

2025–2030 STRATEGIC PLAN



DISCOVERY
CENTRE





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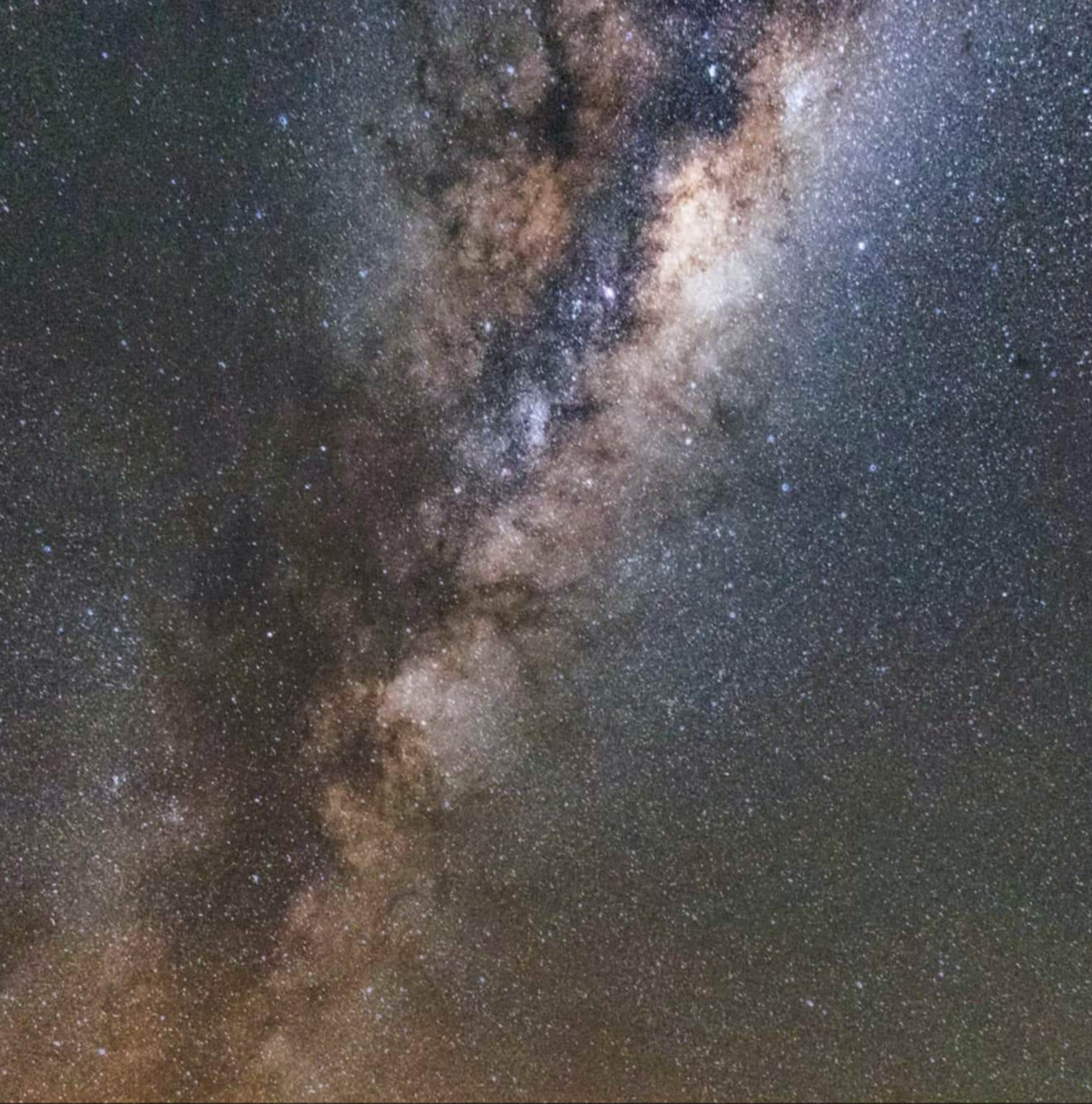
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We would like to acknowledge that the Discovery Science & Technology Centre is located on Djandak, the traditional land of the Dja Dja Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation.

