

State Library of South Australia

Media Release



26 September 2025
For immediate release

MAGNIFICENT MORTLOCK REOPENS – ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST BEAUTIFUL LIBRARIES

The State Library of South Australia is delighted to announce the **reopening of the iconic Mortlock Chamber from 9am, Friday 3 October 2025**, following a temporary closure for essential recarpeting work that has refreshed this much-loved heritage space.

Closed since June 2025, the Mortlock Chamber's well-worn carpet was carefully replaced, a vital step in preserving the heritage of this 141-year-old building. The project was delivered in partnership with South Australian architecture firm Swanbury Penglase, recognised for their expertise in heritage buildings. The new flooring complements the Chamber's historic architecture and enhances the visitor experience.

The reopening comes as the State Library was recently voted the second most beautiful library in the world through the 1,000 Libraries Awards, reaffirming its status as a cultural landmark and architectural treasure. The Mortlock Wing opened in 1884 as a hub for the Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery, laying laid the foundation for a visionary cultural precinct. A stunning example of mid-Victorian public design, the Mortlock continues to captivate visitors with its beautiful galleries, intricate ironwork, and rich history.

To celebrate, the State Library is hosting a program of free activities and tours from Friday 3 to Sunday 5 October 2025 for South Australians and visitors alike to rediscover the Mortlock Chamber, including:

- **Free 'Mortlock highlights' tours:** Friday 3 October, every hour from 10am to 3pm
- **River Magic:** Saturday 4 to Sunday 5 October, a free, drop-in creative experience for kids and families from South Australian artist Ruby Chew and her studio team as part of 2025 Nature Festival. Visitors of all ages can contribute to a collaborative artwork exploring the theme of 'flow', with historical photographs of the River Torrens on display.

State Library's Director Megan Berghuis said:

"We sincerely thank our community for their patience and understanding while the Mortlock Chamber was temporarily closed for this important flooring refurbishment. We're thrilled to welcome everyone back to this remarkable space to experience its beauty and history once again."

Swanbury Penglase Senior Associate Stephen Schrapel said:

"It's been a privilege to work on this iconic and much-loved interior. We're fairly sure the original flooring was just a humble brown linoleum, so we chose a similar and understated palate to allow the wonderful architecture to take centre stage. Of course, the project came with its share of challenges, but it also brought some unexpected surprises, like revealing the original heating pipes hidden beneath the floor."

The State Library welcomes almost 500,000 visitors annually and is the largest public research library in the state and among the most iconic cultural institutions in South Australia. As custodians of South Australian stories, with a vast collection that takes up to almost 60 kilometres of shelving, the State Library plays a significant role in collecting, preserving, and making accessible the State's history for current and future generations to enjoy, experience and learn from.

For more information about the Mortlock Chamber or the reopening program, visit stories.slsa.sa.gov.au/the-mortlock-chamber slsa.sa.gov.au/events/river-magic

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