

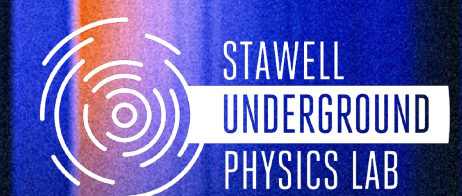
DARK MATTER

DARK MATTER EXPERIENCE CENTRE

A Landmark Investment in Science,
Discovery and Regional Transformation.

March 2026

This document supports the feasibility study completed in 2025.



DARK MATTER



The Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory acknowledges the Barenji Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation as the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters of Stawell. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and honour their enduring connection to Country.



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UNLOCKING ONE OF HUMANITY'S GREATEST MYSTERIES

Beneath the historic goldfields of Stawell lies one of the most extraordinary scientific frontiers in the Southern Hemisphere. More than one kilometre underground, international researchers are working to uncover one of the universe's greatest mysteries – dark matter.

This research is shaping global understanding of physics and driving technological innovation across computing, communications and medical science.

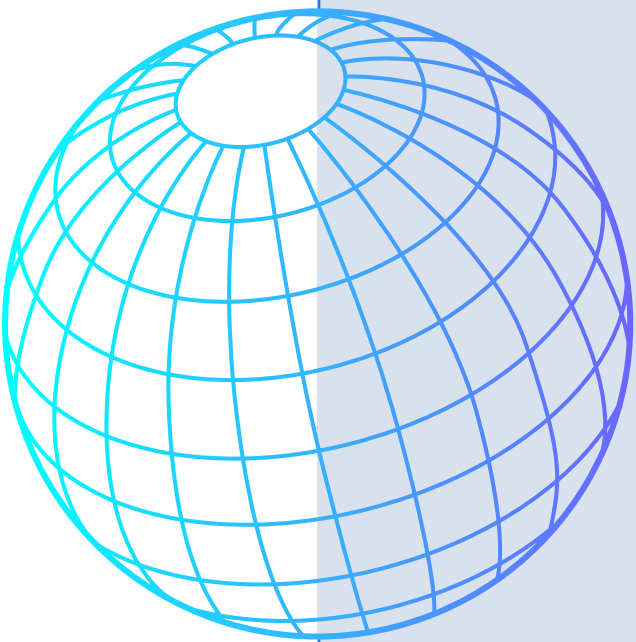
The Dark Matter Experience Centre (DMEC), a working project title, transforms this scientific breakthrough into a world-class attraction. It is a rare infrastructure opportunity that combines science engagement, tourism growth, enhanced education and workforce development into a single, nationally significant project.

The Centre will allow visitors to connect directly with the global search for dark matter, transforming abstract research into a compelling human story of discovery, exploration and possibility.

A detailed feasibility study undertaken with project partners confirms the concept is both technically deliverable and economically viable. The study identified a Benefit-Cost Ratio of approximately 3.0, indicating strong public value and the potential to generate sustained long-term economic benefits for the region.

Unique Market Position

- One of the first public attractions globally dedicated to dark matter
- Direct connection to operational underground physics laboratory
- Combines tourism, education and live research engagement
- Year-round indoor visitor experience
- Strong appeal to tourism, education and science markets
- Supported by feasibility analysis and leading national & international science partners



DMEC
Dark Matter Experience Centre

SUPL + DMEC RELATIONSHIP

GLOBAL SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION PARTNERS

The project is being explored in collaboration with SUPL, research partners, universities, regional tourism, commercial and government stakeholders.

