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26 September 2018

Douglas Shire Council
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QLD 4873

Via email: enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au, gaye.scott@douglas.qld.gov.au

CC: Mayor and Councillors via email : Julia.leu@douglas.qld.gov.au, Abigail.Noli@douglas.qld.gov.au, david.carey@douglas.qld.gov.au, roy.zammataro@douglas.qld.gov.au, Michael.kerr@douglas.qld.gov.au

Attention: Gaye Scott

RE: DAINTREE FERRY

Douglas Shire Sustainability Group (DSSG) welcomes Council's consultation about the ferry, its future and the design of the next tender.

The ferry should remain

The ferry should remain as the only means of crossing the Daintree River and operating hours should not be extended, recognising that:

- There is a limit to the amount the road on the North side can carry,
- The ferry is a unique and valued experience for visitors,
- It provides a lot of employment - the largest employer on the Daintree Coast,
- It is a poorly used opportunity to engage visitors – e.g. handing out maps and brochures,
- It is an opportunity to collect revenues from visitors for the benefit of the Daintree Coast and its community,
- Six hours of no traffic on the road prevents the death of a lot of wildlife

The road north of the ferry has limited capacity. Upgrading will require extensive earthworks, clearing, loss of scenic values, major impact on the World Heritage Area and serious damage to the tourism industry.

Increasing the size of the ferry will not speed up transport across the river as loading times can exceed travel time.

Increasing the speed of the ferry by selling tickets before loading when there is a queue and seeking agreement from AMSA to allow the ferry to go faster may be possible.

A smaller second ferry has merit as a replacement of the main ferry during haul-out; a means of carrying extra traffic in peak times; and as a means of offering priority to locals.

However, with increasing traffic, it too will become congested and DSSG believes there needs to be a limit on the number crossing the River, by whatever means. DSSG understands an additional ferry will be costly and require a fee increase to pay for it. This needs to be balanced against the benefits of carrying more traffic.

DSSG believes locals should have priority access to the ferry on both sides. People who live and work on the North side should not have to queue - and there is no better way to upset locals or hasten the drive for a bridge - than forcing locals to queue.

Traffic Management

Therefore other means of traffic management should be introduced regardless of whether carrying capacity across the river is increased or not. DSSG therefore proposes council investigates the following:

- Detailed analysis of traffic using the ferry by collecting information at the ferry.
- A booking system that guarantees priority access to the ferry (those who do not book can take their chances);
- The Western precinct should be further developed as an entrance with interpretive centre and cafe and accessible to people waiting for the queue to shorten (see earlier submissions in attachments);
- A shuttle service from the north side of the ferry to Cape Tribulation should be considered. Tour boats could offer a passenger service or simply leave people on the North side to meet a shuttle (was suggested in the 1996 Planning Scheme);
- A website established with live queue lengths/waiting time to help locals and visitors choose a better time;
- One way tickets should cost substantially more to discourage through traffic;
- Introduction of a community and conservation levy.

Community and Conservation Levy

An additional charge should be levied against visitors for environmental management and community benefit.

A CSIRO study (**Attachment 1**) estimated people's willingness to pay. It clearly demonstrated they are prepared to pay considerably more than the current cost provided the money is spent on the environment and its presentation. People who do not want to pay, or do not want to wait, have an option to catch a passenger boat and meet the shuttle bus.

The property for sale on the North side should be purchased to provide:

- an upgraded boat landing on the north side,
- car park,
- priority lane,
- boat launching ramp for locals,
- conservation purposes (the land has very high conservation values).

The charge can be made legal by amendment to the Local Government Act as per the Kuranda Train infrastructure levy. Alternatively Council can collect the money but not account for it separately, instead taking a pre-determined amount for community and environment.

DSSG prefers amendment to the Local Government Act as it is more accountable, would define the purpose of the fund and establish a process for its management, and be transparent to those who pay the levy. We suggest the split could be 50/50 (community and conservation) because:

- Visitors want to see the money spent on environment and presentation

- Locals should get more benefit from tourism than they currently do (very little of the Daintree derived tourism $ stays north of the Daintree – most stays in Cairns or Port Douglas, with accommodation, hire cars, tours and food)

It is suggested Council would establish a board, elected by residents of the Daintree Coast, to oversee disbursement, report publicly and decide on community priorities (which could be anything from a community hall to improving RAPS and/or micro grids).

Information for visitors

Visitors need:

- Information about places to see and visit,
- Information about the conservation values,
- An explanation of how the money raised at the ferry is being spent,
- Guidance on how to behave responsibly (e.g. take you rubbish back out, drive carefully, interaction with wildlife (e.g. Cassowaries),
- Information about who lives here.

