

# WAMA: An important opportunity

THE WILDLIFE ART MUSEUM OF AUSTRALIA (WAMA) IS A VISIONARY PROJECT TO CREATE AN ART MUSEUM WITHIN AN AUSTRALIAN BOTANICAL LANDSCAPE.



By Glenda Lewin

The idea to build a wildlife art museum in the Grampians (Gariwerd) region of Victoria began as an aspiration of the Grampians arts community in April 2012. With growing support from dedicated volunteers, and under the guidance of the WAMA Foundation, the Wildlife Art Museum of Australia (WAMA) project has evolved to a proposed scale that will make it an unmatched arts and environmental precinct in Australia.

One of the exciting aspects of the museum is that visitors will be able to view exceptional artwork surrounded by a unique garden incorporating wetlands, a natural, covenanted area of indigenous Grampians flora, and a designed garden capturing the diversity of our national flora. It will be a place of contemplation, learning, observing and participating.



© Lyn Diefenbach, Little Celebrations



The WAMA site



© Raymond Ching, Kangaroo Kangaroo



© Silvio Apponyi, Nautilus

WAMA will attract a significant number of visitors to the region and boost the local economy. It will provide a world-class setting recognising Australia's contribution to the natural sciences, showcase the work of outstanding wildlife and natural history artists, and nurture a learning experience for current and future generations.

Land and wetlands with abundant native species bordering the Grampians National Park has been generously donated to the Foundation. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria has been consulted and has confirmed there are no cultural sensitivities for building and operating WAMA in this location.

The sense of one community working towards an outcome of national and international significance is steadily gaining momentum. When complete, the planned museum building will have a strong focus on education, displaying permanent and tourism exhibitions, housing a dedicated art and natural history library, and providing world-class research, conference and resident artist facilities and studios. These facilities will also promote an understanding of the environment and showcase the importance of water and energy sustainability.

The museum will house a collection of artworks narrating the development of humanity's artistic achievements, from our beginnings in caves, through the scientific and illustrative work of early explorers, to more impressionistic and symbolic works of the present day.

Set amongst native vegetation and against the backdrop of the Grampians mountain range, with the landscaped botanical garden to be created with support from the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne, WAMA will be a compelling attraction for visitors seeking nature-based experiences. The surrounding gardens and wetlands will provide 'hands-on', interactive experiences linked with museum programs. The environs will also feature a permanent local habitat conservation area and protected wetlands reserve, providing a hardening area for endangered species.

A Regional Environment and Economic Impact Study, funded by Regional Development Victoria, confirmed that WAMA is an entirely appropriate economic development initiative that will substantially contribute to the objectives of the Grampians Economic Development Plan and Grampians Tourism Strategic Plan. This study was compiled using preliminary concept plans, input from stakeholders, reviews and comparisons with other museum and botanic gardens developments, tourism data, regional economic data, and analysis and modelling.

From an economic development perspective, WAMA is a 'bottom-up' regional development initiative, with local stakeholders and communities involved in the planning, investment development and implementation activities.

The museum and surrounds will fully complement the existing tourism portfolio and provide a range of experiences and services that, combined, will create a product offering with strong appeal to international, domestic and Victorian visitors, as well as residents of the Grampians region.

The WAMA organisational structure is well-resourced with experienced board leadership. The project is supported by a diverse professional group comprised of business leaders, architects, eminent artists and naturalists, who are all committed to the vision on a voluntary basis.

Donations in excess of \$1 million have been received to date and WAMA is currently in the early stages of design, with a view to making planning and funding applications this year in preparation for a two-year design and construction period. The Board is confident of securing significant (private sector) pledges from its fundraising efforts and will continue to seek appropriate state and federal funding through grant applications.

For more details on WAMA, please visit [www.wama.net.au](http://www.wama.net.au). Your interest and generosity in contributing to this exciting and unique project is warmly welcomed. ♦

Glenda Lewin is the Patron of WAMA.

## WAMA

- Capital costs: \$22 million
- Regional economic contribution: \$29 million per annum
- Jobs: 103 full-time equivalent
- Cash positive/break-even operating model
- Attracting an additional 256,000 visitors annually to the Grampians region