

Media Release

The Hon Lily D'Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change
Minister for Solar Homes



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Friday, 25 January 2019

NEW VISION FOR MELBOURNE'S ROYAL BOTANIC GARDENS

Melbourne's iconic Royal Botanic Gardens could soon be attracting thousands more visitors, with the Andrews Labor Government to provide a \$5 million kickstart to a proposed new nature and science precinct.

Minister for Environment Lily D'Ambrosio today announced funding for a feasibility study for a new Nature and Science Precinct that includes the redevelopment of the National Herbarium of Victoria, and the creation of a new nature gallery and learning and participation centre.

Under the plan, the original 1934 Herbarium building will be fully restored and expanded to include a plant identification service. The much beloved children's garden will also be expanded, and the Great Melbourne Telescope returned to its home at the Melbourne Observatory.

The proposed project would see an estimated increase in visitors from 1.9 million to 2.4 million by 2023 and increase school student participation by 50 per cent.

This redevelopment will also allow for the treasures of the State Botanical Collection to be shared with the public for the first time and help preserve the collection for future generations.

The collection is currently home to more than 1.5 million specimens collected over the past 500 years – including a recent discovery of a plant, hand-collected by Charles Darwin in 1832 during his famous voyage on H.M.S. Beagle.

The National Herbarium of Victoria now joins a small and prestigious list of international herbaria holding collections made by Darwin on this voyage.

The Darwin specimen joins the State Botanical Collection's other famous treasures such as one of the banksias collected by Joseph Banks at Botany Bay, Ludwig Leichardt specimens from northern Australia, and plants from Africa gathered by David Livingstone.

The feasibility study will establish the scope and design for the new precinct and conclude in November 2019, before the expected start of early works on the Herbarium in early 2020.

The Labor Government is also investing \$27 million over five years in Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria to revitalise its Melbourne and Cranbourne gardens.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Environment Lily D'Ambrosio

"This precinct will bring Victoria's natural wonders to life in the heart of Melbourne and thousands more visitors to our beautiful botanic gardens."

"It will unlock our State Botanical Collection, creating wonderful new experiences for local families and schools."

Quote attributable Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria CEO Professor Tim Entwisle

"This commitment from the Victorian Government to our Nature and Science precinct recognises the powerful connection between culture, nature and science, and importance of Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria to Melbourne and to the health of this planet."

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