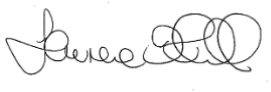
It is therefore suggested Council provide a brochure that explains all this and hands it out with tickets. Council used to do this with a small brochure called the Z card that folds down to the size of a driver's licence.

The big picture

The ferry submission raises again the need for a big picture study, as presented to the Daintree Joint Management Group (DJMG) by DSSG.

DSSG recommends that setting an agreed vision and management plan for North of the Daintree should precede any major investment whether it be a ferry, road upgrade, electricity or changes to policy in planning and local laws.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.
Yours faithfully



Laurene Hull

Secretary

Attachments:

1. CSIRO study re ferry levy
2. Copy of an earlier submission to CRC covering the same issues.
3. Previous submissions about the Daintree Entrance
4. Extracts from Local Government Act and Regulations.

Attachment 1

Estimating consumer surplus and elasticity of demand of tourist visitation to a region in North Queensland using contingent valuation

Romy Greiner (1) and John Rolfe (2)

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Accepted for Publication in Tourism Economics (2004)

Abstract

The Daintree Rainforest is a prime attraction for Tropical North Queensland as a tourist destination. Visitation of the rainforest, specifically the Cape Tribulation section, has increased rapidly as impediments to self-drive access have been removed. This paper examines the potential for the local council to manage the volume of self-drive visitation to the Cape Tribulation region by price mechanisms. Access to the region is by river ferry only The assessment is based on estimates of willingness to pay from a contingent valuation survey of self-drive tourists to the region, from which estimates of consumer surplus and price elasticity of demand are derived. It is concluded that increasing the price for ferry crossings could be an effective and efficient means of (1) reducing traffic volumes caused by self-drive visitors and thereby alleviating traffic-related social and environmental problems and (2) significantly increasing the resource rent which the municipality can draw from tourism, with additional revenue from the ferry being available for the improved management of this prime tourist destination.

Keywords

contingent valuation, tourism, traffic management, recreation use fees, consumer surplus, elasticity of demand, Daintree rainforest

Introduction

The coastal rainforest area north of the Daintree River is an important destination for international and domestic visitors to Tropical North Queensland. A large proportion of the rainforest is part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, which recognises the ecological significance of the area. Cape Tribulation, about 50 kilometres north of the river by road, is part of the World Heritage Area and contains some of the last remaining lowland rainforests in Australia. It is also a historically colourful area where Captain Cook was forced to land during his explorations of the Australian coastline. More recently, the area attracted significant attention in the 1970s when conflicts over logging arose, which ultimately led to the conservation of large sections of the area, and more recently about power supply and urban development in remaining freehold sections.

While there is tourist accommodation available in the Cape Tribulation area, most people visit the area for a day trip, either by organised tour or, increasingly, by self-drive. Sealing of the narrow and steep road between the Daintree River and Cape Tribulation in recent years has made the area accessible to sedans and hire vehicles. Most day visitors are based in Cairns or Port Douglas, the major tourist accommodation centers of Tropical North Queensland. The drive to Cape Tribulation from Cairns takes about 2½ hours. The one-way ferry price in the late 1990s was $7 per non-commercial non-resident vehicles. During 1998-99 approximately 110,000 full paying car ferry crossings were made[1]. As vehicles need to cross the river twice this provides an estimated 55,000 trips by self-drive tourist vehicles to the Cape Tribulation area.

Increasing self-drive visitation is causing serious management problems. Increased traffic causes noise and safety issues for local residents in the small communities north of the Daintree River. There are collisions between cars and wildlife with traffic fatalities posing an additional threat to endangered species such as the cassowary. Specifically during peak tourist season, travellers experience congestion: there are parking problems at key visitor sites and long waiting times exist at the Daintree River Ferry, which provides the only means of access across the Daintree River. Similar traffic-related problems have been recorded in open-access national parks and other popular tourist destinations (eg., Lindberg 1991; Eckton 2003).

Managing visitation of ecologically sensitive areas is a key challenge for many tourist destinations and relevant management agencies (Booselman et al., 1999). The prime considerations are the preservation of the (intrinsic) values of those places and harnessing the economic potential of tourism for host communities and management agencies (Gössling, 1999). For some destinations, the dependence on car-based travel presents difficult contradictions, and a variety of demand management measures have been implemented in various places to influence travel behaviour of visitors. Steiner and Bristow (2000) and Cullinane et al. (1996) provide useful overviews of traffic measures ranging from road closures to information, enhanced public transport provision and road user charges.

