

Bequest



The power of leaving a legacy



Patricia Marcia McDonald
2 March 1929 – 11 November 2018



The Patricia McDonald Story

Patricia McDonald B.Sc., Dip.Ed 1929–2018
Pioneer Educator

Patricia McDonald began work at the Australian Museum (AM) as an Education Officer in 1953 when she was 24 years old. With a science education degree from Sydney University and one year's teaching experience, she dedicated herself to building the Australian Museum's education program over the next 35 years.

By the time of her retirement in 1988, the Australian Museum's education department had become a world-class resource and to this day Patricia's legacy continues with over 150,000 students taking part in AM onsite, online and outreach programs each year.

Her original office was a room in a tin shed with no water or power, however under her leadership, the AM developed a number of ground-breaking education initiatives that have influenced how museums around the world deliver education programs to students, including the Museum In A Box® program and production of educational films for schools.

Patricia passed away on 11 November 2018 at the age of 89 and left a substantial bequest in her will to the Australian Museum Foundation for the benefit and use of the AM in support of its life long learning programs, especially for young people, and for additional facilities.

Learning by discovering

From the early days Patricia believed in a hands-on approach to a child's discovery of the natural world, and she encouraged the curators to donate specimens which the children could handle and use.

Under her lead, the education department began its own collecting, firstly with animals of the Australian seashores. In the Sydney of the 1950s, when children were still being taught science with textbooks from England, Patricia recognised a need for information about the Australian natural environment. Thus, she went on to write a book with Museum biologist Elizabeth Pope *Exploring Between Tidemarks* in 1958 to provide Australian students an introduction to seashore ecology.

Patricia started a new educational program in 1965 – The Discoverers Club – where school students could engage with AM collections and exhibits, complete question and answer booklets on specific themes called Walkabouts and work their way up to attending fieldtrips with the curators. For many students, participation in this program encouraged them to pursue a career in science.



Patricia McDonald collecting by the seashore, 1950's.
Photo: Howard Hughes © Australian Museum.

Museum in a Box®

After receiving a travelling scholarship in 1961 to study museum practices overseas, Patricia was inspired to introduce school loan cases, with real specimens and teaching resources for use inside schools. Each Museum in a Box® covered one topic and contained sliding boards of mounted specimens, dioramas, pictures and text. This successful program required ongoing maintenance by dedicated staff and is still in operation today.



Early Museum in a Box®.

A modern approach

Patricia strived to achieve proper levels of staffing and facilities, and in 1975 the new Education Centre opened, the first in any natural history museum in Australia. There were large classrooms equipped according to subject, including Dinosaurs, Investigating Animals and Aboriginal Australia, and a Discovery Room housing hands-on exhibits for children. Educational films were produced and loaned to schools, and the Education Centre remained contemporary by engaging with the current exhibitions and latest scientific discoveries.

Reaching out: Australian Museum Train and the Wandervan

In the 1970s Patricia oversaw two projects designed to extend educational resources to those who could not easily visit the Museum. The Australian Museum Train included an exhibition carriage and a classroom carriage as well as housing accommodations for one Education Officer. For over 10 years it travelled by railway around New South Wales, reaching many new audiences including school classes and various adult groups.

Another project was the Wandervan, a vehicle which contained a mobile collection of resource materials prepared by the AM to improve accessibility for children with disabilities and the elderly. The van travelled with an Education Officer who would use its materials to teach in a variety of settings, including schools, hospitals and day care centres.



Students inside the Australian Museum Train, 1978.



The Wandervan used for the mobile outreach project that began in 1978.

Supporting museum educators

Patricia also made major contributions to the wider museum community in Australia and overseas. As a founding member of the Education Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) she ensured that the voices of Australia and the smaller Pacific countries were heard in the international arena. At a 1977 ICOM meeting in Leningrad, she presented a related paper entitled *The role of Museums in promoting Mutual Cultural Enrichment and Understanding among Nations*.