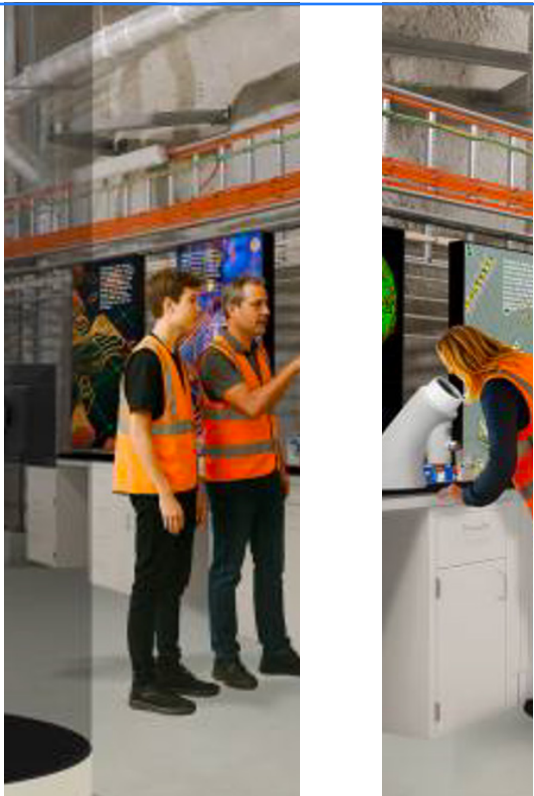
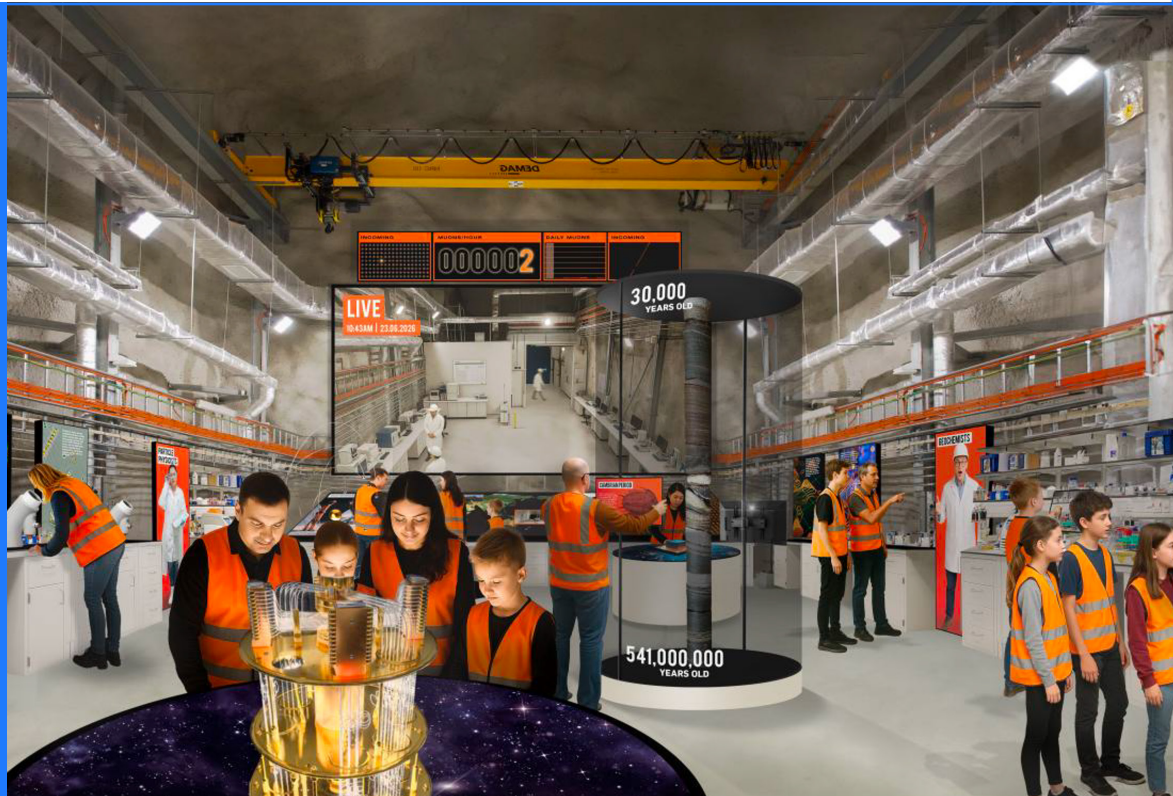


Location:
Ground level

The DMEC transforms cutting-edge scientific discovery into a public experience that inspires curiosity and strengthens national innovation.



Linda O'Brien
Former CEO,
Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory



1KM

SUPL

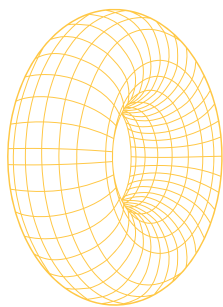
The Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory (SUPL)

