



Wildlife Tourism Australia Inc.
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Promoting the sustainable development of a diverse wildlife tourism industry that supports conservation

10 October 2025

Chief Executive Officer
Douglas Shire Council
PO Box 723
Mossman QLD 4873

By Email: enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au

**Re: Properly Made Submission - Letter of Support – Rainforest Rescue
Development Application for Permanent Plantation**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing on behalf of Wildlife Tourism Australia to express our support for Rainforest Rescue's Development Application. Please accept this written notice as a properly made submission in support of the proposed Permanent Plantation development in the Lower Daintree (Council Ref: MCUI 2025_5809/1).

Wildlife Tourism Australia is a national not-for-profit organisation that promotes the sustainable development of a diverse wildlife tourism industry that supports conservation. Our membership comprises both wildlife tourism academics and tourism operators, from micro and single tourism operators through wildlife tourism on farms to large wildlife parks and zoos, including several members in Tropical Far North Queensland.

Nature tourism is the biggest drawcard to Douglas Shire, which is unique in having the two World Heritage areas, the Great Barrier Reef and the World Heritage Wet Tropics Daintree Rainforest in close proximity, and was the first shire in Australia to achieve certification as an eco-destination. Between the two are significant wetlands, such as the area Daintree Rescue is proposing to restore. The IUCN's World conservation

Conferences currently being held in Abu Dhabi have been stressing the importance of the world's wetlands. Australia's position as the world's driest non-polar continent makes the conservation of ours especially important. These wetlands, rainforests, and reef support the highest biodiversity of plants and animals in Australia.

Much of this area was cleared in the 1950s for cane growing, but has since been abandoned. Experts have assessed this flood-prone area as marginal for agriculture, and the area is becoming weed-infested. These weeds are encroaching on and impacting the natural values of surrounding protected areas. Wildlife Tourism is increasingly finding that visitors are looking for experiences that include stories of regeneration and resilience of these ancient rainforest, reef and wetland communities.

Restoration increases habitat for wildlife and thus improves the likelihood of amazing wildlife encounters. The stories of resilience and restoration will only enhance the experience, increasing the sustainable nature tourism of the area. In turn, this has real and economic benefits to individual tourism businesses, including those providing accommodation and hospitality, as well as tour guides and operators. Visitors can even become involved in tree planting projects, giving back to the region.

Additionally, this initiative aligns with Council and regional priorities, as well as delivering wide-ranging benefits for the Douglas Shire:

- **The proposal responds to the Regional Plan's call for climate-responsive land use**, by restoring degraded land, improving flood resilience, and supporting biodiversity corridors. These actions contribute to regional adaptation and align with broader sustainability goals.
- **Planning Act 2016 Compliance** – The development supports the purpose of the *Planning Act 2016* by facilitating ecological sustainability through the integration of environmental protection, economic development, and community wellbeing. Specifically, it:
 - Restores degraded land and protects Matters of State and National Environmental Significance;
 - Supports local employment and economic diversification through nature-based industries;
 - Enhances resilience to climate change and natural hazards through nature-based solutions.
- **Ecological Benefits** – restoration of more than 400 hectares of former cane land, protection of nationally significant wetlands, and re-establishment of endangered rainforest ecosystems.

- **Community & Economic Benefits** – support for local employment through seed collection, nursery propagation, and land management roles, alongside new opportunities for eco-tourism and sustainable revenue streams.
- **Climate & Resilience Benefits** – enhancement of biodiversity corridors, carbon sequestration, improved water quality flowing to the Daintree River and Great Barrier Reef, and resilience to climate change impacts.

Rainforest Rescue has a 25-year history of conservation leadership in the Daintree, and this project is a transformative step in aligning land use with Council's vision for a sustainable and resilient Shire.

We urge Douglas Shire Council to approve this Development Application and enable the restoration of these lands for the benefit of the environment, community, and future generations.

Yours sincerely,



Chair, Wildlife Tourism Australia Inc.

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About Wildlife Tourism Australia

Wildlife Tourism Australia (WTA) is a not-for-profit incorporated association founded in 2003. Its members include eco-tourism operators, wildlife guides and interpreters, academic researchers, students and individuals concerned with sustainable wildlife tourism and conservation. It has an elected committee consisting of a chair, vice chair, secretary, treasurer and up to three non-executive committee members that meet monthly from all over Australia. Similar organisations are found in the USA and Scotland and are making a big difference to wildlife conservation and the development of sustainable wildlife tourism.

Our Mission

To promote the sustainable development of a diverse wildlife tourism industry that supports conservation.

Our Objectives

- **Communication:** To provide a forum for collation and dissemination of knowledge, and communication between wildlife tourism stakeholders.
- **High Standards:** To support development of high standards in wildlife tourism product design and interpretation.
- **Low Environmental Impacts:** To promote appropriate management and monitoring to minimise negative environmental impacts of wildlife tourism.
- **Conservation:** To enhance links between wildlife tourism and conservation of native Australian wildlife.
- **Promotion and Awareness:** To promote sustainable wildlife tourism and raise awareness of the benefits and costs of wildlife tourism.