There is a complex management system in place for the Cape Tribulation area[2] but management of road and ferry management and maintenance issues reside with the local municipality, Douglas Shire council. Given these access conditions, the Daintree Ferry could be used as a management tool for tourist access to the Cape Tribulation. The physical capacity of the ferry and the fact that a user charge applies for crossing the river already act as an access management tool to the Cape Tribulation area. However, additional price mechanisms offer themselves as one means of regulating the volume of traffic north of the Daintree river. Also, if a price increase for ferry crossings would generate additional revenue by capturing a proportion of current consumer surplus, this could make an important financial contribution to better management of this tourist destination area. To pursue this avenue of thinking, it is important to know the value of the benefits that visitors derive from visiting the Daintree Rainforest and estimate the consumer surplus that they derive as well as the elasticity of demand.

The research described in this paper sets out to measure the recreational use value that self-drive tourists derive from visiting the Daintree Rainforest north of the Daintree River and the price elasticity of demand. The study is based on a comprehensive contingent valuation survey with over 1000 surveys conducted at the Daintree Ferry. This research was part of a larger research project into the management of tourism development in the Port Douglas – Daintree region during 1998-2000, which was funded by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and supported by Douglas Shire Council and the regional tourism industry.

The paper is organised into five sections. In section 2 details of the valuation methodology are provided, while analysis of results is presented in section 3. Interpretation of the results is offered in section 4, and the paper concludes with recommendations as to how this data might be used for managing self-drive visitation of the

[1] Data kindly provided by Douglas Shire Council, 2000

[2] The World Heritage status of the area means that various Commonwealth, State and local government agencies are involved.

2. Economic valuations of travel and tourist choices are a useful means of informing conservation and management of tourist destinations. There are two major techniques to consider. The travel cost method is based on observed market behavior (revealed preference) while contingent valuation (CV) methods provide a stated preference framework by asking respondents' willingness-to-pay (WTP) or willingness-to-accept. The travel cost method is more problematic in application when visitors are enjoying multiple destinations in a trip, and when the travel costs of overseas visitors need to be apportioned in some way between destinations. In cases where a significant proportion of recreational users are overseas visitors, it is easier to use a stated preference technique such as the CV method to assess the impacts of hypothetical changes in the provision of an amenity. Beal (1995) used the travel cost method to assess the consumer surplus associated with Carnarvon Gorge National Park in Queensland, which is visited by 18,000 people per annum.

There is ongoing debate about the biases inherent in CV methods but they have the advantage of having the potential to estimate both use and non-use values associated with environmental goods (Mitchell and Carson 1989, Portney 1994). Laarman and Gregerson (1996:248) stipulate CV to be the preferable method to guide pricing of a site. For this study CV is used to elicit one use value of the Cape Tribulation area – the recreational value of self-drive visitation – with the intention of informing decisions on price setting to manage traffic volumes in that area.

CV methods rely on surveys to elicit users' valuation of their particular resource use activities (eg. visit to the rainforest), and to collect demographic or activity information which might be used as predictors for these valuations. The questions directed toward users are "contingent" on there being a market for the good in question.

To accurately perform a CV experiment, it is important that the trade-offs and scenarios being presented to people are realistic, that a suitable payment vehicle is used, that the survey instrument and collection method do not cause biases, and that a representative sample is taken from the relevant population (Mitchell and Carson 1989, Hanemann 1994). These conditions can be adequately met in the Daintree Forest case study. Respondents are familiar with the case study in question (they have already decided to visit), are used to making choices about tourism destinations (including considerations of cost), are familiar with the payment vehicle, and can be surveyed personally at a time (waiting for the ferry) when they have time on their hands. As well, the population of interest can be clearly defined because tourists to the Daintree self-select to queue at the ferry.

Typically, CV methods employ either dichotomous choice or open ended approaches (Mitchell and Carson 1989). Dichotomous choice CV approaches to elicit willingness to pay have the advantage of being simple for respondents and reduce the incentive of respondents to provide strategic responses (Hoehn and Randall, 1987) and the method is applied commonly (eg. Langford et al., 1998). However, there are several concerns with the approach, among the most important being that large sample sizes are required for a given level of estimation precision when compared to open-ended approaches (Bateman et al., 2001) and the high susceptibility to anchoring effects (Green et al., 1998). Open-ended CV approaches tend to include a significant proportion of responses that are considered too high to be reliable, perhaps because opportunities for rent-seeking are more apparent (Green et al, 1998).

An increasingly common approach in dichotomous choice formats is to ask subsequent choice questions in a multiple bound design format. Bateman et al. (2001) review a number of multiple-bound design examples, which seek to minimize the large data set requirements of the single dichotomous choice format. They also report on empirical data that reveals internal inconsistency of an elaborate multiple-bound CV design. Carson et al. (1999) suggest to practitioners to trade-off bias versus efficiency gains on a case-by-case basis.

CV is prone to various potential biases in estimating values (Mitchell and Carson 1989). Design of the questionnaire and administration of the survey are critical in minimising biases. Two biases in particular need to be carefully addressed.

