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Hon Sussan Ley MP

Minister for the Environment
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Griffith, NSW, 2680

Ms. Emma Campbell

Chair of the ACIUCN Executive Committee
Acting First Assistant Secretary, Biodiversity Conservation
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We are writing to you as a coalition of organisations with grave concerns for the Daintree Rainforest and Wet Tropics World Heritage Area (WHA) from activities proposed by Federal Government representatives and the newly elected local government.

To date, Local, State and Federal Governments have maintained policies that limit perverse impacts on the Wet Tropics WHA. Despite the fact that there has been minimal investment in active, on-ground conservation, previous governments have ensured that infrastructure and development do not increase environmental pressures associated with residential and tourism activities.

However, the election of the new Douglas Shire Council (DSC) in March 2020 has resulted in an alarming major infrastructure investment proposed by the current Mayor and with support from the local representative of the Federal Government. These actions and proposals of concern include;

- the suspension of the current ferry contract across the Daintree River to assess the feasibility of a bridge over the Daintree River;
- The Federal Government representative, Hon Warren Entsch MP, is promoting an electricity grid to supply all 600 privately owned allotments;
- Pressure from Hon Warren Entsch MP to upgrade the road along the coast to Wujal Wujal to a **highway standard**,

As recently as 2019, feasibility studies*1 for such infrastructure developments showed them to be inappropriate in regards to cost, community desire and environmental impacts. The net result is that damaging development is being proposed and subsidised by the Federal Government who have an obligation to protect and present a World Heritage Site, listed for its natural values at an international level and nationally for its cultural values under the EPBC Act.

Our coalition of organisations is planning to notify the IUCN and UNESCO of our concerns and ask them to take action. However, we are writing first to you, as the responsible Minister.

Leading academic, Professor Steve Turton, previously Director of Research for the Rainforest Co-operative Research Centre, has warned that proposed major infrastructure developments on the Daintree Coast may jeopardise its outstanding universal value (OUV) and potentially lead to an In-Danger listing should they come to fruition.

We are deeply concerned about the proposed developments and ask that you take action to ensure the protection of the Wet Tropics OUV from these proposed development and infrastructure activities.

- *1 KPMG. (2019). Daintree Electricity Supply Study. [PowerpointSlides]. Retrieved from https://www.dnrme.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/1456926/daintree-electricity-supply-study-presentation.pdf
- * 1 Douglas Shire Council. (2018). Daintree Ferry Contract Community Engagement Findings. Retrieved from https://douglas.qld.gov.au/download/community_engagement/Final-Report-on-Daintree-Ferry-Contract-Community-Engagement.pdf

With the Douglas Shire Council progressing work as we speak, we request that you:

1. Urgently begin work with key stakeholders to develop and implement a Conservation Management Plan for the Daintree which;
 - a. Prioritises Traditional Owner led management
 - b. Includes social, cultural and economic factors
 - c. Can guide government investment on both conservation and infrastructure development.
2. Ensure that if current proposals being pursued by Douglas Shire Council and Hon Warren Entsch MP are progressed to developments stage, they are assessed under the EPBC Act due to the likely significant impacts on the Wet Tropics WHA.
3. Ensure that there is commitment to long term land buy back and restoration of land to enhance World Heritage values, and increase resilience to climate threats
4. Advocate for a Daintree Landholder Kit to assist existing and prospective landowners to adopt and apply responsible ecological practices.

As highlighted above, we are writing to you to request urgent action, due to the activities of the Douglas Shire Council and Hon Warren Entsch MP that are already progressing the development of concern.

Sincerely

* Our coalition of organisations is in conversation with Traditional Owners in the Daintree area, who also hold concern about the impacts of the current development push.



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