



NEW MUSEUM

FOR WA

FRONT-END EVALUATION PLAN: CHANGES – SHAPING THE FUTURE

1 CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR RESEARCH

This document outlines a plan for a front-end evaluation project to investigate audience interest in engaging with content related to the future health of Western Australia's environment in the New Museum.

1.1 THE NEW MUSEUM PROJECT AND CHANGES – *SHAPING THE FUTURE*

The new Western Australian Museum (New Museum) is due to open in the Perth Cultural Centre in 2020. The New Museum will share the stories of our people and place, and act as a gateway to explore Western Australia (WA). The New Museum's *Changes* gallery will explore the complex, enduring and significant relationship between people and the environment in WA.

Changes shares the idea that WA's land and water are precious resources, and that visitors' actions can, and will, determine our future. Through the lens of multiple perspectives, it will explore the economic, environmental, cultural and social impacts of human engagement with our environment. As we learn from the past and think ahead, it will pose fundamental questions – what do we value? What do we want our State to look like in the future? What are we doing now to ensure the health of our State for a prosperous and sustainable future?

Shaping the Future is one of seven main story areas within *Changes*. While future focussed content will feature throughout the entire *Changes* gallery, *Shaping the Future* will include a dedicated 'hub' (likely towards the end of the visitor journey), that will encourage visitors to form and reflect upon their own values and aspirations for the management and health of WA's environment. It aims to spark discussion and debate, asks people to think and respond with their own comments, and invites them to consider how their own personal choices will influence the future of our State. *Shaping the Future* will invite participation and include visitor-generated content that is inspired by the stories and themes presented throughout the other main story areas in this gallery.

1.2 *SHAPING THE FUTURE* TARGET AUDIENCE

Shaping the Future is designed to appeal to a wide range of audiences. However, it is hoped that it will be an area that holds particular appeal for older children and young adults (10 – 25 year olds), as research has shown that young adults often have a significant interest in the future, and engage well with museum displays that

pose provocative ideas, challenge established values, and raise questions about current norms¹. *Shaping the Future* should also hold significant appeal for adult audiences. While *Shaping the Future* will explore issues specific to WA, the commonly-shared environmental issues that humanity faces across the world should mean that this space should also resonate with interstate and international visitors.

1.3 RATIONALE FOR CONDUCTING EVALUATION

Shaping the Future is envisioned as a space that will explore challenging, complex and potentially divisive topics. Front-end evaluation will help to refine effective 'hooks' for visitor engagement in this content. *Shaping the Future* is the principal story area in *Changes* with scope for significant visitor participation and user-generated content through innovative and surprising delivery mechanisms. However, many visitors to the WA Museum may be relatively unfamiliar with participatory museum environments (as the WA Museum has never included significant participatory components). This gives a meaningful and exciting opportunity for audience research to inform the development ahead and ensure that this area has a real and enduring impact on visitors.

This evaluation will test assumptions that New Museum visitors are interested and invested in the future environmental health of WA and that they want to engage with this content in a participatory manner.

New Museum staff has identified a variety of risks relating to the *Shaping the Future*, including:

- It could have no meaningful impact/take-home message
- It could take too long to get something meaningful out of the space
- If content is meant to be 'current', or if hi-tech heavy, it could quickly become out-of-date
- Visitors may not trust/believe what they are being told about the future
- Visitors may see it as pushing a particular agenda
- Visitors may experience fatigue about environmental issues and disengage with them.

Targeted audience research about visitor interest in, and attitudes towards the future of WA's environment will help mitigate these risks.

This evaluation will test future-related content with a range of audiences, in recognition that 'one size doesn't fit all' in relation to content and/or execution. As discussed in Section 1.2, *Shaping the Future* is intended to have a relatively wide audience appeal, so a range of audiences will be involved in research around the

¹ Dilen, C. (2012). *Top 8 Tips for Museums and Non Profits to Engage Millenials in 2012*. Retrieved April 10, 2014

Gallant, C. (2013). *How to Make History Museums, Like, Totally Cool for Young Adults*. Retrieved April 10, 2014.

Kelly, L (2009). *Young People and Museums*. Australian Museum. Retrieved April 11, 2014.

The Guardian (2012). *Museums and me: Junction's top tips for engaging young people*. (2012).

development of this content, including specific testing with older children and young adults.

The research will be conducted in both metro and regional areas, in recognition that pressing environmental issues may be different for people living in large cities and regional towns, and that concerns may also vary depending on the dominant local industry (mining vs farming, for example). As *Changes* is a gallery space which speaks to diverse human experiences across WA, we feel it is important to include regional viewpoints in the gallery.