1. Estimates are subject to 'anchoring bias', also known as 'starting point bias': Higher bids lead to a higher estimated willingness to pay (Mitchell and Carson 1994, Portney 1994). This problem was addressed in this study in various ways. Respondents were familiar with the good to be valued and had a very good understanding of what to expect from a visit to the area. They were also familiar with the type of payment vehicle. They were informed of the current charge for a one-way ferry crossing (which at the time was $7) in case they did not know. Half of respondents knew the price for the crossing. The issue was further addressed through the choice of 'referendum' or closed-ended format of CV, whereby bids were offered. In addition, all respondents were presented with an open-ended follow-up question, which allowed them to further refine their bid.

2. Estimates are susceptible to 'embedding': There is a common tendency of people to give similar willingness-to-pay responses to more or less inclusive goods (Portney 1994, Hanemann 1994). This was addressed in the questionnaire by taking respondents through a set of questions first, which isolated the Cape Tribulation visit aspect of their travel. Explanation as to the use of additional revenue generated was provided before the valuation question was asked.

For this study, a combination of double bounded dichotomous choice with additional open-ended question was chosen. Respondents were presented with an initial dichotomous choice as to whether or not they were willing to pay a specified amount for a one-way ferry crossing. Five "bids" were offered at random which were $20, $30, $50, $70 and $100 per vehicle for a one-way crossing. If respondents declined, they were offered a second bid at half the initial amount. In addition all respondents were asked what the maximum would be they would be prepared to pay. Figure 1 summarises the bidding sequence.

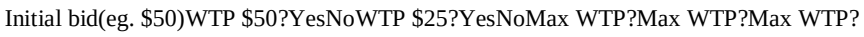


Figure 1: Bidding sequence

The majority of self-drive tourists could be expected to return by the ferry at the end of their visit to the Daintree rainforest. Because return ferry tickets were not available, the choices were framed as one-way tickets so the payment vehicle remained realistic. The one-way element of the scenarios were stressed at each payment bid, so that respondents could be expected to consider the return cost as well when formulating their responses. It could be expected that if respondents did not consider their return trip costs, then the bids given may have been overly optimistic.

The survey was administered at the Daintree Ferry by face-to-face interview. Travel parties in cars – specifically the drivers of the vehicles – were approached while they were waiting for the ferry to take them across the Daintree river on their way to Cape Tribulation. An initial screening question allowed non-tourist vehicles to be identified and excluded. After a pretest and pilot phase, four survey periods of one week each were conducted in July, September and November 1999 and April 2000, yielding a total of 1053 valid responses. This represented a sample of the cars traveling across the ferry in that time period. The range and proportion of different visitor types interviewed can be regarded as representative of the total visiting population.

The survey collected a range of socio-economic and other variables that characterised self-drive visitors. These variables included the origin of visitors, how long they stayed in the country and/or in the Port Douglas – Daintree Region; whether their trip across the Daintree River was a day trip; whether they had a hire car and what type of car; size and type of travel party; what expectations they had, what their profession was, whether they were members of environmental organizations and the type of vehicle they drove. A background briefing on the use of additional revenue for the purpose of managing the destination provided further context for the question. Only then, the valuation question was asked.

Analysis of results

In this paper, only the data from the open-ended bids (the final bid question) are used. The dichotomous choice questions are visualized as ‘framing’ choices which help respondents to formulate their open-ended bid. The varying levels of the dichotomous choice questions help to minimize any potential starting point bias. The data from the open-ended bids are summarised in Figure 2. It shows that a very small proportion of respondents are prepared to pay high bid levels, but that as bid levels fall, support increases. All respondents are prepared to pay $7 in ferry costs (the existing price level). The average bid is $27.29, with a standard deviation of $25.24. The median bid is $20. For Australian residents, the average bid is $25.53, while for overseas residents the average bid is $29.87. When the costs of a return trip are considered, these amounts need to be doubled. For the purposes of estimating consumer surplus amounts, a bid function needs to be estimated, based on the bid amounts estimated for a return trip.

proportion of self-drive travel parties WTP for one-way crossing ($)

Figure 2: Demand function of self-drive visitors to the Cape Tribulation area established from open-ended bids for Daintree river crossing by car ferry

