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Protected Species and Communities Branch
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
(Attention: recoveryplans@environment.gov.au)
GPO Box 3090
Canberra ACT 2601

Via email: recoveryplans@environment.gov.au

To Whom It May Concern

Comment on the draft National Recovery Plan for the Southern Cassowary which is proposed to be made under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

Douglas Shire Sustainability Group Inc. (DSSG) is an incorporated association active in the Douglas Shire since 2005, in support of sustainability in this region. DSSG is a community-based environmental advocacy organisation whose objects include:

- To promote and encourage the adoption of the principals of ecologically sustainable development to all sectors of the community throughout the Douglas Shire;
- To the protection and conservation of the unique environment in the Douglas Shire and its surrounds, including the Great Barrier Reef, the Wet Tropics and World Heritage areas;
- To promote social, economic and environmental balance;
- To promote and support environmentally sustainable practices, education and great environmental awareness amongst visitors to and residents of the Douglas Shire;
- To recognise and promote the sustainable practices of the traditional owners of the Douglas Shire; and
- To promote and encourage the adoption of the principals of ecologically sustainable development to all sectors of the community throughout the Douglas Shire

We note the draft National Recovery Plan for the Southern Cassowary (the draft plan) has identified the ongoing threats to include the following, in order of prominence:

- Climate change
 - Habitat loss
 - The loss of coastal forests through saltwater inundation from sea level rise or storm surges
 - Regular incremental loss of rainforest through uncontrolled fire

- Regular incremental loss of forest after more intense and more frequent cyclones
- Changes in plant phenology
- Direct impacts of climatic conditions (e.g., high temperatures, drought) on cassowary physiology
- Changes in the distribution of vegetation associations and refugia
- Movement of human populations
- Habitat fragmentation, such as by new clearing for infrastructure
- Habitat degradation, such as by weed or disease invasion
- Land manager inaction and lack of planning at scale
- Roads and traffic
- Interactions with humans and dogs
- Habitat loss, such as through clear-felling
- Invasive introduced species
- Disease

Our members observe that in this area and the Cassowary Coast area - the main killers of Cassowaries are vehicle strike and dog attack. The problem with expansion of the cassowary population is not breeding success. It is survival after being separated from its parent. See the following news article for a recent example [HEARTBREAK: Lone cassowary put to sleep after injuries deemed too severe for prosperous life | NEWSPORT DAILY](#).

In terms of longer term consequence, DSSG acknowledges the very real threats of Climate Change and Habitat fragmentation and degradation. We would place roads and traffic and interaction with humans and dogs and feral pigs above land manager inaction and lack of planning at scale, noting that in our area of interest, the pigs, dogs and vehicles are symptomatic of poor land management and planning.

Feral pigs

Cassowaries are at high risk from feral pigs—a contentious ‘invasive species’ which causes excessive damage to agricultural crops, livestock pasture and other native species. We note that the 2005 *Threat abatement plan for the predation, habitat degradation, competition and disease transmission by feral pigs* (the 2005 feral pig plan) is archived.¹

The 2005 feral pig plan estimated a population of feral pigs in Australia at between 3.5 million and 23.5 million. While estimates vary, in 2021, the Queensland government estimated there were up to 2.3 million feral pigs in Queensland. They are among Queensland's most widespread and damaging pest animals. Feral pigs spread invasive plants, degrade soil and water, prey on native species, damage crops and livestock, and carry diseases. Land owners are required to manage feral pigs on their property², under a general biosecurity obligation, and Local Governments must have a bio-security plan which may include feral pigs³.

We urge the Minister to develop a current threat abatement plan, and allocate sufficient resources to tackling this critical threat to endangered species, including the Cassowary.

¹ [Threat abatement plan for predation, habitat degradation, competition and disease transmission by feral pigs - DCCEEW](#)

² Qld Government [Feral pig | Business Queensland](#)

³ [Feral pig \(daf.qld.gov.au\)](#)

Co-operative action

To achieve the vision of the plan that “a healthy population of the southern cassowary... occupies its full potential range in connected landscapes of functional ecosystems... (where) each population coexists with informed communities”, requires cooperation from landowners, local communities, conservation organisations, tourists, and government representatives, working towards a common goal.

DSSG members observe that in the Wet Tropics area, the land management and associated legislative framework is complex and this creates disincentive for action by landowners. For example, many local landowners are of the view that they cannot undertake biosecurity activities like removing feral pigs, because the legislative framework does not allow them to undertake this activity.

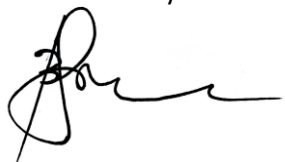
Daintree National Park (CYPAL) encompasses 73,500ha and is jointly managed by the Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation and the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, in accordance with an Indigenous Management Agreement and other land management arrangements. The area is also managed in collaboration with the Wet Tropics Management Authority⁴ (Queensland State Government Department of Environment and Science and Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water), for the purposes of nature conservation and nature-based recreation. It is part of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area⁵ and is adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area⁶.

Numerous Queensland Government agencies play a role in helping to manage the World Heritage Area. For instance biosecurity for weeds, feral animals and diseases the responsibility of the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning manages planning schemes, highways and main roads are managed by the Department of Transport and Main Roads.

In addition to state and local governments, a range of other infrastructure agencies manage roads, powerlines, telecommunications towers, cableways, dams, railways and other infrastructure, including Telstra, Stanwell Corporation, QRail, Powerlink and Ergon Energy.

DSSG submits that in order to effectively protect the Cassowary and its habitat, along with all other endangered species in this area, we need a comprehensive long ranging plan that is agreed by all agencies and organisations along with land holders, and appropriately funded.

Yours sincerely



Didge McDonald
President

⁴ [Management partnerships | Wet Tropics Management Authority](#)

⁵ [Wet Tropics | Parks and forests | Department of Environment and Science, Queensland \(des.qld.gov.au\)](#)

⁶ [Partners | gbrmpa](#)