We recognise they are among the first scientists, astronomers, and engineers in human history.

We pay respect to them, their culture and knowledge, and to Elders, past, present and emerging.

Through our work, we promote scientific understanding in the hope that we can help tend to this land to keep it healthy for future generations.

INTRODUCTION

In an era of accelerating change, the ability to think critically, solve complex problems, collaborate across disciplines, and adapt creatively is no longer optional — it's essential. Today's and tomorrow's challenges, from climate change and pandemics to automation, data ethics, and novel engineering, require people who can not only master technical knowledge, but apply it in imaginative and socially responsible ways. STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) education is the foundation for nurturing those capacities, offering both a language and a methodology for inquiry, innovation, and agency in the world.

WHY STEM EDUCATION MATTERS

The Australian Government's National STEM School Education Strategy frames STEM education as central not only to individual opportunity but to national productivity, innovation, and competitiveness. (*Department of Education*). A workforce with strong STEM literacy supports new ideas, better services, and more resilient communities. In Australia, occupations in information and communication technology and engineering have grown at about 1.5-times the rate of other jobs in recent years, illustrating how the demand for STEM skills is rising swiftly (*STEM Centre Australia*).

But beyond jobs, STEM education cultivates transferable skills:

Critical and creative thinking

Unpacking assumptions, designing experiments, iterating, and imagining alternative futures.

Collaboration and communication

Translating complex ideas, listening and synthesising diverse perspectives, co-designing solutions.

Problem-solving and inquiry

Framing meaningful questions, collecting evidence, testing hypotheses, adapting to failure.

These capacities matter across domains; in the arts, in governance, in health, and in civic life, and underpin the agility people will need in a world where entire occupations may morph or vanish.

Studies of programs like RE-Engineering Australia show that well-designed STEM experiences (e.g. challenge-based, project-based) do more than teach content: they shift attitudes, improve persistence, and open new pathways for students to see themselves as makers and problem-solvers (*Re-Engineering Australia Foundation*).



STEM FOR ALL – ENSURING ACCESS, EQUITY, AND REPRESENTATION

A strong STEM ecosystem requires not just more people in STEM, but diverse voices. Yet persistent gaps remain: women and diverse genders are underrepresented, especially in engineering, computing, and technology (*Chief Scientist*). The 2024 STEM Equity Monitor continues to show disparities in participation, confidence, and progression along STEM pathways (*Department of Industry, Science and Resources*).

In regional and rural Australia, educational disadvantage and infrastructure gaps intensify barriers to STEM access. Cultural, economic, and geographic constraints can mean fewer opportunities for hands-on learning, fewer role models, and limited resources. Particularly for Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, systemic exclusion or lack of culturally responsive design can further entrench inequality.

Promoting “STEM for all” is not just a moral imperative, it expands the talent pool and strengthens social cohesion. When more girls, First Nations students, rural students, and marginalised voices engage in STEM, our collective capacity for innovation becomes richer and fairer.

75%

**OF THE FASTEST GROWING
OCCUPATIONS REQUIRE
STEM-RELATED SKILLS**

Australian Industry Group

THE SCIENCE (AND ART) OF LEARNING THROUGH PLAY



One of the most powerful ways to open STEM to everyone, especially young children and families, is through play. Learning through play is not frivolous; it is deeply rooted in developmental science. When children play, they experiment, test boundaries, simulate hypotheses, iterate, negotiate, and reflect — all naturally engaging cognitive, social, and emotional systems (*The Genius of Play*).

In early learning contexts, integrating STEM into play-based pedagogies has been shown to enhance children’s self-belief in their capacities to “do science,” trigger deeper appreciation of STEM in everyday life, and scaffold more sustained inquiry (*UWA*). Play also lowers cognitive load: it makes abstract concepts tangible, invites multiple entry points, and reduces the fear of “wrong answers”. When families and educators engage in play-based STEM together, the experience becomes accessible rather than intimidating, inviting curiosity rather than performance anxiety.

In summary play is not just a technique, it is a human way of thinking, exploring, and making sense of complexity.