A tobit model was utilised to estimate a bid function. The advantage of using a Tobit model over a standard regression analysis is that the former allows the bid values to be censored (Haab and McConnell 2002, Bateman et al. 2002). In this case, the lower truncation needs to be $14, while an upper truncation of $9999 is chosen to represent the estimated level of disposable income per respondent. A model with significant variables is reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Tobit model with lower and upper truncations Coefficient	Standard.Error		Mean of X
Primary index equation			
Proportion prepared to pay amount	1.122***		0.014
Heteroscedasticity Terms			
State of residence (Australian respondents)	-0.193***	0.012	2.005
Length of stay in Australia (overseas visitors)	-0.112***	0.015	1.130
Days in region	0.173***	0.014	1.390
Region where stayed the previous night	0.058***	0.015	2.046
Number of passengers in car	0.069***	0.014	2.763
Type of group	-0.060***	0.011	2.087
Occupation	-0.043***	0.005	2.808
Car size	0.065***	0.020	1.690
Reason for visit – rainforest	0.265***	0.043	0.855
Reason for visit – WHA	-0.053*	0.031	0.430
Reason for visit – wildlife	-0.172***	0.033	0.299
Reason for visit – remoteness	0.098*	0.053	0.178
Reason for visit – 4WD experience	0.515***	0.057	0.079
Reason for visit – getting away from people	0.113***	0.038	0.241
Reason for visit – travelling further north	-0.153***	0.055	0.072
Knew that ferry charge was $7/vehicle	0.110***	0.028	1.516
Disturbance standard deviation			
Sigma	17.048***		1.938
Model statistics			
# of observations		1053	
Log-Likelihood		-4833.00	

Attachment 2

From: Mike Berwick AM
Lot 147 Daintree Rv
To: Cairns Regional Council
PO Box 359
CAIRNS QLD 4870
Sent via email to: daintree.gateway@cairns.qld.gov.au
290411

I strongly support the upgrading of the Daintree gateway but do not support it all being done at public expense. The main resources should be reserved for the actual asset, ie the environment and community of the Daintree/Cape Tribulation Coast, rather than just the entrance. I would be totally opposed to the Gateway upgrade if that was the CRC's principle investment in presentation and conservation of the Daintree Cape Tribulation Coast.

The cost of improving the general look of the area (landscaping and replacing the montage of ugly signage) and providing some interpretation is not great and should logically paid by the public purse. However the cost of providing booking facilities, river access, toilets and associated infrastructure for the tour boats will be significant and should be recovered from rent. It should definitely not be at the cost of ratepayers.

I am deeply concerned the larger issue of the Daintree Community Plan to which a commitment was made at the Daintree Summit hosted by CRC in Nov 2008, is not being addressed. The Daintree Community Plan and its subsequent implementation should be seen as the principle investment in conservation, economic and local community outcomes. The Gateway therefore needs to sit in the context of the broader Daintree Community Plan and I have consistently raised this with the Mayor, CEO and Division 10 councillor. There are therefore some fundamentals that need to be built into the Gateway Plan or provision made for them:

- Quality interpretation of the outstanding environmental values and the unique ecological history
- The conservation/political history and the investment that has been made so far in winding back development, land purchase and compensation payment
- Recognition this has come at personal cost to some but for the greater good
- The environmental challenges that remain: ongoing buyback, landscape restoration, weeds, pests, domestic animals (dogs and cats) signage (just as ugly as the ferry precinct cacophony of signs)
- Capacity to explain to visitors what the ferry fees are used for, particularly if a visitor levy is re-introduced

Below is an earlier discussion paper that looks at ongoing management of the greater area and I suggest that the Gateway should be designed in this context. This discussion paper was prepared for a meeting attended by CRC Mayor, Division 10 Councillor, WTMA, DERM staff and Director General which I hope are ongoing.

I support the Save The Cassowary Campaign submission very strongly **(Attachment 3**). I have worked with this group which has tirelessly raised funds for ongoing buyback, a fantastic effort.

Issues and discussion paper
Daintree Futures
Mike Berwick
111010

Three reports over the years - The Daintree Planning Study, the EIAS into Power reticulation and the Daintree Futures Study - have all recommended the need to reduce development on the Daintree/cape Tribulation Coast. Much of this has occurred thanks to around $50 M investment by the state and Australian Governments into conservation and tourism infrastructure

The bulk of the money has gone into purchasing land which is currently in the process of being incorporated into the national park estate. While this investment saved the Daintree Coast from irretrievable overdevelopment, it has left a fragmented landscape, as per the map below, which will be extremely difficult to manage, both from a conservation and resident/National Park infrastructure perspective.