During the 1960s her Education Officers conducted some of the first research work on museum visitor behaviour and the effectiveness of museum exhibits, and in 1966 she organised a seminar on the role of museums in education for the Australian National Advisory Committee for UNESCO. One of the main aims of the seminar was to discuss ways to assess the effectiveness of museum education programs, and Patricia presented a paper on *Assessment of Results of Education Programs*. She also published *Audience Surveys in Australia* in the ICOM Education Annual in 1970, where she wrote that at the AM, under her lead, they had been conducting questionnaires of audiences since 1960.

Patricia continued to provide leadership in the museum education field for many years after her retirement, and she also served on the boards of the National Trust of Australia and the Sydney Film Festival.

Leaving a legacy to be enjoyed by future generations

Patricia McDonald made a bequest to support the AM's life-long learning programs.

Patricia's story demonstrates the power of a bequest and the positive impact it creates for future generations. Patricia's belief in the importance of education for our children provides a gift that will ignite wonder, inspire debate and drive change. Today's children are tomorrow's adults and Patricia's legacy will ensure our education programs continue to shape generations to come. Her generosity will endure as a gift to all visitors, as the AM is for everyone to enjoy.

The Australian Museum Foundation (AMF) is a charitable trust, the purpose of which is to ensure a secure financial base for the AM and the AM is its sole legal beneficiary. Like Patricia, you can leave a bequest to the AMF to further the AM's vision as being the leading voice for the richness of life, the earth, and culture in Australia and the Pacific.

The new Education Rooms, as part of Project Discover, have been named in Patricia's honour as a mark of her dedication to education at the AM both during her lifetime and beyond.

Part of Patricia's bequest will also build a state-of-the-art learning centre - a multi-zone education space that will support each age and stage level of learning with educator-led and self-led groups within specialist zones. The education centre will integrate First Nations knowledge systems and Western science together to create deeply engaging learning experiences outside the classroom.

You may wish to designate your bequest for the general purpose of the AM, and funds will be allocated to priorities of the AM at the time. We do recommend that you seek independent legal advice when making or updating your will.

There are several ways in which you can leave a bequest:

Residual After you have specified gifts for family or friends, the remainder (residual) is left to the AMF.^

Percentage of your total estate You specify what percentage of your estate you leave to the AMF.^

Specified assets (including the proceeds of any insurance policies) You may choose to give specific assets (of the tradeable variety) to the AMF such as shares, bonds or property. You can also direct that your Executor give the proceeds of any life insurance policy or superannuation policy to the AMF. Assets of this sort may attract Capital Gains Tax.*^

A specified sum of money You may choose to give a specific amount of money to the AMF.^

Alternatively, you can include a clause for a simple gift in your will as:

"I give to the Australian Museum Foundation (ABN 64 497 967 210) (select the applicable choice [the residual of my estate] / [X% of my estate] / [name of specific asset(s)] / [specific amount of money]) for the use and benefit of the Australian Museum at its absolute discretion, free from all taxes and duties payable in respect of my death, my estate or the administration of my estate and I direct that the receipt of the Director, President or other authorised officer at the time shall be an absolute discharge to my Executor(s) for the gift."

We welcome the opportunity to assist you in creating a bequest to the AMF.

Bequests are highly appreciated and extremely beneficial in supporting the AM's goals to inspire and educate future generations.

For more information on how to leave a bequest to the AMF, please visit our website: australian.museum/get-involved/join/foundation/bequests, or contact our **Development team on (02) 9320 6216 or development@australian.museum**. All enquiries are strictly confidential.


^ These explanations are general in nature and we recommend that you seek independent legal advice when making and updating your will.

* More information about Capital Gains Tax and bequeathed assets can be found on the ATO website under deceased estates and capital gains tax.

Museum in a Box® reached 51,203 people through the loan of 297 boxes across the diverse range of topics during 2019-20.



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Become a donor to the
Australian Museum Foundation,
contact the Development team.

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Image: Patricia McDonald with students from
Smithfield Public School, 1976.

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