Location:
1km underground



A VISION THAT POSITIONS AUSTRALIA ON THE GLOBAL SCIENCE STAGE

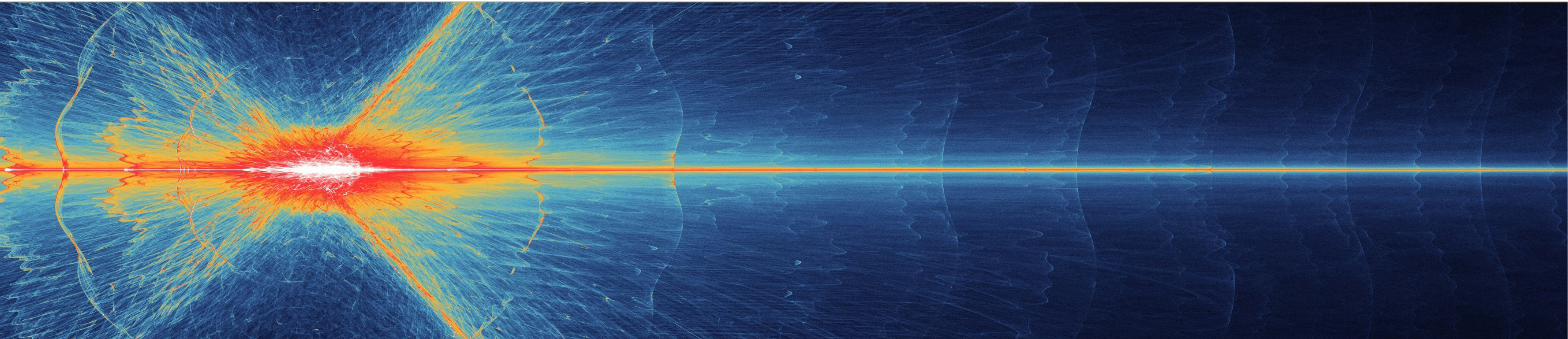
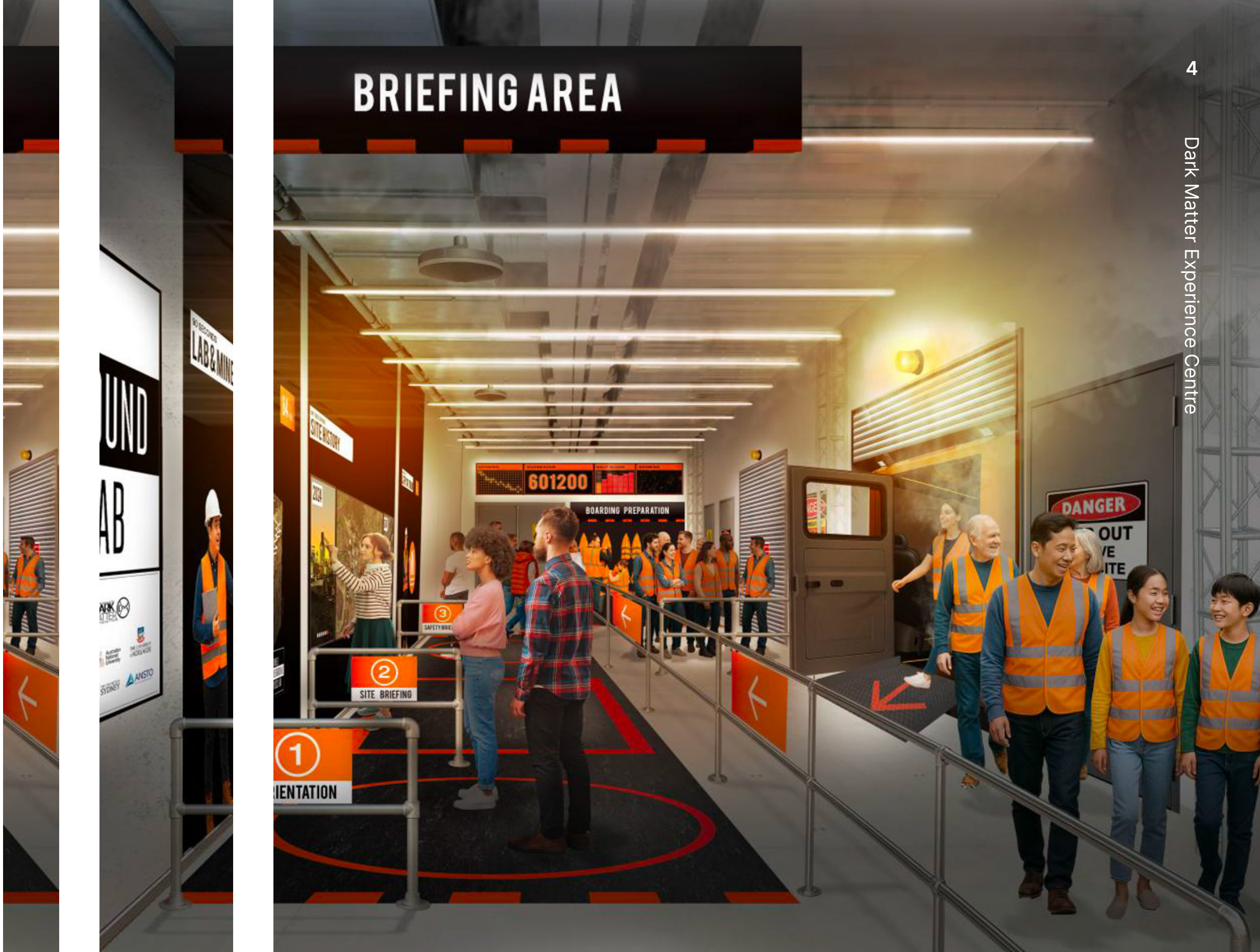
The Dark Matter Experience Centre represents a groundbreaking opportunity to create a leading science tourism destination in Australia, leveraging the unique assets of the Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory to deliver world-class visitor experiences while advancing STEAM education and regional economic development.



A WORLD-LEADING
IMMERSIVE SCIENCE AND
EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

International science visitor destinations consistently demonstrate strong visitation demand and long-term economic return. The DMEC allows Australia to participate in this emerging global tourism and education sector while strengthening national research visibility.

The project aligns strongly with federal and state priorities around innovation, tourism diversification and education engagement.



“

Few projects provide the opportunity to translate global scientific research into economic, educational & tourism outcomes simultaneously.

Marc Sleeman
CEO, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism

A VISION THAT POSITIONS AUSTRALIA ON THE GLOBAL SCIENCE STAGE

GLOBAL BENCHMARKING

GLOBAL SCIENCE TOURISM COMPARATORS

ANNUAL VISITATION

 Switzerland 350-500K CERN Visitor Centre Global Science Research Tourism	 USA ~100K+ Sanford Underground Research Facility Visitor Centre Underground Science Tourism
 ACT ~500K Questacon National Science Centre	 VIC ~500K Scienceworks Science & Education Attraction

HIGH PERFORMING TOURISM & CULTURAL ATTRACTIONS (AUSTRALIA)

ANNUAL VISITATION

 700K-1M MONA (TAS)	 700K-1M Australian War Memorial
 ~710K Penguin Parade (VIC)	 ~450K Sovereign Hill (VIC)
 ~333K Port Arthur Historic Site (TAS)	 ~200K Bendigo Art Gallery (VIC)

REGIONAL SCIENCE & HERITAGE COMPARATORS

ANNUAL VISITATION

 ~100K National Dinosaur Museum	 ~100K Workshops Rail Museum
 ~100K Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame	 ~85K Cobb+Co Museum
 ~78K NSW Rail Museum	 ~60-85K Australian Age of Dinosaurs

The DMEC is forecast to:

- Exceed regional science attraction benchmarks
- Sit within the visitation range of major regional cultural destinations
- Rank among the top regional science and heritage attractions nationally
- Exceed conservative visitation modelling relative to comparable facilities

DMEC PROJECTED MARKET POSITION

FORECAST VISITATION

Opening Year

~160K

Year 10 (Mature Operation)

~286K

Year 20

~299K

DESCEND INTO THE SEARCH FOR DARK MATTER

The DMEC visitor experience has been designed to balance entertainment, education and scientific authenticity. Visitors begin their journey by boarding a simulated underground transport vehicle, replicating the descent taken by scientists travelling to the SUPL.