Early last year the Cairns Regional Council (CRC) held a Rainforest Summit. A major outcome of that was to draw up a new community plan that addressed environment, social, economic and infrastructure issues

The problems faced by NP managers include:

- Small, isolated blocks of national park and freehold in-holdings within national park
- Long and tortuous boundaries that are not readily identifiable
- Extensive edge effects
- Vulnerability of small isolates to shocks
- Weed and domestic animal encroachment
- Illegal camping and dumping
- Maintenance of high quality, expensive infrastructure

Conservation management issues and options

- ongoing property purchase in the conservation zones (voluntary purchase over the long term as properties come on the market), consolidating isolated blocks and rationalizing boundaries
- maintenance of the National Park infrastructure (boardwalks, toilets, car parks…)
- closure of roads and removal of infrastructure in conservation zones
- alignment with Rainforest Rescue ongoing investment in land purchase for conservation
- saving the Cassowary and other threatened species from further decline with all of the above
-

Resident issues and opportunities

- replacement of multiple generators with local, low voltage, green grid in settlement areas
- bitumen roads in settlement areas
- landowner information kits (very well done in the past, now abandoned)
- Fixing the Entrance (underway?)

- Better management of clearing, earthworks, weeds, pests, domestic dogs …… all currently a dreadful mess

Tourism issues and opportunities

- better management of signs and aesthetics
- tourism planning – low impact, high return to locals

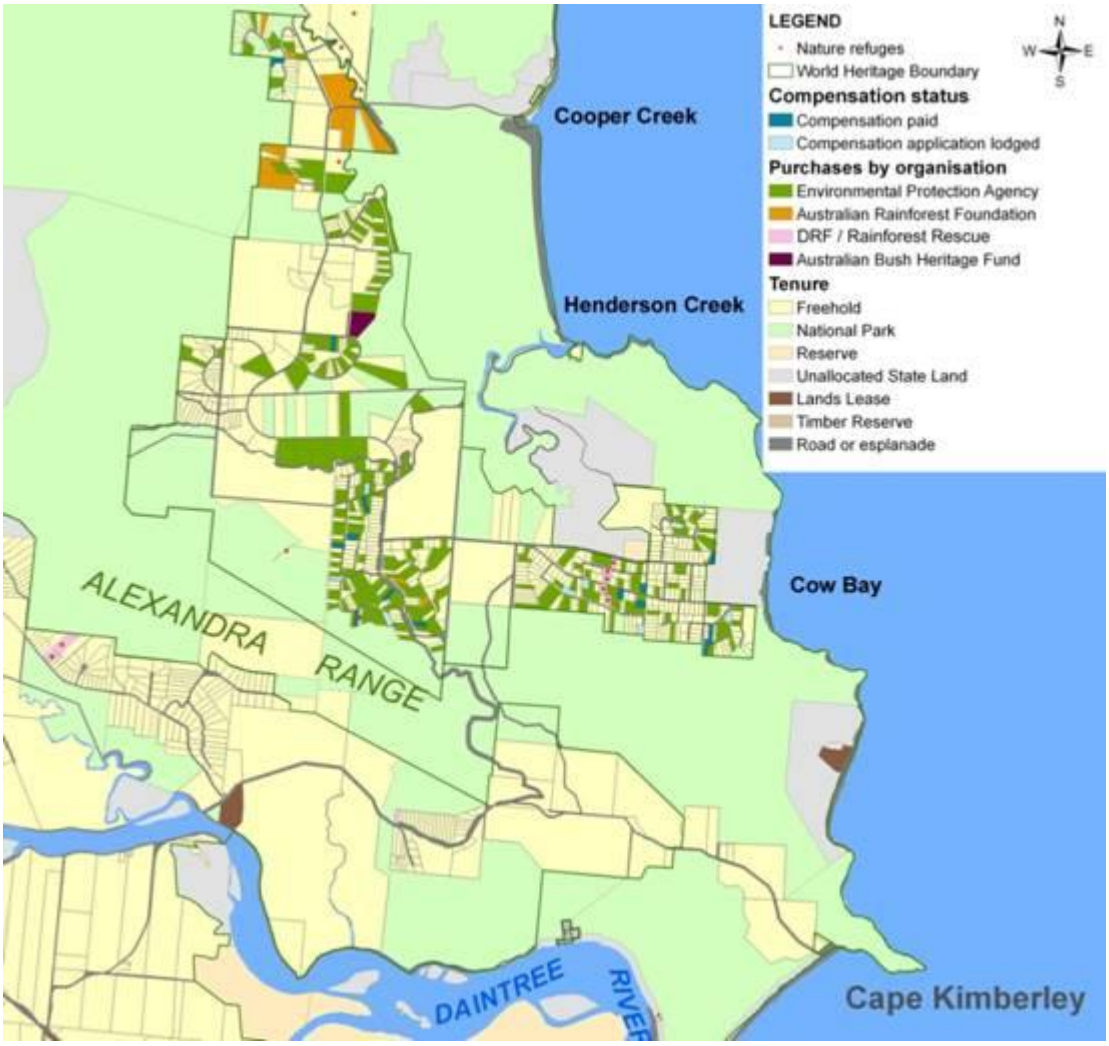
The best way to address all of these issues is to prepare the community now contemplated for about three years, a plan that addresses environmental, social, and economic and infrastructure issues and one that fully engages the community and other stakeholders. To make ongoing planning and management work successfully will need community ownership and participation as well as reconciling state and national conservation, cultural and economic/tourism values and interests. The reality is the residents and owners are stewards of this landscape, along with NPs and WTMA

