

Daintree Gateway Concept Plan – Stage 2 Western Precinct

I am pleased to present the following feedback on behalf of the Daintree Marketing Cooperative and in conjunction with the Daintree Coast Community Council with regards to the Daintree Gateway Car Park Upgrade concept plan released for public comment on 18 April 2016.

Whilst the Douglas Shire Council specifically requested comment on car parking and traffic flow and excluded comment on the relocation of the soil pile, replanting and revegetation from the consultation process, we believe it is imperative that we provide our vision for the Daintree gateway as a whole which we would be unable to express under the Douglas Shire Council's request for restricted feedback. Whilst we realize a large amount of work has been invested in the Daintree Gateway concept to date and therefore there is likely to be a reluctance to make any dramatic changes, we would urge you to give careful consideration to our feedback as the concept plans should provide a Gateway that the Shire can be proud of, that will significantly enhance the visitor experience and address the various issues, including the detrimental impact on tourism, posed by the ferry bottleneck during peak periods.

We believe that the Daintree Gateway should deliver decent visitor infrastructure and resolve visitor & resident access across the Daintree River in a professional & sympathetic manner that is befitting of the iconic and world class destination that is the Daintree Rainforest. Unfortunately, we believe that the current concept plan falls short of achieving this.

Issues we feel should be addressed at the Ferry Precinct through the Gateway plans

1. The **long ferry queues** during peak periods are a major deterrent to visitation to the Daintree and will continue to undermine the economic sustainability of local businesses, and the funds and resources expended by the DSC and TPDD in promoting the region unless they are addressed through a combination of more effective design of the ferry precinct to facilitate efficient loading and the implementation of alternative ticket purchase methods & incentives for travel outside peak periods.
2. **Need for attractive, clear & effective signage** suited to such an iconic environment to enhance visitor experience and facilitate ease of use of the area
3. **Provision of additional visitor information services** prior to crossing the Daintree River to facilitate trip planning by visitors (for details please see Further Info at end of this submission*)
4. **Provision of Waste Disposal** at entry/exit of Daintree National Park

Issues with the Current Concept Plans for the Western Precinct

1. The current Western Precinct is not a big enough footprint to contain an adequate level of parking and visitor infrastructure.
 - On some days we currently see far higher numbers than 24 trailers parked far more efficiently on the grassy area (we counted 16 trailers in the carpark on a day in May which is low season & lower usage).
 - The 22 standard visitor parking bays are less than adequate for current River cruise customers (we counted 10 cars in the car park on a day in May with cruise boat at less than 25% capacity).
 - Need to provide space in the footprint for the Ferry Ticket booth with some additional visitor information facilities
 - Need to provide additional parking for visitors utilizing the Info facility & Ticket booth
 - Bus parking directly in front of the River Cruise Tout Booths may impact negatively on sales by reducing visibility to potential self-drive customers.
 - Traffic Island and slip lane makes accessing boat ramp problematic for those travelling from the north.

Suggestions for changes to Concept Plans for the Western Precinct

1. **Larger footprint** required utilizing all available land rather than revegetating it.
 - Boat Parking to be redefined to **Long Vehicle parking** (so can be utilized by 4WD & trailers, caravans, RV's etc) and increase number of spaces.
 - Possibly relocate some Long Vehicle Parking further away (where current pile of sand is) to utilize all available space and increase number of parks.
 - Number of **standard parking spaces to be increased** and located close to Ticket booth, Visitor Info, Existing Interpretative Info & Toilets
2. Ferry Booth Relocation to Western Precinct and additional Ticket Sales options
 - **Online ferry ticket sales** to be introduced immediately
 - **Ferry ticket booth to be relocated to Western Precinct**
 - Visitors without pre-booked tickets to be directed through the Western Precinct to purchase tickets, access visitor information*and access/be exposed to River Cruise options.
 - **Automated boom gate** for Ferry Card holders and pre-booked ferry ticket holders bypassing Western Precinct.
 - Area between boom gate and ferry to allow for a **full ferry load to be queued**, ideally in a Painted Loading zone, thereby improving efficiency of ferry loading and allowing visitors the option of utilizing facilities at the Western Precinct prior to queuing.
 - **Incentive Ticket System** to encourage visitors to travel on the ferry outside peak times (e.g significant discount for travel north before 10am or after 3pm)

- Ultimately introduce **bookable timeslots** to manage traffic flow and disperse unbooked visitors to alternate activities (river cruise, visit Daintree Village etc) while awaiting ferry travel
 - **Extension of ferry hours** (specifically earlier opening eg 5am) to allow visitors to stay an extra night in the Daintree prior to catching flights from Cairns or departing on early tours from elsewhere in the region.
3. Addition of Gantry Signage to Western Precinct
- **Gantry signage** to be incorporated over the road before the turn off to river touts (envisage something rustic similar to Great Ocean Road one) with welcome message on one side and goodbye message on other side to be developed in consultation with DMC & DCCC.
 - Further Gantry signage close to Western Precinct turn off directing traffic to Western Precinct to purchase ferry tickets or directing pre-booked straight ahead
 - Clear ferry lane signage either gantry or road written.
 - Unprofessional and hand written signage by the ferry operator is unacceptable.
4. Waste Disposal
- Would be nice to see **large waste container** so visitors can dispose of their rubbish upon entrance & exit to the Daintree Coast.
 - Would be nice to have a **dump point facility** for caravans/RV's.
5. Further facilities
- ***Visitor Information** – We believe it is important for the Western Precinct to incorporate some additional visitor information facilities (whether this is separate to or included with the Ferry Ticketing) that would include information/ebook downloads (requires Wifi but no internet), a map (whether virtual or physical) to include National Parks Walks & visitor facilities north of the Daintree River, brochure stands and possibly wifi hotspot for tour info & booking.
 - Limited (pre-packaged) **food & beverage** sales available at the Western Precinct (whether by existing River Cruise tours, Visitor Info, Ticket booth or vending machines).
 - **Wifi or FM radio available on ferry** to enhance visitor experience and provide professional delivery of information

Thank you for your consideration of our feedback. If you have any questions or would like to discuss further please feel free to contact myself or Sheena Walshaw.

Kind regards
 Tess Leach
 Secretary
 Destination Marketing Co-operative