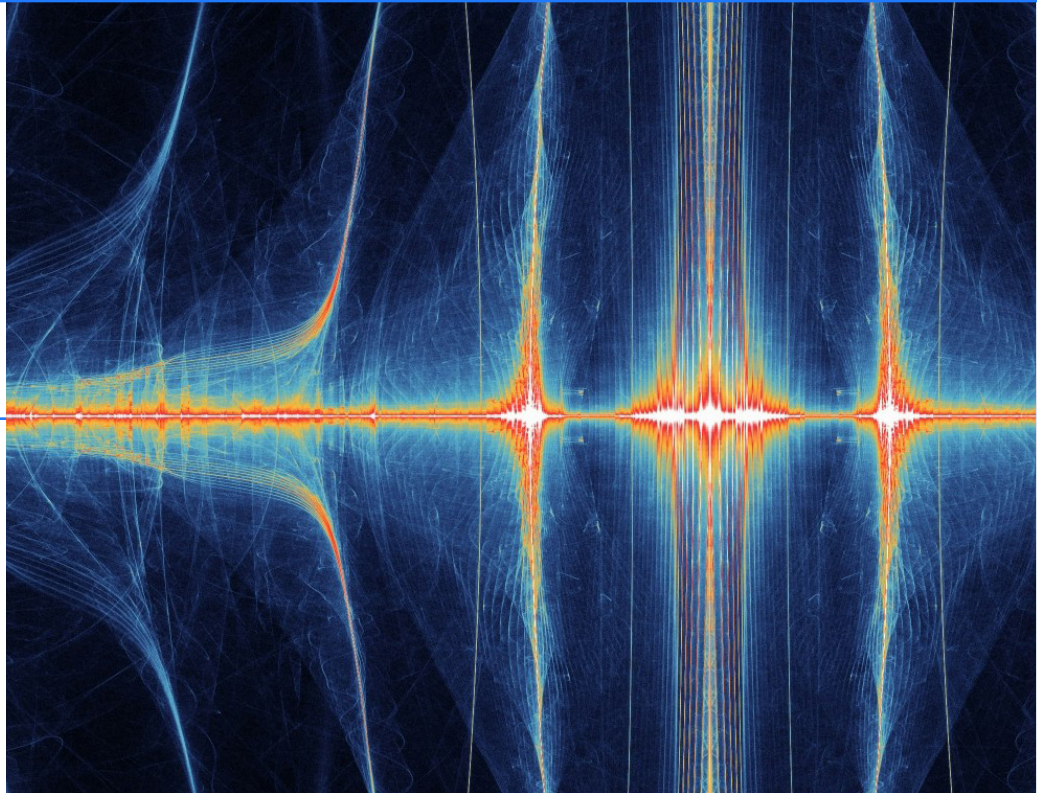
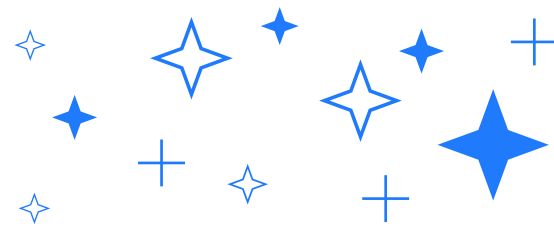
The simulated descent experience is the centrepiece of the attraction. Designed as a seated transport experience, it mirrors the real journey undertaken by researchers entering SUPL and provides a powerful transition between the surface world and the hidden scientific frontier below.

Through immersive visuals, motion and sound, the experience recreates the dramatic one-kilometre journey beneath the Earth's surface, placing visitors directly inside the scientific mission to uncover dark matter.

Upon arrival underground, visitors enter immersive exhibition environments that introduce the scientific method and the global search for dark matter.

Interactive displays, visualisations and live research interpretation connect visitors directly with one of the most important scientific quests of our time.

The experience concludes with observatory and astronomy programming linking cosmic science with public interpretation.



“

Visitors will not simply learn about science - they will experience it through an immersive journey of discovery.

Prof Virginia Kilborn
Chief Scientist, Swinburne University of Technology

BUILDING THE NEXT GENERATION OF SCIENTISTS

Education remains central to the DMEC vision. The Centre will deliver curriculum-aligned STEM learning through immersive exhibits and purpose-built education facilities, including a science theatre, classrooms, an educational laboratory and a flexible conference space.

These spaces will support school programs, tertiary learning, teacher development and public lectures, creating a platform for students to engage directly with contemporary scientific research.

Victoria’s student population is forecast to grow significantly, driving increased demand for experiential education infrastructure.

A unique feature of the DMEC is the opportunity for students to engage directly with scientists working at the SUPL. Researchers undertaking surface-level preparation and analysis for underground experiments can participate in talks, demonstrations and student programs, providing a rare opportunity for young people to connect with active scientific discovery.

Education facilities at DMEC

- Science theatre for live demonstrations and lectures
- Flexible classrooms for school programs and workshops
- Educational science laboratory for hands-on learning
- Conference and seminar space for research engagement
- Direct interaction with SUPL scientists and researchers

Education Segment	Opening Year 2030	Year 10 2039	Year 20 2049
School Groups	~33k students	~58k students	~60k students
Tertiary / Research / Training Groups	~4k visitors	~9k visitors	~10k visitors
Total Education Visitation	~37k visitors	~67k visitors	~70k visitors



VICTORIAN STUDENT GROWTH FORECASTS

Indicator	Forecast Growth (2024 – 2049)
Victorian student enrolments	951K TO 1.3M
Primary student growth	+36%
Secondary student growth	+31%



Immersive science education inspires curiosity, makes concepts accessible and shapes future careers