2 OBJECTIVES

This evaluation aims to:

1. Identify visitors associations with the term 'future', and whether visitors are generally optimistic or pessimistic about the future
2. Identify timescales for 'the future' which hold the most resonance for visitors, particularly as it relates to the sustainable health of the environment
3. Identify issues related to the sustainable health of the environment featuring in *Changes* that visitors are most optimistic and pessimistic about
4. Identify key topics of most and least interest in the future of the environment in WA
5. Investigate whether visitors believe that their own actions make a difference to the future of WA's environment, and what motivates visitors to take action to improve the health of the environment
6. Explore visitor interest in sharing personal opinions about the future of WA's environment, and seeing where their opinion sit in relation to the opinions of other visitors
7. Examine visitor expectations of what would happen to information and/or opinions they share with the New Museum
8. Identify who visitors see as being 'experts' on issues relating to the future health of the environment, and how visitors perceive, value and believe the opinions of these 'experts' compared to opinions of fellow visitors
9. Investigate whether visitors expect the WA Museum to take an institution-wide position on specific environmental issues, such as climate change.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 RATIONALE

A variety of research methods are proposed for this evaluation. Analysis of a combination of different types of data will improve the evaluation by ensuring that the limitations of one type of method are balanced by the strengths of another. In this case, quantitative methods will be particularly useful for describing *what* visitors want or think, while qualitative methods will provide insights into *why* visitors feel this way.

By using both quantitative and qualitative data, the researcher gains in breadth and depth of understanding. Mixed-methods approaches also allow researchers to triangulate findings- by examining one problem with different methods, researchers can be more confident about the findings of their research.

A literature review will be used to target Objectives 1, 3, 4 and 5, and also to create an inventory of approaches used by other museums in exhibitions relating to environmental health and/or the future of the environment.

A large-scale public survey (a quantitative instrument) will be used largely to target Objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9.

Focus groups (a qualitative instrument) will be used to address objectives 1-9.

3.2 METHODS

3.2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

A Literature Review will be conducted by the New Museum team to examine approaches taken by museums and similar institutions (science centres etc.) that communicate information about anthropogenic impacts on the environment, and climate change. An inventory of comparable museum exhibitions will be prepared, and trends in target audiences, communication styles and interpretation techniques will be analysed. Wherever possible, feedback about the most and least successful aspects of these exhibitions will be sourced.

The Literature Review will also investigate existing research from industry, academics and museums which examines the following:

- What have been common approaches by museums and other like-institutions (e.g., science centres) to interpreting issues related to the future health of the environment? Which interpretative techniques have museums found to be most effective? Which topics have museums found to be the most and least engaging for visitors?
- Over what timescales do museum exhibitions typically consider 'the future'?
- Are people generally optimistic or pessimistic about the future health of the environment? Are they more optimistic or pessimistic about some elements of environmental health than others (e.g., climate change vs. habitat loss)? Does this optimism/pessimism vary between different demographic groups?
- Are people more or less interested in some elements of environmental health than others? Do they experience 'fatigue'/over-exposure to some topics that make them disengage? (e.g., 'climate change fatigue'?)
- Do people believe that their own actions make a meaningful difference to the future of the environment?

Literature reviews are useful research tools because they allow the researcher to investigate similar research which has been conducted elsewhere. In some cases, this may negate the need to do additional research, if directly-comparable research is found. In other cases, literature reviews help to refine the direction of research projects, but clarifying what is already known about a given topic or research

question. Literature reviews also form a baseline against which further research findings can be compared and contrasted.

3.2.2 SURVEY

A survey will be developed to investigate the interests and concerns of Western Australians about the future of the environment. Surveys are useful research tools because they allow a large number of responses to be collected from geographically dispersed respondents. With suitable sample sizes, they can allow for statistical comparisons to be made.

The survey will be designed to take around ten minutes to complete, and will be presented in an e-survey format that can be completed online, or in-person by museum staff using an Ipad or similar device. The survey will be available in English only. Demographic information and MHM Culture Segment information will also be collected through the survey, to allow for comparisons between different groups.

3.2.3 FOCUS GROUPS

Insights from the literature review and survey will be used to refine the direction of a series of focus groups. Focus group participants will be recruited through New Museum Community panel networks, the WA Museum's CRM (Customer Relations Management system), local schools and WA Museum social media outlets.

The focus groups will be facilitated by Audience Advocates from the WA Museum team and transcribed by an external transcription service.