WHY EARLY YEARS EDUCATION IS CRUCIAL

The years from birth to about age eight form the neural and cognitive foundation for later learning. Neuroscience and education research show that early experiences shape brain architecture, influencing later capacity for self-regulation, reasoning, curiosity, and resilience (*International Journal of the Whole Child*).

In STEM specifically, early exposure matters. Children who engage in meaningful, scaffolded STEM experiences before formal schooling are more likely to persist in STEM learning, see themselves as science-capable, and approach new domains with confidence (*Creative Education*). Because early years are less differentiated by disciplinary labels, they offer a unique space to weave science, engineering, and mathematics in integrated, natural, curiosity-led ways.

By investing in early years engagement, we plant seeds of identity, motivation, and capacity that can grow into lifelong learning.

DISCOVERY: MORE THAN A SCIENCE CENTRE

Within this ecosystem, the Discovery Science & Technology Centre (Discovery) plays a unique and multifaceted role:

As an education institution

Discovery bridges formal and informal learning, partners with schools, supports professional learning for educators, and serves as a living lab for pedagogical innovation.

As a community hub

It is a place where families gather, curiosity is shared, and learning is communal. It helps local schools, councils, industry, and cultural groups coalesce around science, innovation, and vision.

As a tourist attraction

It draws people from across the region and beyond, serving not only to inspire but to build cultural and economic vitality in the region.



For decades, generations of families have brought children through its doors: children who now remember their first rocket launch, their wonder at a microscope, or the memory of braving the vertical slide. These shared experiences become stories passed through siblings, cousins, and friendships, embedding Discovery in the fabric of regional life.

We know that for some, a spark at Discovery has led to life-changing trajectories: a student sparked to become an engineer, a teacher re-ignited in their discipline, or a parent rediscovering their love of science. These are the unseen ripple effects: when curiosity becomes identity, and identity becomes opportunity.

This strategic plan is built on the conviction that STEM is for everyone, that play is a powerful pathway, and that early, accessible experiences can change lives. Discovery is not only a site of possibility — it is a catalyst for individuals, communities, and futures. The following pages present how we intend to amplify that impact in the coming years.

OUR VISION

Making STEM accessible for all

OUR PURPOSE

Leading science education from regional Australia

OUR MISSION

We inspire and nurture scientific curiosity

BY 2030

Discovery feels new, energised and alive — a place people want to be.

Discovery has a skilled, capable and satisfied workforce resourced to meet strategic and operational targets with a strong and sustainable financial base.

Discovery has a strong identity as a partner of choice in leading regional science education in Australia and making STEM accessible for all.

OUR FOCUS

Infrastructure & Programs

People & Finance

Branding & Partnerships

OUR ACTIONS

Infrastructure

- Extend and improve activation of our spaces.
- Increase accessibility and comfort.
- Create fit-for-purpose storage and workshop space.
- Establish a permanent facility to support online education.
- Develop a clear and feasible plan for building and renovation works.
- Secure funding to undertake a infrastructure upgrades.

Programs

- Develop a new and engaging educational program delivery plan with STEM education as a core focus – to include:
 - In-centre experiences.
 - School excursions and outreach.
 - Community outreach.
 - Holiday activities.
 - Increased use of existing assets.
- Create a five-year plan for new exhibitions:
 - Develop the roadmap for exhibits.
 - Rotate and refresh in-house exhibits and experiences.

People

- Develop a workforce strategy that builds skills, capability and capacity.
- Retain and expand our team and ensure high workplace satisfaction and wellbeing.
- Build, retain and celebrate our volunteers.
- Foster a culture of inclusive, inspiring, and inquiry-led science education leadership.

Finance

- Review and revise our membership value and structure.
- Develop a strategy to increase the profitability and performance of our programs.
- Maintain inclusive pricing.
- Develop and fund a renovation plan.

Branding

- Establish a cohesive and consistent brand identity.
- Build a marketing and communications strategy that positions Discovery as leaders in making STEM accessible for all.
- Build a responsive and accessible website.
- Use our brand to drive visitation from local, regional and metro visitors.
- Use visitor evaluation and engagement data to inform our decisions.

Partnerships

- Build on existing partnerships and engage new strategic partners.
- Build a roadmap for education partnerships.
- Work with education departments to develop Discovery-led STEM education.
- Engage key stakeholders to collaboratively promote the complete Discovery experience.
- Broaden connections with business and philanthropy.
- Adopt partnerships that support infrastructure works.