Key to making this work is a source of revenue and fortunately the Daintree Coast, with its unique ferry access, could easily self-fund all of this. A conservation and infrastructure levy was run very successfully raising several hundred thousand per year until the Ombudsman said it wasn't legal for the Council to do it and it was shut down. However it has always been recognized the state could do this, it would only apply to visitors (locals already get free ferry use) and could be in the form of a Kuranda Train Levy or a Recreation Management Area declaration or whatever.

All of this would form the basis of the Community Plan the CRC is still considering but could not work without state and AG support.

It is recommended:

- CRC be assisted by the state and AG to prepare a community plan addressing all of the issues listed above
- The state consider the introduction of a ferry levy and the community engagement process that would be required.


LEGEND
Nature refuges
World Heritage Boundary
Compensation status
Compensation paid
Compensation application lodged
Purchases by organisation
Environmental Protection Agency
Australian Rainforest Foundation
DRF / Rainforest Rescue
Australian Bush Heritage Fund
Tenure
Freehold
National Park
Reserve
Unallocated State Land
Lands Lease
Timber Reserve
Road or esplanade
N
W
E
S
Cooper Creek
Henderson Creek
Cow Bay
ALEXANDRA RANGE
DAINTREE RIVER
Cape Kimberley

Attachment 3

Previous submissions about the Daintree Entrance

STCC believes it to be important that the Daintree ferry access is upgraded and we commend the Cairns Regional Council for taking action on this issue. STCC believes that the placement of a visitor's centre close to the ferry entrance is a prime opportunity to educate the public and tourists about the conservation values of the region and how they can help ensure the region is looked after.

However, given the number of conservation and community issues the region faces, it is questionable whether spending $7.5 million on upgrading the gateway over five years should be the highest priority.

Existing issues in the Daintree

There are a number of issues that should be addressed in order to preserve the conservation values of the Daintree before encouraging more pressure on the environment by increasing traffic flow and tourism of the region. These issues include; 185 blocks zoned for development remaining at the heart of the Daintree, the difficulties associated with Daintree National Park management as it is intermingled with residential blocks, the use of diesel generators, the excessive signage depleting the visual appeasement of the Daintree, weed infestations, the lack of dog management, feral pig control, speed limits and the need for rehabilitation of key habitat corridors. The Council can play a large role in addressing many of these concerns through a vigorous consultation process with the local community and conservation groups and collaboration with State government.

Local tour guides have informed us that many eco-tourist clients are disappointed with their Daintree experience, claiming that they did not expect to see residential lots, for sale signs, domestic dogs wandering and cleared lots among the protected areas of the Daintree.

All of these issues are decreasing the value of the Daintree and the World Heritage Valued Areas and need to be addressed prior to increasing the traffic flow and the pressure on the region.

Save the Cassowary Campaign feels strongly that the purpose of the upgrade should be focussed on preserving the conservation values of the Daintree, not simply 'improving the experience for visitors to the Daintree-Cape Tribulation areas' or 'increasing economic benefits for local communities and business from greater visitation'. If designed, integrated and implemented correctly, the entrance to the Daintree could not only increase the number of visitors to the region, but also enhance the values of the region through education and revenue raising for the much needed ongoing conservation efforts in the Daintree to preserve the World Heritage Values.

Conservation Ferry Levy

An integrated Community-led Conservation plan is needed for the Daintree that takes all these issues into account and the re-instatement of the conservation levy on the ferry and the Gateway Master Plan should be included in this.

In a meeting in July 2010, with Cairns Regional Council's CEO Lyn Russell the Mayor Val Schier, Russell Wild from the Cassowary Recovery Team and Mike Berwick from Terrain NRM, we discussed the option of re-instating the conservation levy on the Daintree ferry to raise revenue for ongoing conservation efforts within the region. The outcomes of those discussions indicated that the Cairns Regional Council was supportive of taking action on this issue. We have not been made aware of any progress on this, however a response from Kate Jones office indicated that the State understood that CRC was looking into it and the Master Plan would be including plans for a conservation levy.

In July 2003, Douglas Shire Council successfully implemented a conservation levy on the Daintree River ferry fee. This levy was only an extra $4 bringing the cost of the ferry to $20,

with an average number of 450,000 visitors per year; this is potentially an extra $1.8million per year towards conservation efforts. Although tourism operators may fear that an extra $4 will reduce the number of visitors, paying an extra $4 on top of the extensive costs to get to the Daintree, it is very unlikely to stop people crossing the river, especially if the reasoning behind the levy is clearly explained. Eco-tourists come to see places like the Daintree because they are unique, rare and vulnerable; therefore it is likely that they would want to support the conservation efforts to preserve the Heritage Values they appreciate so much.