Rose Bryant-Smith
Faculty of Science, University of Melbourne

GENERATING WORKFORCE PATHWAYS

The DMEC provides an excellent opportunity to support the ongoing development of workforce pathways including but not limited to;

- 

Scientific research associated with STEM career pathways into various industry sectors including the resource sector, manufacturing etc.
- 

Innovation and technology development pathways across various disciplines
- 

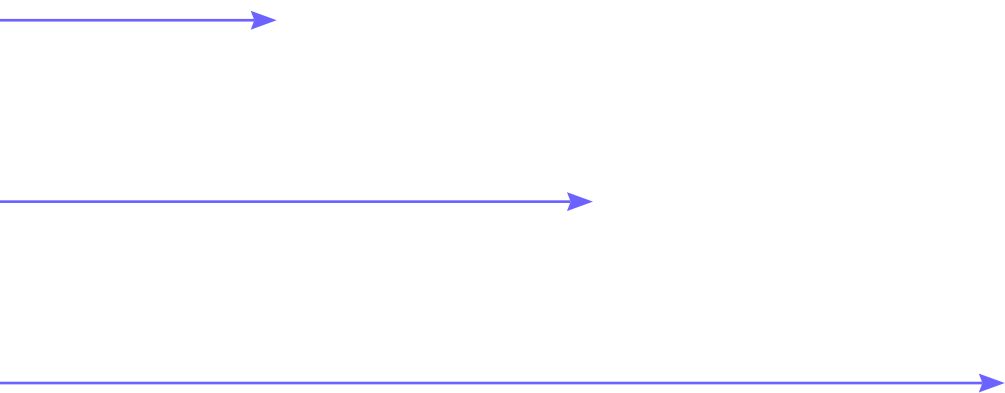
Academic pathways for both undergraduates, post-graduate students and existing scientists working in a variety of science fields associated with the DMEC
- 

Tourism and related economic development pathways associated with the DMEC attraction and positions and its ability to leverage new tourism related employment in various ancillary businesses
- 

Event management and related pathways created through the use of the DMEC as a major new hub for a range of functions and events;

and
- 

Teaching pathways generated by the DMEC to encourage both onsite and remote education programs supporting all age groups and specific primary, secondary and tertiary education sectors.



CREATING A NEW ICON FOR REGIONAL TOURISM

Regional tourism continues to evolve as visitors increasingly seek experiences that combine authenticity, education and entertainment.

Tourism Metric	Forecast Outcome (2024 – 2049)
Regional visitation growth	488k → 1.0m
DMEC visitation – Year 1	160k
DMEC visitation – Year 20	~300k

The DMEC creates a reason to visit regional Victoria, stay longer and support our many tourism and hospitality businesses.

Marc Sleeman
CEO, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT -
VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT



- Experience Victoria 2033 – A Plan for a Vibrant Visitor Economy Experience -Victoria-2033 and the Grampians Wimmera Mallee Destination Management Plan 2024-2030
- Victorian STEM Education priorities (Science Victoria / ATSE / Royal Society of Victoria)
- Victorian Curriculum (Foundation–Year 10) – STEM (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority)
- Tech Schools and Science & Mathematics Specialist Centres initiative (Department of Education, Victoria)
- Creative State 2025 (where arts, culture and immersive learning are referenced as drivers of innovation and engagement)
- Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR) – Regional Development and Tourism Strategy settings

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT -
AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT



- National Science and Research Priorities (2024) – Department of Industry, Science and Resources
- National Science Statement – Australian Government
- National Research Infrastructure Roadmap (2026) – Department of Education
- Future Made in Australia agenda (science, innovation and regional transformation)
- Australian Research Council (ARC) strategic alignment framework (supporting priority aligned research and engagement)



CREATING A NEW ICON FOR REGIONAL TOURISM

VISITOR GROWTH FORECAST

GROWTH POSITIONING SUMMARY

The DMEC is forecast to:

- Attract strong early visitation demand
- Achieve mature visitation comparable with leading regional cultural attractions
- Expand regional tourism markets beyond traditional nature-based visitation
- Support year-round tourism activation
- Significantly increase visitor spend in the region

PROJECTED ANNUAL VISITATION

Year	Total Visitation
Opening Year	160k visitors
Year 10 (Mature Operation)	286k visitors
Year 20	299k visitors

The DMEC is forecast to more than double visitation during its growth phase before stabilising at mature market performance.

Supporting Messaging

- Growth reflects increasing brand awareness
- Demand expands beyond education markets to tourism audiences
- Modelling uses conservative growth assumptions

VISITOR MARKET COMPOSITION

Market Segment	Visitors	Share
Tourism Visitors	107k	~67%
Student Groups	37k	~23%
Local Residents	16k	~10%

Tourism visitors represent the dominant demand driver, highlighting the DMEC's strong visitor economy role.

OVERNIGHT STAY CONVERSION & TOURISM VALUE

TOURISM IMPACT INDICATORS



- Majority of non-local visitors forecast to originate from outside the immediate region
- Attraction expected to increase overnight visitation and extend visitor length of stay
- Supports growth in accommodation, hospitality and regional tourism services

The DMEC is specifically designed as a public-facing tourism attraction that broadens regional visitor appeal beyond school markets.

REGIONAL DISPERSAL BENEFITS

REGIONAL TOURISM FLOW-ON EFFECTS



The DMEC supports visitor dispersal across the broader Grampians tourism region by:

- Encouraging multi-day travel itineraries
- Complementing outdoor nature-based tourism experiences
- Supporting shoulder season visitation
- Increasing visitation to surrounding towns and attractions

DELIVERING STRONG ECONOMIC RETURNS FOR GOVERNMENT

The DMEC represents a strategic infrastructure investment that supports both immediate economic activity and long-term regional growth. Nationally significant visitor attractions consistently drive tourism expenditure, stimulate local supply chains and support sustainable employment outcomes. By establishing a landmark science destination, the DMEC strengthens Western Victoria’s ability to attract new visitor markets and increase overnight stays.