EXPERIENCE

CREATING SPACES & PROGRAMS THAT SPARK CURIOSITY

This area focuses on revitalising Discovery's physical and programmatic offerings to ensure it remains a vibrant, engaging, and inclusive space for science education. It's about making the Centre a place people want to visit and learn in — especially children and families in regional areas.

Discovery has always been a place where curiosity comes alive. Since its founding in 1995, Discovery has offered regional communities the rare opportunity to engage with hands-on science in ways that are both playful and profound. Our exhibits, programs, and workshops have inspired countless moments of wonder, from a child's first rocket launch to a teacher rediscovering their own love of science. But as the world and education evolve, so too must the spaces and experiences that fuel this curiosity.

Our commitment to experience is about creating environments that invite exploration, imagination, and connection. We believe that curiosity grows when people feel empowered to touch, test, and question the world around them. That's why our next chapter focuses on revitalising Discovery's spaces and programs, ensuring that they are vibrant, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of our communities. By 2030, Discovery will feel renewed: a place where energy and learning pulse through every corner, where children and families see STEM as something they can do, not just something to observe.

This strategic priority reflects our belief that experience is the heart of Discovery. Modernising our exhibits, introducing new technologies, and creating fit-for-purpose learning spaces will allow us to spark that vital first moment of curiosity again and again. It's about keeping Discovery alive, not as a museum of what science was, but as a living centre for what STEM can be.



BY 2028 WE WILL

Infrastructure

- Extend and improve activation of our spaces including floor, roof and vertical spaces.
- Increase accessibility and year-round temperature and sound comfort.
- Create fit-for-purpose storage and workshop space.
- Establish a permanent fit for purpose technology enabled facility to support online education and recordings.
- Develop a clear and feasible plan for building and renovation works.
- Secure funding to undertake a minimum of two infrastructure upgrades.

Programs

- Develop a new and engaging educational program delivery plan with STEM education as a core focus – to include:
 - Discovery in-house public education, experiences and exhibitions for all ages and science stages
 - School excursions and outreach (Discovery in person, in school and online)
 - Community outreach, parents and carers education, science educator training (Discovery in person, in community, online and at home)
 - Holiday activities Increased use of existing assets in programming e.g. planetarium, Rocketship, auditorium, lab.
- Create a five-year plan for new exhibitions — either hired or Discovery created:
 - Develop the roadmap to buy or build at least one high impact, feature exhibit a year.
 - Rotate and refresh in-house exhibits and experiences.

AGES 5 AND UNDER
SAFETY
SCIENTISTS
STEP 1





ENGINE ROOM

BUILDING THE PEOPLE & RESOURCES BEHIND DISCOVERY

This area ensures Discovery has the skilled people and financial resources needed to deliver on our vision. It's about strengthening the internal capacity to support growth, innovation, and sustainability.

Behind every hands-on exhibit, every excited visitor, and every community program is the engine that drives Discovery forward: our people. From passionate educators and volunteers to creative designers and operational staff, Discovery's success has always rested on the dedication and ingenuity of those who make it all happen. Through the years, this "engine room" has powered our growth, sustained our outreach, and ensured that regional Victoria continues to receive incredible and inspiring STEM education.

The purpose of this priority is to invest in that engine, strengthening the skills, wellbeing, and sustainability of the people and systems that keep Discovery thriving. We recognise that our greatest resource isn't a building or a brand; it's the collective talent, enthusiasm, and expertise of our team. To build a Discovery that endures, we must create the conditions for those people to grow, collaborate, and innovate.

This means developing a clear workforce strategy, providing meaningful professional pathways, and ensuring financial sustainability that allows creativity and education to flourish. A strong financial foundation gives us the freedom to focus on what matters most: delivering impact. By 2030, Discovery will have a secure and dynamic workforce, a diverse funding base, and the confidence to expand its reach across regional Australia.

