

Former Australian Museum Teacher Leaves Significant Bequest for Education Patricia McDonald, Australian Museum Education Pioneer, Provides Lasting Legacy

Sydney, 24 February 2021: The life-changing power of a bequest was recognized today when the Australian Museum (AM) officially opened the Patricia McDonald Education Rooms in honour of the former AM Education Officer who died in 2018 at 89 years.

“Patricia McDonald worked in education at the AM for 35 years, commencing in 1953 at the age of 24 years and pioneered new ways of learning which influenced the way museum education developed here and around the world,” Kim McKay AO, Director and CEO of the Australian Museum said.

The bequest of over \$7m, the largest received in the AM’s history, was made by Patricia McDonald to the Australian Museum Foundation (AMF) to support lifelong learning, especially for young people.

The AM has created new education facilities as part of its recent redevelopment, Project Discover. The education briefing rooms, designed specifically for student groups, have been named the Patricia McDonald Education Rooms honouring her dedication to education at the AM during her lifetime and the ongoing impact of her generous gift.

Part of the bequest will help build a new interactive education centre, on Level 2 of the museum which will weave together First Nations knowledge systems with the AM’s scientific research to deliver a unique learning space for curious children of all ages. Part of the bequest will also provide an ongoing grant program for education projects at the AM.

“Our robust education initiatives at the Australian Museum would not be what they are today without the ground-breaking work of Patricia McDonald, a true education pioneer. The AM’s Education initiatives spark curiosity and a spirit of discovery in diverse audiences with more than 150,000 students taking part in AM onsite, online and outreach programs each year.

“We look forward to continuing to inspire more people through our education initiatives with the new education rooms and the future development of a state-of-the art, interactive education area, which we expect to complete over the next two years,” McKay said.

Chairman of the Australian Museum Foundation, Brian Hartzler, said the Patricia McDonald story demonstrates the power of a bequest.

“Leaving a bequest to the AMF creates a positive impact for future generations. Children across NSW and Australia, including my own, have greatly benefited from the Australian Museum’s fantastic education initiatives, many of which were pioneered by Patricia McDonald,” Hartzler said.

In 1953, armed with a science education degree from Sydney University and just one year’s teaching experience, Patricia McDonald dedicated herself to building the Australian Museum’s education programs over the next 35 years.

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, development of a dedicated Education Centre onsite and production of educational films for schools.

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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 voice of Australia and the smaller Pacific countries was heard in the international arena.

By the time of her retirement in 1988, the Australian Museum's education department had become a world-class resource and Patricia continued to provide leadership in the museum education field for many years after her retirement.

Patricia McDonald died on 11 November 2018 at the age of 89 and left a substantial bequest to the AMF to support the AM's learning programs, furthering the AM's vision as being the leading voice of life, the Earth and culture in Australia and the Pacific.

For more information about making a gift or leaving a bequest to the AMF, please visit <https://australian.museum/foundation>.

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About the Australian Museum

The [Australian Museum](#) (AM) was founded in 1827 and is the nation's first museum. It is internationally recognised as a natural science and culture institution focused on Australia and the Pacific. As custodian of more than 21.9 million objects and specimens, 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 (AMRI), the AM also plays a leading role in conserving Australia's biodiversity through understanding the environmental impacts of climate change, potential security threats and invasive species.

About the Australian Museum Foundation

The [Australian Museum Foundation](#) (ABN 64 497 967 210) is a charitable trust, the purpose of which is to ensure a secure financial base for the Australian Museum and the Museum is its sole legal beneficiary. The Foundation is endorsed as a deductible gift recipient and an Item 2 public ancillary fund under the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997.

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