STC campaign believes signage and explanation of this levy should be included in the Gateway Master Plan as this is where tourists will be asked to pay the levy. It is a prime opportunity to educate the visitors about the delicate conservation values of the Daintree and how their money will be used to improve and protect the very values they are coming to see.

<u>Emphasis on preserving Conservation Values, History and Culture</u>

The Daintree has an amazing, colourful history of all the efforts made by individuals, organisations and movements in the attempt to protect it and achieve World Heritage Listing. It also has a rich connection with local Kuku Yalaji people. The visitors centre should be used as an opportunity to explain the story of the Daintree and educate visitors about the conservation issues and how they can help preserve the World Heritage Values.

Clear mapping of the Daintree including World Heritage Areas, conservation precincts and residential precincts with a clear explanation of the history of the region may lead to more tourists willingly donating towards ongoing conservation efforts. *This is a huge opportunity for the Cairns Regional Council to think about how funds can be raised to preserve the very values that the tourists come to see.*

<u>General Comments</u>

STCC is of the opinion that any developments constructed in or near the Daintree should be done in a way to minimise environmental disturbances. Facilities are needed for visitors; however, this should be done in such a way that no environmental values are compromised. For example, reducing the traffic that goes through the Daintree by providing parking for individual cars and providing public bus services from the ferry, using solar and wind energy for facilities and consolidation of messy signage into clear, concise messaging that clearly educates visitors about the values of the region will vastly improve the Daintree experience and help preserve the World Heritage Values

Attachment 4

Local Government Act 2009

270 Regulation-making power

(1)The Governor in Council may make regulations under this Act.
(2)For example, a regulation may be made about—
(a)the processes of the tribunal; or
(b)…….
(f)the regulation and management of local government assets and infrastructure; or
(g)a levy on the railway between Cairns and Kuranda; or

Local Government Regulation 2012

Part 4 Levy on Kuranda rail line

65Definitions for pt 4

In this part—
free of charge, for a journey on the Kuranda rail line, means a journey provided without any of the following—
(a)payment or other consideration;
(b)requiring, or asking for, a donation, levy or other monetary contribution for the journey including, for example, the purchase of a ticket in a raffle;
(c)displaying a receptacle, whether on the train used for the journey or elsewhere, in a way that suggests a donation is expected or required to travel on the rail line.
Kuranda rail line means the railway between Cairns and Kuranda.
Kuranda rail operator means a rail transport operator within the meaning of the *Rail Safety National Law (Queensland)* who is accredited under that Law for the operation or movement of rolling stock on the Kuranda rail line.

def *Kuranda rail operator* amd 2017 SL No. 75 s 25 sch 2
tourist infrastructure levy see section 66(1).

s 65 exp 30 June 2021 (see s 70)

66 Imposition of levy

(1)A levy (the ***tourist infrastructure levy***) is imposed on each Kuranda rail operator until 31 December 2020.
(2)The levy is at the rate of $1 for each passenger journey to or from Kuranda on the Kuranda rail line provided by the Kuranda rail operator, other than a journey provided free of charge.
(3)For subsection (2), a return journey is taken to be a single journey.

s 66 exp 30 June 2021 (see s 70)

67Payment of levy

(1)Each Kuranda rail operator must, within 3 weeks after the end of each quarter for which the tourist infrastructure levy is imposed, pay the State the amount of the levy imposed on it during the quarter.

(2)A Kuranda rail operator must pay interest on an amount owing under subsection (1) unpaid from time to time.
(3)Interest accrues daily at the rate of 10% per annum on the unpaid amount on and from the day after it is owing until it is paid in full.
(4)If a Kuranda rail operator does not pay an amount owing under this section, the State may recover it from the operator as a debt.

s 67 exp 30 June 2021 (see s 70)

68 Obligation to give annual statements

(1)Each Kuranda rail operator must, within 4 months after each financial year ends, give the chief executive a written statement for the year that complies with subsection (2).

Maximum penalty—20 penalty units.

(2)The statement must—
(a)state how many passenger journeys on the Kuranda rail line were provided by the Kuranda rail operator during the financial year, other than journeys provided free of charge; and
(b)if a form is approved for the statement—be in the approved form.
(3)The approved form may require the statement to be made or verified by statutory declaration.

s 68 exp 30 June 2021 (see s 70)

69 [Repealed]

s 69 om 2015 SL No. 140s 5

70 Expiry

This part expires on 30 June 2021.

s 70 exp 30 June 2021 (see s 70)