The "Engine Room" is not just about efficiency; it's about empowerment. It ensures that every spark of curiosity we create in the public is backed by a capable, motivated team with the tools and resources to make it happen, today and for generations to come

BY 2028 WE WILL
People
Develop a workforce strategy that creates clearly defined roles supported by a development program that builds skills, capability and capacity across the employed team, volunteers and board.
Retain and expand our core team, offering secure employment contracts with high workplace satisfaction and wellbeing.
Build, retain and celebrate our volunteers.
Foster a culture of inclusive, inspiring, and inquiry-led science education leadership
Finance
Review and revise our membership value and structure.
Develop a strategy to increase the profitability and performance of our programs.
Maintain inclusive pricing.
Develop and fund a renovation plan.



VISIBILITY

WHO WE ARE & WHY IT MATTERS

This area is about strengthening Discovery’s identity and reputation. It positions Discovery as a leader in regional science education and builds partnerships that amplify our impact.

Discovery has been a cornerstone of regional STEM education for decades, yet our impact often extends far beyond what’s visible. Every incursion, every school partnership, and every community collaboration shapes how people see and experience science in their everyday lives. The Visibility priority is about ensuring that this impact is recognised, amplified, and celebrated, locally, nationally, and online.

In a world saturated with messages, standing out requires clarity of purpose and authenticity of voice. For Discovery, visibility is not about marketing alone; it’s about sharing our story in ways that inspire others to join us. It’s about being known as a trusted, innovative, and joyful force for STEM learning, a place where people feel a sense of pride and belonging. Through a stronger brand identity, a cohesive digital presence, and meaningful partnerships, we will articulate who we are and why what we do matters.



Historically, Discovery has thrived through collaboration, with schools, councils, universities, and local industries. These relationships are the foundation of our success and the key to our future. The next stage of our journey will build on that legacy, positioning Discovery as the partner of choice in regional STEM education. By elevating our profile, celebrating our achievements, amplifying others and strengthening our partnerships, we make it easier for others to see the value of what we do, and to invest in it.

Ultimately, visibility is about connection. When people understand and believe in Discovery’s mission, they don’t just visit; they champion it. By 2030, Discovery will be known not only as a place where science lives, but as a movement making STEM accessible for all.

BY 2028 WE WILL
Branding
Establish a cohesive and consistent visual and written brand identity with a strong physical and online presence.
Build a marketing and communications strategy that positions Discovery as leaders in making STEM accessible for all.
Develop a fully functioning and optimised website supported by a digital marketing strategy.
Use our brand to initially drive visitation from local and regional customers before targeting metro visitors.
Use visitor evaluation and engagement data to inform our decisions.
Partnerships
Build on previous and existing partnerships as well as identifying opportunities to engage new strategic partners.
Build a roadmap for targeted education partnerships across all levels of government and the Tertiary Education sector.
Work with education departments to develop Discovery-led STEM education and incursion programming.
Identify, educate and engage key stakeholders to collaboratively promote the complete Discovery experience.
Broaden connections with business and philanthropy to secure funding and visitation numbers.
Adopt partnerships that support infrastructure works.



CONCLUSION

THE FUTURE OF DISCOVERY

Discovery belongs to everyone who has ever walked through its doors — and to everyone whose life has been changed by the spark it ignites.

The future of Discovery is bright, bold, and within reach. Over the next five years, we will build on what makes Discovery special, strengthening our impact as a centre of creativity and learning. It will continue to be a place that sparks curiosity from the moment someone walks through the door; a place where young minds see themselves as scientists, inventors, and problem-solvers; a place where educators, families, and partners come together to make STEM accessible for all.

We are entering a new era for Discovery. One defined by renewal, of spaces, programs, people, and purpose. We will modernise our infrastructure to create immersive and inclusive learning environments. We will invest in our people, staff, volunteers, and educators, to ensure Discovery remains powered by passion, expertise, and innovation. And we will strengthen our visibility and partnerships so that Discovery is recognised nationally as a leader in regional science education.