Focus groups are valuable evaluation tools because they allow for more nuanced and details responses than those typically elicited through surveys. They typically provide more information about *why* people feel a certain way/hold a particular belief than surveys. They also allow participants to bounce off each other's ideas, and to contextualise their own beliefs and attitudes compared to those of their peers.

Discussions are currently underway with the New Museum Project's Engagement Team to explore the possibility of using these focus groups as a starting point for broader community engagement about the future and/or the environment. The Engagement Team would work with Audience Advocates to ensure that these projects are complementary, and to look for opportunities for engagement projects to add to data collected through this evaluation.

4 TARGET AUDIENCE

This evaluation will explore the interests and needs of older children, aged 10 years and up, young adults, and adults more broadly in regards to the content and execution of *Shaping the Future*. It will engage people around the State, not just in the Perth Metropolitan area.

4.1 SAMPLE SIZE AND DISTRIBUTION

4.1.1 SURVEY

Approximately 400 participants will be recruited for the survey. All participants must be residents of Western Australia, and 16 years of age or older.

The survey will be promoted through the WAM Facebook page, and the WAM CRM (through CRM networks who have agreed to be part of New Museum research), the What's On newsletter, and New Museum Community Panels. It is anticipated this survey will be further distributed via the snowballing method. Paid Facebook advertising will be used to boost response rates.

Surveying will also be conducted in-person at the WA Day celebrations at Elizabeth Quay on Monday the 5th of June, as this event is considered likely to attract large numbers of diverse visitors. Other opportunities for in-person survey collection will be sought if survey targets are not met.

4.1.2 FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups typically work best when participants are reasonably homogenous. Three focus group discussions will be held in Perth, working with the following age groups (as age is currently considered to be a key variable in attitudes towards the future):

- Year 5/6 students (11-12 year olds)
- 18 – 25 year olds
- 30- 50 year olds

Whether people live in Perth or regional WA is also considered to be a possible driver of difference in opinion about the future of WA's environmental health. Three regional centres- Geraldton, Merredin and Port Headland will be visited, with a mixed-age adult focus group, and a year 5/6 focus group, being held in each.

Town/city size, geographic region, dominant primary industry, and previous levels of NMP engagement were key deciding factors in ensuring that focus groups are conducted with diverse audiences. Geraldton was chosen as an example of a larger regional centre with diverse industries. Merredin was selected as a good example of a small regional centre dominated by agriculture, which Port headland was selected as a centre dominated by mining. These sites have all had less engagement with the NMP to date than other similar centres (e.g. Karratha or Albany). Audience Advocates are currently investigating opportunities to conduct other work researching barriers to participation/engagement with the museum, making best-use of visits to these centres. Specific content engagement may also be conducted if appropriate.

The structure of focus group sessions held in regional WA will be the same as those held in Perth, to allow for comparison between groups. In particular, talking to people in regional WA will help to answer objectives 2, 4, 5 and 8.

5 ETHICS

Once a visitor has been selected to participate in a focus group or survey they will be informed why the research is being conducted, provided with a brief overview of what the research is concerned with, its importance, and assurance that they will remain anonymous. This ensures that they have enough information to assess the likely effects of the research on them and enough information to make a decision if they wish to participate or not. A consent form will be presented for focus group participants to sign.

Parental consent will be sought from children under the age of 16 to participate in focus groups. Consent will also be sought from the child.

6 DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

Audience Advocates will analyse quantitative data using Excel and SPSS, looking for meaningful trends and patterns.

Audience Advocates will analyse qualitative data for meaningful patterns. As patterns and trends emerge, similar responses will be grouped together. The evaluation report will include interpretations of these trends and patterns. Where appropriate, verbatim quotations from the transcripts will be included to help illustrate key findings. All analyses and conclusions will be supported by the data, and the discussion will be concrete and include applicable recommendations.

Audience Advocates will clearly outline all activities undertaken with school groups, and will evaluate the effectiveness of these activities. Feedback from teachers will be recorded.

7 SCHEDULE

Timeframe	Task
15 May – 15 June	Literature Review
15 May – 26 May	Survey instrument development and testing Develop survey promotion graphics with Lian
29 May – 7 June	Promote survey through WAM social media Recruit schools and regional Focus Groups Begin promotion of regional focus groups
29 May – 16 June	Survey collection
12 June – 16 June	Focus group instrument development

16 June- 26 June	Survey data processing
28 June – 25 July	Conduct focus groups (28- 30 June PERTH, 17-18 July Port Headland, 20-21 July Merredin, 24-25 July Geraldton)
28 July- 11 August	Transcription of focus groups
14 August - 25 August	Data processing and final report writing