

ENVIRONMENTAL ROLE PLAY

Activity Outcomes

SOSE Outcomes Level 5:

- PS 5.5** Students evaluate ideas concerning sustainability to identify who may benefit and who may be disadvantaged from changes to a Queensland industry.
- PS D5.6** Students apply ideas concerning sustainability to suggest how natural, social and built environments should interact in a preferred future.
- SRP 5.1** Students evaluate the relationship between an ecological system and a government and/or economic system.
- SRP 5.3** Students use a structured decision-making process to suggest participatory action regarding a significant current environmental, business, political or legal issue.

Background to the Role Play

Paluma is an ideal location for a study of the significance of place, and the human attitudes and perspectives that are attached to significant places. Paluma has been the scene of environmental conflict in the past, with most issues resolved in favour of the environment following some public debate. In this Role Play, students will look at how change impacts on the various groups claiming an interest in the natural environment surrounding Paluma. Students will also become aware of the significance of government decisions often taken far from the local level where they will have an effect. The activity will stress the importance of being able to clearly put across a point of view in a public forum. Follow-up discussions should include information about common meeting procedures and participatory decision-making as an important feature of modern democracy.

The Scenario

The village of Paluma is surrounded by World Heritage listed Wet Tropics rainforests. Until now, these forests have come under the dual management of land tenures under the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service (part of the Environmental Protection Agency) and the Department of Natural Resources (formerly Forestry). Recent changes mean that State Forest areas that fall within the declared World Heritage Area will be handed over to Parks and Wildlife. There is a public perception that some activities now permitted within the State Forest will be prohibited under Parks and Wildlife management.

Teaching Considerations

While this activity has been designed to take place on-site in Paluma, preferably within the rainforest for 'atmosphere', it could be undertaken just as successfully in the classroom. Given enough time, the initial 'Public Meeting' Role Play could be followed by the design of lobbying strategies by each interest group, leading to an eventual government decision or decisions.

This Role Play could be used as the introduction to a cross-curricula unit of work located in the English and SOSE Key Learning Areas. A fully-developed unit of work would provide many opportunities for public speaking, drama, interviewing, reporting, letter-writing, etc.

A selection of Role Play cards is provided as a Teachers Resource. Select at least eight groups for best results. Individual students can be selected to act out the role of media reporters and the relevant government Ministers. The teacher may choose to be the Chairman of the Public Meeting if no student has the necessary skills. Regardless of their own personal opinions, each group must follow the objectives outlined on their card. Groups must be given time to discuss these before the 'meeting'.

In an extended unit of work, groups could research their roles in detail. Newspaper advertisements and flyers for the meeting could be drawn up, campaign placards constructed, and costumes designed. Opportunities should be taken to explore stereotyping and the development of social skills for conflict resolution.

(In a later draft, assessment tasks will be included)

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