The economic modelling demonstrates that project benefits extend beyond direct visitor revenue. Flow-on expenditure is forecast across accommodation, hospitality, retail and regional service industries, supporting small business sustainability and strengthening regional economic diversification.

The project also aligns strongly with government priorities relating to innovation, education and regional economic development. Infrastructure that combines tourism activation with science engagement delivers compounded economic and social outcomes while strengthening Australia’s research and education profile.

The DMEC demonstrates how investment in science engagement infrastructure can deliver both measurable economic return and lasting community benefit.

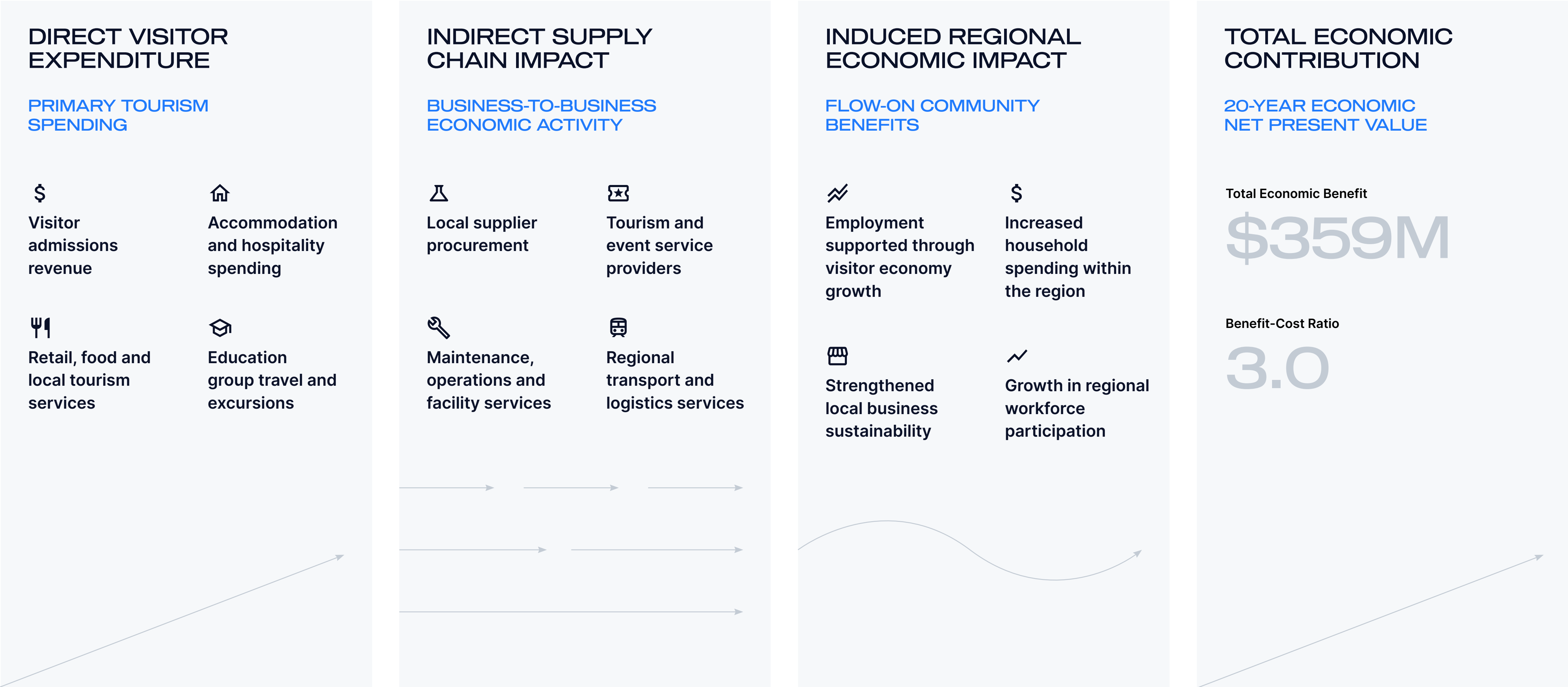
Economic Indicator	Outcome
Economic Net Present Value	\$359m
Benefit-Cost Ratio	3.0
Research funding contribution	\$8.2m over 20 years

“ The DMEC is forecast to generate approximately three dollars in economic benefit for every dollar invested

Albert Stafford
Stafford Strategy

DELIVERING STRONG ECONOMIC RETURNS FOR GOVERNMENT

ECONOMIC IMPACT



A COMMERCIALY SUSTAINABLE INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

The DMEC represents a commercially structured visitor attraction supported by diversified and resilient revenue streams. Admissions, education programming, corporate events and secondary visitor spending create multiple income pathways, reducing reliance on any single revenue source and strengthening long-term financial stability.

Access to nationally significant science infrastructure improves talent attraction and retention within regional communities.

The project benefits from strong demand drivers including growth in experiential tourism, increasing education excursion markets and rising corporate demand for unique event venues. Science-based visitor attractions internationally have demonstrated strong performance through multi-generational appeal and repeat visitation.

Importantly, the DMEC is projected to achieve a breakeven position within its first year of operation, reducing investment risk and supporting long-term sustainability.

The projected positive net cashflow supports reinvestment, facility renewal and future programming growth.

