wider story of life on Earth. The Museum creates public benefit by strengthening cultural vitality, social equity and wellbeing, ecological responsibility, economic resilience, and trusted knowledge. These outcomes are connected: cultural authority shapes environmental care; digital access supports research and education; collections data

informs government and industry decisions; and public understanding builds the capability South Australia needs for the future.

The measure is a more informed South Australia, empowered to shape its future. One where people have greater access to trusted knowledge, stronger connection to place, and the confidence and agency to act on what they know.

10. What success looks like

We will know this strategy is working when:

Caring for Country and Place

- Government agencies, educators, universities, industry partners and communities actively use Museum research, collections and data in collaborations, policy, management, teaching, interpretation, planning and innovation.
- The Museum is recognised as a leader in collections-based research on biodiversity, geology, deep time and environmental change.

Knowledges, Culture and Truth-Telling

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities report that research and collection relationships with the Museum are respectful, useful, self-determined and of practical cultural value.
- Communities connected to collections in the Museum's care have greater access, authority and benefit.

- The Museum consults with respective communities to ensure appropriate cultural authority is identified in repatriation and provenance research.

Public Understanding and Action

- Regional communities experience the Museum as a partner in understanding, caring for and telling the stories of their own places.
- Students, early career researchers, cultural practitioners, educators and collection specialists see the Museum as a provider of advanced research education and a pathway into future work.
- Digital collections use grows in reach, quality and impact, including use by communities, government, universities, industry and international researchers.



11. How we will measure impact

We will track:

Caring for Country and Place

- The number of peer reviewed research outputs, numbers of citations and relative citation indices, policy references, technical reports and applied advice.
- Digital collections use, including ALA users, government users, industry users, university users, international users and community users where measurable.

Knowledges, Culture and Truth-Telling

- Number, depth and quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research, access and collection partnerships.
- Community access requests, visits, cultural use and outcomes, including access not classified as research.

Public Understanding and Action

- Numbers of students attending Museum educational sessions.
- Numbers of people attending public programs.
- Digital engagement outcomes.
- External funding, partnership investment and in-kind research infrastructure access secured.

Underpinning foundations: collections and capability

- Priority records improved, digitised or made discoverable, separated by metadata, imaging, 3D, genomic and other advanced data types.
- Progress against significance and vulnerability priorities.
- Staff, partner and community feedback on research culture, access, governance and use.



Appendix 1. Legislative and policy context

Functions under the South Australian Museum Act

Under the *South Australian Museum Act 1976*, the Board is responsible for the care and management of the Museum and its collections. The Act establishes the Board's functions, which include accumulating and caring for objects and specimens of scientific or historical interest, classifying and managing associated data, promoting research, disseminating information, and advising the Minister on matters relating to research and collections.

This legislative framework defines the State Collection as a public asset. It places responsibility on the Museum to accumulate, care for and manage material of scientific and historical interest for the long term.

While the Museum holds nationally and internationally significant collections, its legislative responsibilities anchor the State Collection within South Australia. The CMP gives effect to these statutory functions by setting out how the Museum will care for, document and make accessible material of scientific and historical interest in a consistent and defensible way.



Appendix 2. The Museum as government infrastructure

Environment and biosecurity

Museum collections and taxonomic expertise underpin South Australia’s ability to meet its environmental and biosecurity obligations. Our long-term baselines, species identification capacity, and biodiversity data are actively used by government agencies across multiple regulatory frameworks.

Legislation	Museum contribution
SA Biosecurity Act 2025	Species identification and taxonomic expertise for early detection and response to invasive species. Museum-trained taxonomists provide the identification capability that triggers biosecurity management responses
Landscape SA Act 2019	Biodiversity data, species distribution records and long-term environmental baselines that inform Landscape Board planning, regional natural resource management and land condition assessments across South Australia
Greater Adelaide Regional Plan	Urban biodiversity data, species records and environmental baseline information that supports ecological assessment, green infrastructure planning and environmental impact evaluation across the greater Adelaide region
Marine Parks Act 2007	Marine and coastal biodiversity data, species identification and long-term ecological baselines that support marine park management, monitoring and compliance across South Australian waters
State of the Environment reporting	Long-term environmental baselines, species distribution data and collections evidence. Museum collections and the work of the Department for Environment and Water together provided the data that formed the 2023 State of the Environment report
SA Biodiversity Act 2025	Taxonomic baseline, species monitoring capacity and biodiversity data essential for the Act's implementation. Without the Museum's capacity to identify, monitor and document species, the state cannot know or measure its biodiversity

In 2024-25, over 41,000 specimen datasets registered by the South Australian Museum were downloaded from the Atlas of Living Australia by researchers and government agencies. Museum staff described more than 100 new species and four new genera from South Australian and Pacific ecosystems.

Cultural heritage and community

The Museum's collections, archives, and provenance research are central to South Australia's obligations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to the state's cultural heritage more broadly. Our work also supports South Australia's growing multicultural communities whose cultural identity is connected to objects in the Museum's care.

<i>Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988</i>	Cultural collections management, provenance research and repatriation of Aboriginal Ancestors and sacred objects to communities. The Museum holds the world's most significant collection of Aboriginal material culture and cares for ancestral remains
<i>Heritage Places Act 1993</i>	Natural and cultural heritage identification, assessment and documentation in support of heritage listing, protection and management across South Australia
<i>South Australian Multicultural Act 2021 and Multicultural Charter</i>	Cultural inclusion obligations and recognition of community heritage held in the State Collection. The Museum's World Cultures and Pacific collections serve South Australia's diverse multicultural communities, including a growing Pacific Islands diaspora, by providing access to cultural heritage connected to their identity and wellbeing

In 2024-25, the Museum agreed to Australian Government and Aboriginal community requests for temporary care of Ancestors returned from institutions in Tokyo, Auckland, Los Angeles, and Berkeley. In 2024-25, Ancestors were returned to Country from institutions in Tokyo, Auckland, London and Berkeley. The Museum was the first institution outside Aotearoa to endorse the return of Māori pou to the Tamatea Pōkai Whenua Trust. The Archives team responded to more than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family history requests and over 100 additional research enquiries.

Resources, geology, and natural heritage

Museum geological and palaeontological collections contribute to South Australia's capacity to assess and manage its natural resources, protect its significant fossil and geoheritage sites, and meet its international World Heritage obligations.

<i>Heritage Places Act 1993</i>	Geological and palaeontological site assessment and protection, including the Naracoorte Caves World Heritage Complex. Museum research identifies and documents sites of geological and palaeontological significance for listing and management
<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Federal)</i>	World Heritage obligations supported by Museum research, including the Flinders Ranges nomination. The Sprigg Ediacaran Fossil Collection is among the first 11 geological heritage collections of global importance recognised by the International Commission on Geoheritage
<i>Mining Act 1971 and resources legislation</i>	Critical minerals research, geological collections and environmental context for mineral exploration and assessment. The Museum holds type specimens for over 1.5% of the world's currently known mineral species, providing irreplaceable reference material for geological research and mineral prospectivity
<i>South Australian Museum Act 1976 (meteorite provisions)</i>	Legislative custodianship of all South Australian meteorites found after July 1980, making the Museum the primary research institution for meteorite collections from one of the world's premier meteorite localities, the Nullarbor Plain

The Sprigg Ediacaran Fossil Collection is one of only 11 collections globally recognised at the highest tier of quality by the International Commission on Geoheritage. Museum research has directly supported the Flinders Ranges World Heritage bid. Honorary Researchers described four new minerals from South Australian localities in 2024-25. The Museum holds type specimens for over 1.5% of the world's currently known mineral species.



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