



## The SAM Collections

The South Australian Museum is a world-leading research institution, and houses over four and a half million objects and specimens, so only a small portion are on display in the main building. We're excited to show you some of the behind the scenes work today.

Our Science Centre is where most of the biological sciences and earth sciences collections are stored, and also where many of our scientists work, in labs, offices, and directly with the collections.

At the Museum, we host the largest tissue collection in the Southern Hemisphere, the most comprehensive collection of Australian Aboriginal Cultural material in the world, and Australia's finest collection of helminths (parasitic worms).

We host hundreds of type specimens, the original specimen nominated as the reference specimen when describing a new species.

The biological collections stored here are either housed in spirit rooms (in jars, in ethanol or similar) or dry storage.

These non-gallery collections are not usually open to the public as they are functioning worksites. Also the collection is precious and sometimes, especially with archives and anthropology, the information and items are of a sensitive nature and can't be shared publicly.

In the Science Centre we host:

- Museum archives
- Family History Unit (we have a dedicated team working on the collections involving Aboriginal family histories, including genealogists who help connect people with their family trees)
- The Mawson Centre and Polar Collections (We have three collections focused on Antarctic exploration, the biggest one being the Sir Douglas Mawson collection)
- Palaeontology (ancient life, fossils)
- Mineralogy (minerals and meteorites)
- Taxidermy and 3D model making
- Mammalogy (whale and dolphin bones are processed and stored in a separate facility as there isn't room here for them)
- Herpetology (Snakes, Lizards)



- Ichthyology (Fish)
- Ornithology (Birds)
- Marine Invertebrates (shells, squids etc - This is the broadest by far of all the biological collections: all of vertebrates fits in one phylum, Marine Invertebrates covers 26)
- Terrestrial Invertebrates (This is a huge collection of around 2 million specimens, including insects, spiders, scorpions, ticks, mites and others that are less well known like collembola and pseudoscorpions)
- Subfossils (ancient but not ancient enough to be fossils – often part of an organism that has not fully fossilised, ie bones but also stick-nest rat nests)

Offsite we host:

- World Cultures including the large Pacific Cultures collection
- Australian Aboriginal Cultures (our Aboriginal cultures collection is a national collection, arguably the most comprehensive and important collection in the world, with only about 5% on public display)
- The maceration facility, where we process and store large mammal bones such as whales (the maceration process, where we remove the flesh from the bones, takes place in the large vats here, and sometimes by composting in the ground at the facility)

On public display in the galleries are:

- The Australian Aboriginal Cultures Gallery (ground and Level 1)
- Pacific Cultures Gallery (Mezzanine level)
- World Mammals Gallery (ground)
- Whales and dolphins display (main foyer)
- South Australian Biodiversity Gallery (Level 2)
- First Life Gallery (Level 3, Ediacaran fossils – the oldest life forms)
- Megafauna (Level 3 – ancient Australian marsupials and other animals)
- Cambrian (Level 3 – ancient fossils, just after the Ediacaran period)
- Minerals and Meteorites (Level 3)
- Opal Fossils (Level 3 – fossils from the Eromanga sea period, ancient South Australia)
- Ancient Egypt Gallery (Level 3)
- Giant Squid (Level 3 – in an old elevator shaft, a lifesize model of a giant squid)