

1. What is the exhibition about?

For example: *Human impacts on koala populations*

2. What is the story or message that the exhibition is telling?

An exhibition can answer questions (inform), pose questions (challenge thinking) or do both.

Informing

The selection of objects displayed in an exhibition should collectively tell a story or message. This is a type of response to an implied question. For example, a display of Australian animals could focus on their habitat. The implied question might be simply:

- Where do these animals live?
- What do these animals eat?
- What eats these animals?

Provoking

The exhibition can also represent a clear point of view. Exhibitions are designed by teams of people who have a range of viewpoints on different matters. Sometimes an exhibit can represent more strongly a particular viewpoint that depends on the personal or professional interests of members of the design team. For example, the range of people on a design team for a natural history exhibit might include:

- An exhibition designer who is an expert on exhibition layout and display of objects and specimens.
- A scientist who studies small mammals
- A scientist who studies insects
- A manager who has a personal interest in conservation
- A nature artist

Challenging thinking

Questions that such an exhibition might pose include:

- Where will these animals live in the future?
- Can these animals live in other places?
- What can we do to help preserve their places of living?
- Where do these animals live in my area?

3. How can the story be told?

Informing

The display might be a diorama showing the habitat of a selection of Australian animals. The animals could be placed strategically in the display to demonstrate the living environment of the selected animals.

Provoking

What point of view will be shown? This can be done in a variety of ways. For example, if the view that cars are a major hazard for animal populations is to be shown, a scene that shows a dead animal beside the road could be used. In the Endangered Species exhibit at Queensland Museum South Bank, a dead mother cassowary is shown beside a road with her chicks nearby. The confronting visual scene is accompanied by the sounds of speeding cars going by.

Challenging

Labels could be constructed and placed to either inform or challenge thinking. Labels do not describe the scene or specific specimens. Labels should only add to what can already be seen by the viewer.



Labels can be used to pose specific questions that challenge the viewer's thinking about an issue. For example, what can you do to help prevent this unfolding tragedy?

Some examples from Endangered Species:



SOUTHERN CASSOWARY

Casuarus casuarus johnsonii



CCCC
Consultative
Committee on
Cassowary
Conservation

Diversity
The species
richness of a
community or area.

Homogeneity
The extent to
which species
of plants are
spread
evenly across a
community or area.

ENDANGERED (Qld - southern population)
VULNERABLE (Qld - northern population)
VULNERABLE (Federal)

PROBLEM Clearing of tropical rainforest has divided the Southern Cassowary population into several small, fragile remnants. In these patches of forest, cassowaries are susceptible to a range of threats (starvation, dog attack, shooting, road accident) that are normally not as big a problem in larger areas of suitable habitat.


RESEARCH CSIRO, Joan Bentrupperbaumer and the CCCC have researched the reasons for the decline in cassowary numbers and have recommended rescue measures. They have highlighted the cassowary's role in spreading the seeds of over 100 types of rainforest trees. Rainforest plant diversity and homogeneity may depend on the presence of cassowaries.

SOLUTION Retain core habitat that already exists. Reestablish interconnection between habitat fragments. Rehabilitate degraded habitat. Develop strategies to deal with road deaths, agricultural expansion, pigs and dogs.





Sugar Overdose Endangers Glider

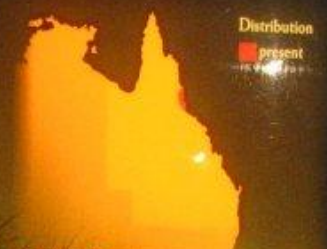


The Mahogany Glider was already endangered by the time it was rediscovered in 1989. Over 80% of its **habitat** had been cleared for sugar cane, plantation pine, bananas and cattle. Destruction of low, coastal country between Ingham and Innisfail has been going on for around a century. This has occurred with scant regard for species loss or the establishment of reserves.


Each Mahogany Glider needs around 20 hectares of woodland to provide it with a year-round supply of food.

Habitat
The place where an animal or plant normally lives and reproduces.

There are only 2000-3000 Mahogany Gliders left in the wild.



Distribution
present



Human impacts on koala populations

What is the story or message that the exhibition is telling?

Issues

- Destruction of habitat
 - Roads
 - Property development
 - Pollution
- Declining Populations
 - Critical numbers for sustainable populations
 - Natural population cycles
- Biodiversity
 - Niches of particular organisms
 - Resilience of biologically diverse systems

Informing

Koala population decline

- Current population status
- Critical numbers for sustainable populations
- Natural population cycles

Koala habitat

- Where do these animals live?
- What do these animals eat?
- What eats these animals?