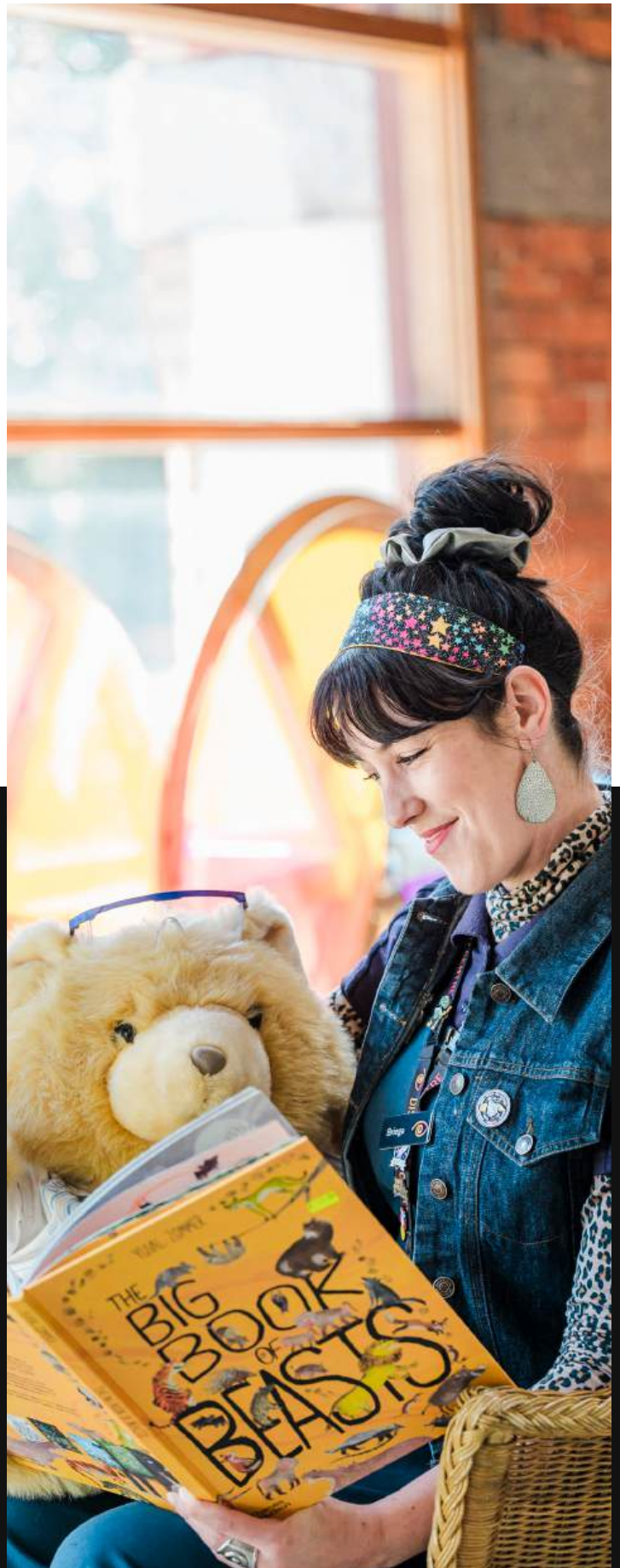
But the next chapter cannot be written alone. Discovery has always been a shared story — shaped by those who visit, volunteer, teach, and support. Every child's laughter in the exhibit hall, every teacher inspired to bring new ideas back to their classroom, every visitor who leaves seeing science differently — these moments are made possible by collective belief and investment in what Discovery stands for.

Now, we invite you — our community, partners, supporters, and advocates — to help us take the next leap. Together, we can ensure that regional Australia is at the forefront of science education and that every child, regardless of background or postcode, has access to the joy and possibility that STEM offers. Your support, through partnership, advocacy, funding, and participation, will turn this plan from vision into reality.

Discovery has always been more than a science centre, it is a living story written by the people who fill it with curiosity, laughter, and imagination.

It's a place where childhood memories and scientific dreams intertwine, where local pride meets global thinking, and where every visitor becomes part of something bigger — a community built on the belief that learning should be joyful, inclusive, and within everyone's reach. With your help, it will continue to do so — bigger, bolder, and better than ever before.

**JOIN US IN MAKING
STEM ACCESSIBLE
FOR ALL. THE FUTURE
OF DISCOVERY
STARTS NOW**





The Pillars of Creation

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DISCOVERY
SCIENCE + TECHNOLOGY
CENTRE