The DMEC’s combination of scientific authenticity, global research association and immersive visitor experiences positions it as a highly differentiated tourism product capable of supporting premium pricing and sustained market demand.

The DMEC represents a rare opportunity to invest in a globally distinctive visitor attraction supported by strong demand fundamentals and diversified revenue performance.

Financial Indicator	Outcome
Capital Investment	\$57.4m
20-Year NPV	\$5.4m
Return on Investment	29%
20-Year Net Cashflow	\$16.5m
Operational Breakeven	Year 1
Revenue Source	Strategic Value
Admissions	Core visitor revenue
Education programs	Supports midweek demand
Events & conferences	Premium commercial revenue
Retail & hospitality	Enhances visitor spend
Sponsorship & partnerships	Supports funding diversification

The DMEC combines scientific authenticity with strong commercial performance

Kim Mintern-Lane
Chief Operating Officer,
Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory

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ATTRACTING PHILANTHROPIC AND RESEARCH INVESTMENT

The DMEC offers a compelling philanthropic investment opportunity by combining scientific advancement, education and the unique heritage story of Stawell's historic gold mine.

Philanthropic investment in science education and research engagement is increasingly recognised as a high-impact form of social infrastructure funding. Science visitor centres consistently demonstrate long-term benefits through improved science literacy, workforce participation and community education outcomes. The DMEC provides philanthropists with an opportunity to support a project that delivers measurable national education and research engagement benefits.

The DMEC also celebrates the history of gold mining that made the Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory possible. The gold mine now hosts one of the world's deepest underground physics laboratories. This transformation from gold discovery to scientific discovery provides a powerful narrative linking Victoria's mining heritage and an operating gold mine with the future of global scientific research

The DMEC supports flexible philanthropic participation models including education program endowments, regional outreach initiatives and immersive exhibition sponsorship. These opportunities create visible and enduring philanthropic legacies while supporting public access to scientific discovery.

Philanthropic investment also supports inclusive education access. Funding programs that support school visitation, regional outreach and community engagement ensures the benefits of the DMEC extend beyond tourism audiences to reach students and communities that may otherwise face participation barriers.



“ Investment in science education and the history of gold mining creates impact that extends across generations

Cameron Hope
Stawell Gold Mines

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY IDENTITY AND REGIONAL LIVEABILITY

The DMEC provides Stawell with a globally distinctive identity centred on scientific innovation and education leadership. The project also creates opportunities to recognise and share First Peoples knowledge and perspectives within science interpretation, strengthening cultural understanding alongside regional branding, tourism and investment outcomes.

Access to nationally significant science infrastructure improves talent attraction and retention within regional communities.

Outcome	Benefit
Cultural engagement	Recognition of First Peoples knowledge and community participation
Employment growth	Regional workforce development
Tourism expenditure	Local business growth
Education access	Local science engagement
Regional identity	Strengthened global profile

By providing local access to world-class education and research engagement opportunities, the DMEC supports workforce diversification and encourages young people to pursue science careers without relocating to metropolitan areas.

The Centre also provides opportunities to incorporate First Peoples knowledge systems and cultural perspectives into education programming and interpretation, recognising the longstanding connection of Indigenous communities to land, sky and scientific understanding.

The DMEC also supports development of complementary tourism and service industries across accommodation, hospitality and retail sectors. These broader economic benefits strengthen local business sustainability and support regional employment growth.



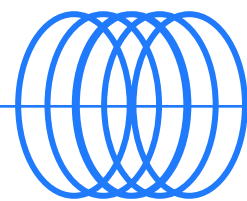
The DMEC strengthens regional pride while creating opportunity for future generations

Justine Kingan
Director, Strategy Prosperity and Engagement
Northern Grampians Shire Council



A CLEAR AND CREDIBLE DELIVERY PATHWAY

The DMEC delivery model reflects global best practice for science visitor attraction governance. The proposed structure balances scientific oversight with specialist commercial operator expertise, ensuring authenticity while supporting operational sustainability.



The staged delivery approach allows stakeholder engagement, exhibition design and education program development to occur alongside construction. This integrated model reduces operational risk and supports strong visitor engagement outcomes from opening.

The project benefits from existing research infrastructure, established scientific partnerships and strong regional stakeholder support. These foundations significantly strengthen project delivery confidence and investment credibility.

THE STAGED DELIVERY APPROACH

Stage	Key Activities
Planning & Funding	Secure capital and approvals
Detailed Design	Architectural & exhibition development
Construction	Facility development
Operations	Visitor launch & program delivery



Strong governance and delivery planning underpin investment confidence

Linda O'Brien
Chair, DMEC Project Governance Group

A LEGACY INVESTMENT FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

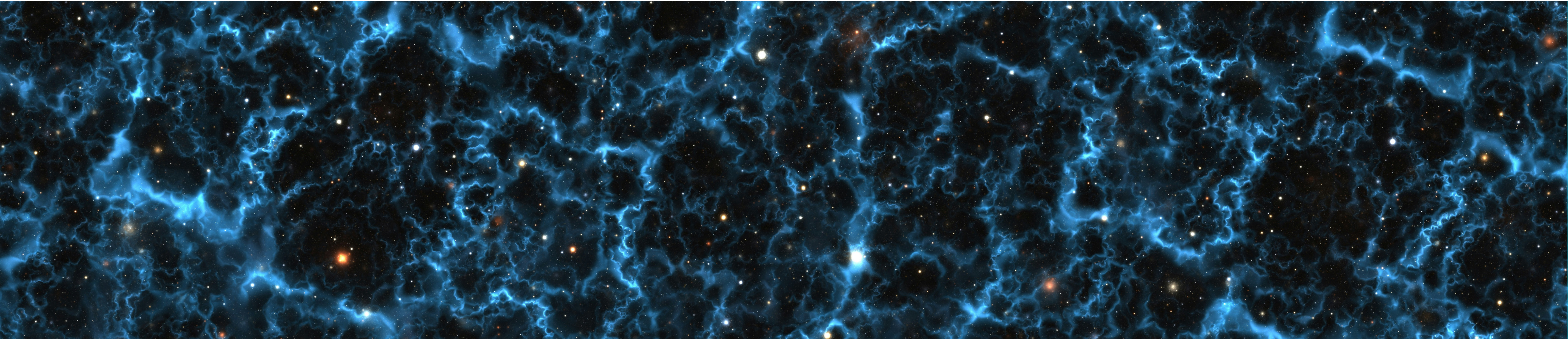
The DMEC represents a long-term investment in Australia’s scientific, economic and educational future.