Provoking

Agents for destruction of habitat

- Development
- Pollution
- Drought

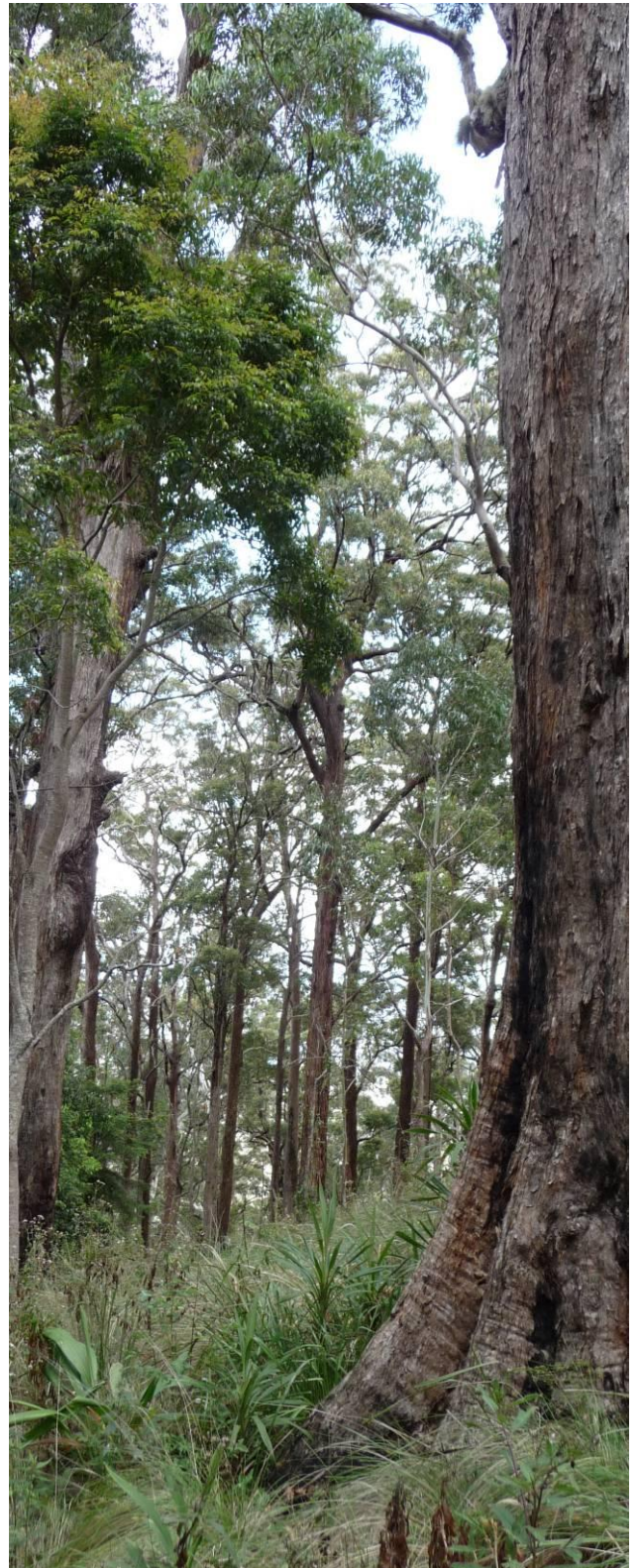
Agents for destruction of animals

- Domestic animals
- Vehicles

Challenging

Challenges for the viewer

- Where will these animals live in the future?
- Can these animals live in other places?
- What can we do to help preserve their places of living?
- Where do these animals live in my area?
- What can I do to help the situation?



How can the story be told?

Informing

Koala population decline

- Current population status
- Critical numbers for sustainable populations
- Natural population cycles

Resources A

- Graphs Diagrams
- Reports with data
- Maps

What to do

1. Explore the resources
2. Decide what story you will tell
3. Plan how you display will look

Plan

4. Write your labels to tell your story
 - Use label writing sheet for help
5. Construct your exhibit

How can the story be told?

Informing

Koala habitat

- Where do these animals live?
- What do these animals eat?
- What eats these animals?

Resources B

- Texts
- Specimens

What to do

1. Explore the resources
2. Decide what story you will tell
3. Plan how your display will look

Plan

4. Write your labels to tell your story
 - Use label writing sheet for help
5. Construct your exhibit

How can the story be told?

Provoking

Agents for destruction of habitat

- Development
- Roads and vehicles
- Pollution
- Drought

Resources C

- Signs and photos
- Vehicles and machines
- Specimens

What to do

1. Explore the resources
2. Decide what story you will tell
3. Plan how your display will look

Plan

4. Write your labels to tell your story
 - Use label writing sheet for help
5. Construct your exhibit

How can the story be told?

Challenging

Challenges for the viewer

- Where will these animals live in the future?
- Can these animals live in other places?
- What can we do to help preserve their places of living?
- Where do these animals live in my area?
- What can I do to help the situation?

Resources D

- Label and sign writing material
- Message board or guest book

What to do

1. Explore the resources
2. Decide what story you will tell
3. Plan how you display will look

Plan

4. Write your labels to tell your story
 - Use label writing sheet for help
5. Construct your exhibit