**Brief Executive Summary of Recommendation**

**It is proposed the Australian Government provide funding towards the development of the new Minerals Gallery in the Australian Museum, with a special one-off capital grant of $1.3 million.**

Australia has such reliance on its mineral wealth, and it deserves to be celebrated, displayed and understood by the public. There is no such facility currently in Sydney and the proposed new Australian Museum Minerals Gallery would fulfill this important need through the display of almost 1000 world class mineral specimens. objects.

**This new Gallery in the recently reopened Australian Museum (AM) is budgeted to cost $3.1 million in addition to internal resources. It is planned to open in June 2022.**

This budget will be met by NSW Government and private support.

NSW Government - $1,300,000

Commonwealth Government - $1,300,000

Private Support - $ 500,000

**Introduction**

For more than 190 years, the Australian Museum (AM) has been at the forefront of Australian scientific research, collection and education. The AM has grown to house an internationally recognised collection of over 21.9 million cultural and scientific objects and specimens, the largest in the Southern Hemisphere.

**Project Discover**, the AM’s renovation, was the most significant development since its inception and involved closing the AM to the general public for 15 months in which the following upgrades were made:

* Hintze Hall - A dynamic 2000sqm space that is adaptable for events and public programming and provides capacity for exhibition space.
* Temporary Exhibition Hall - 1000sqm of new space to attract international blockbuster exhibitions.
* Expanded Brian Sherman Crystal Hall entrance and donor lobby to facilitate an enhanced visitor experience and ensure the museum is prepared for increased visitation,
* Improved visitor amenities including: a new museum shop; a second café; expanded Member’s Lounge; cloaking, education rooms; and new public amenities.

This was made possible through a capital injection of $50.5 million from the NSW Government and a further $7 million from philanthropic supporters and community members.

Since reopening, the AM has seen an increase of over 200% attendance and the reopening attracted significant media interest. Through substantial support from the NSW Government, the AM has also been able to reopen without entry charge, which has drawn a wide and diverse audience from across Sydney and NSW (during COVID)

It is interesting to note that pre-COVID the AM’s audience included large tourist attendances. Increased audience numbers are even more impressive given the tourism sector is temporarily reduced.

The second stage of Project Discover involves the planning and development of four new galleries which will be created during 2021-23. These include:

* Discovery Space - A new state-of-the-art education centre, including immersive First Nations cultural and scientific learning experiences (level 2).
* Pacific Gallery - a highly engaging and innovative new gallery that tells the story of the people and environment of the Pacific (level 1).
* **Minerals Gallery** will showcase the renowned Albert Chapman collection in an enhanced facility that highlights its mineralogical diversity, crystal perfection, aesthetic appeal, and high Australian content (level 1). This will also provide the opportunity for education around the importance of mineral industries to Australia’s history and economy. The AM also holds the finest gem and mineral collection in the southern hemisphere, with nearly 60,000 specimens and is currently seeking funding to showcase this collection in an enhanced display environment:
* Egyptian Gallery: a new gallery to display one of the largest collections of antiquities in Australia for the first time in decades (level 3)

The AM is a dynamic source of reliable scientific information and a touchstone for informed debate about some of the most pressing environmental and social challenges facing our region: the loss of biodiversity, a changing climate, and the search for cultural identity.

**Executive Summary of Recommendation**

Australia has such reliance on its mineral wealth, and it deserves to be celebrated, displayed and understood by the public. There is no such facility currently in Sydney and the proposed new AM Minerals Gallery would fulfill this important need through the display of almost 1000 objects and specimens.

**It is proposed the Australian Government provides funding towards the development of the new Minerals Gallery in the Australian Museum with a special grant of $1,300,000. This represents 42% of the total budget cost of the new Gallery.**

**How this addresses the future**

The Minerals sector is one of the most important industries in Australia in economic development terms, as an employer and exporter. The role the sector plays in our history, society and future should be further recognised and understood.

The AM’s Mineralogy and Petrology collection is the oldest in Australia, and consists of 68,149 registered specimens, primarily made up of minerals, but also including 19,320 rocks (including 755 meteorites) and eight Type specimens. The mineral component is the largest of any Australian Collection, encompassing private collections (e.g., Albert Chapman collection) and those used for active research.

The AM’s Mineral Gallery project provides an opportunity for the Federal Government to support and celebrate the history and future of minerals in Australia with an organization that offers credible scientific backing; a track record of world-class display; and innovative education programs to communicate the significant impact of minerals to the Australian social, scientific, economic, and environmental landscape; as well as a projected audience of over 1 million (post COVID)

Support for this project will provide a destination gallery for visitors both local, domestic, and international, stimulating regrowth in the tourism economy.

This gallery will be a highlight for AM Education tours: with the recently completed Stage 1 upgrades, the AM able to attract approximately 115,000 students *per annum*. The gallery will provide direct links to the science curriculum and it would be expected to be a key stop for guided and self-guided groups through the Museum.

**How the Federal Government can address the issues:**

The AM is well positioned to deliver on the Federal Government’s policy priority of **Supporting Australia’s Mineral Sector**.

This object-rich display will showcase many of the significant rock and mineral specimens previously on display as well as important pieces acquired recently – highlighting the abundant diversity of Australia’s geology.

Selected specimens from the continent will be interpreted within a place-based framework highlighting geological environments in which they were formed and relationship to Country and First Nations communities from which the specimens were collected.

Other specimens, including from international sources, will be interpreted within a collection-based framework, focusing on: AM collection highlights; collecting practices; geological focus areas; and individual collections such as Albert Chapman.

In addition to the display, funding of the gallery would also be used to create the following:

* Interactive screens: that contain app content; and activities (explore chemical compositions – allow for experimentation with chemical elements). This content will also be iPad-compatible to allow student groups to utilise it in AM education spaces;
* Short documentary film: that focuses on Australian ‘highlight’ specimens/regions to illuminate the geodiversity of our continent. The film could include key location shots from the geological environments in which specimens were formed, details of discovery/acquisition, including current discoveries being made, set within broader narrative of the geological evolution of Australia and its mineral deposits, geological heritage, economic contribution, environmental issues and First Nations relationships.

**Specific Request of the Federal Government:**

The AM is seeking Federal Government support of $1,300,000. This partial funding of the gallery will be supplemented by the NSW Government and AM Donors.

This funding will ensure that there is a world class mineral gallery display to educate, “wow” and engage adults and children alike.

The funding will also engage several contractors and staff for the development and building including:

* Science and exhibition personnel for content and text.
* Prep staff for build, painting, mounts, and fabrication;
* Designers for graphics and 3D renderings.
* Electricians.
* Showcase providers.
* Multimedia company for the development of interactives.
* Lighting technicians:
* Video production:
* Education program development.

Government funding will therefore also contribute to local employment during the construction phase of the Gallery – estimated 30 people.

It is anticipated that the project will commence in the second half of 2021 with completion by June 2022. A commitment to funding would be required in the forthcoming budget.

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