The DMEC represents a long-term investment in Australia’s scientific and educational future. By fostering curiosity and scientific understanding, the Centre supports development of future innovators and technology leaders.



Science engagement infrastructure plays a critical role in supporting national innovation ecosystems. The DMEC strengthens Australia’s research visibility while supporting workforce capability development in emerging technology industries.

The Centre also supports intergenerational learning by creating shared education experiences for families, students and community members, encouraging lifelong learning participation.



The DMEC is an investment in tourism, curiosity, discovery and the future of knowledge

Paul Matthews
DMEC Project Manager

THE OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY

The DMEC represents a rare convergence of scientific discovery, tourism growth, education demand and regional development opportunity.

The DMEC represents a rare alignment of scientific discovery, tourism growth and education demand. The project leverages an internationally significant research asset to deliver measurable economic returns while strengthening public engagement with science and innovation.

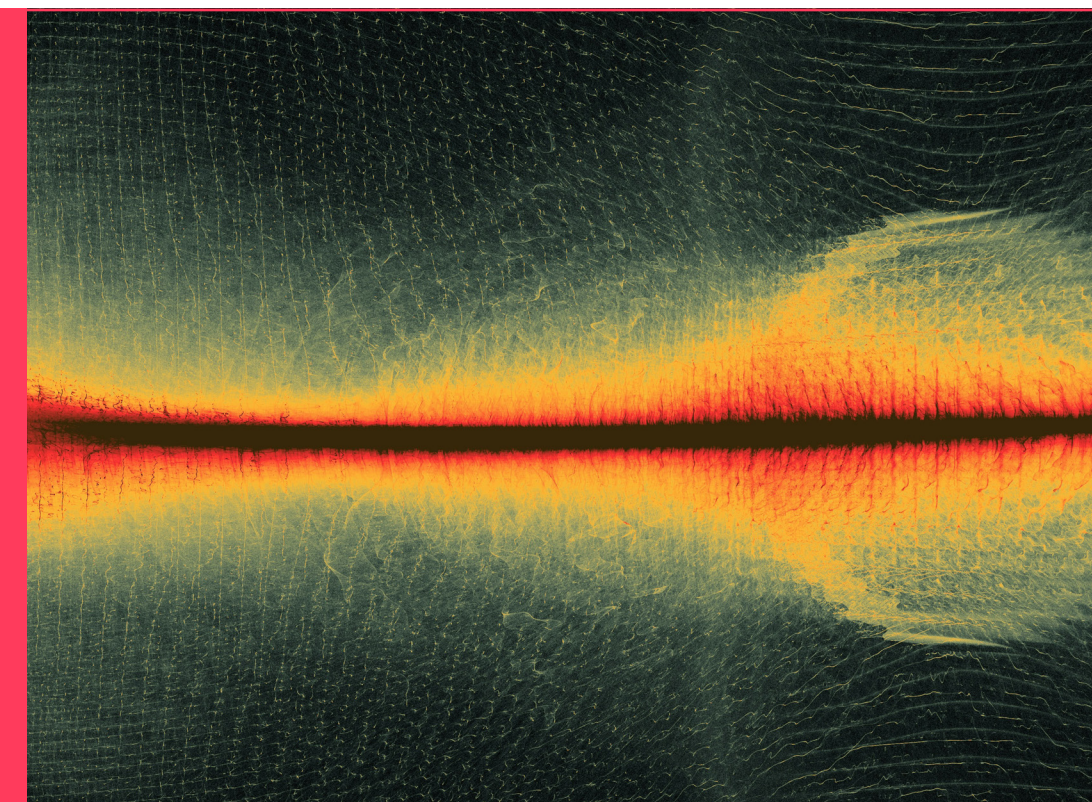
Government investment in the DMEC supports knowledge-based economic development and regional diversification. For commercial investors, the Centre presents a globally differentiated visitor attraction supported by diversified revenue streams and strong visitation growth.

For philanthropic investors, the DMEC provides an opportunity to support national science education and community engagement outcomes while creating enduring legacy impact. The project offers a unique opportunity to inspire discovery while delivering long-term economic and social value.

The DMEC will not simply be infrastructure. It will be a national science and tourism legacy.

Linda O'Brien
Chair, DMEC Project Governance Group

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THANK YOU

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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SUPL Chief Operating Officer

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We acknowledge the support of the PGG members including the Victorian State Government, Stawell Underground Physics Laboratory (SUPL), University of Melbourne, Swinburne University of Technology, Northern Grampians Shire Council, Grampians Wimmera Mallee Tourism and Stawell Gold Mines, in addition to the support of Stafford Strategy and the Victorian State Governments Enabling Tourism Fund.

Their contribution has been instrumental in advancing this important initiative.

For more information visit <https://supl.org.au/>

