

Douglas Shire Sustainability Group  
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# ANNUAL REPORT

2020

***Mission: To represent the people of the Douglas Shire in preserving and conserving the world heritage values of the Douglas Shire, while supporting ecologically sustainable development in the region.***

# TO OUR MEMBERS

## President's report

Thanks to all members and our Committee for 2020. It's been a strange and hectic year. This year's report covers the period 20 November 2019 to 1 December 2020, noting that the financial reports cover the financial year which ends on 30 September 2020, per the Constitution.

### STRATEGIC HIGHLIGHTS

Our significant projects in 2020 were:

- Acting on reports and observations of significant clearing of trees in littoral forest areas, in suburban streets and in Daintree Coast area.
- Campaigning in Douglas Shire Council elections in support of our objects.
- Pursuing implementation of election commitments by elected members of Douglas Shire Council.
- Continuing the Daintree Campaign, in the face of several threats, in particular the proposed bridge over the Daintree River and support by Council for an electricity grid in Daintree Coast.

We wrote to Douglas Shire Council on several issues, including:

- Continued clearing of forest in Daintree Coast – ostensibly for house building.
- Providing comment and suggestions regarding consultation on a suitable crossing for the Daintree River.
- Clearing of large trees for development at Langley Rd Port Douglas
- Council plans for Lot 83 as a conservation strategy.
- Urging sale of Lot 83 to QTFN and Rainforest Rescue.
- Decrying the destruction of large mango trees in Port Douglas
- Impact of Wangetti Trail construction work at Mowbray River
- Congratulating Mayor and Councillors on election and committing to ongoing consultation and feedback.

We made submissions to relevant Queensland government agencies on the Wangetti Trail.

We also made submission to Douglas Shire Council's survey on Daintree river crossing.

We also wrote to the Minister for State Development, Tourism and Innovation regarding the bridge works at Mowbray River for Wangetti Trail.

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In the lead-up to the State election, DSSG wrote to the relevant State Ministers and local MPs urging funding for upgrade of stand-alone solar power systems for Daintree Coast residents, and seeking to clarify if funding requests had been made for a bridge across the Daintree River. We met with Cynthia Lui during the campaign to share our views with her.

We wrote a letter to the editor of the Port Douglas Mossman Gazette re ongoing attacks and slurs made against DSSG in the lead up to Council elections. We also wrote a letter to the editor of DNN re misinformation about environmental impact of the ferry across the Daintree River, specifically dredging and diesel impacts.

We issued media releases and made media commentary on:

- DSSG election survey
- Council's decision to pursue a bridge across the Daintree River and support for an electricity grid in Daintree.
- Proposed bridge over Daintree River
- Vegetation clearing in Douglas Shire

We wrote letters of support for Great Barrier Reef Legacy Biobank project and for the 2021 Call of the Running Tide Environmental Art exhibition.

We attended workshops by Call of the Running Tide presenting on current environmental issues in the Shire; and Douglas Shire Council's environment focus group re Daintree River crossing.

## **Local Government Elections 2020**

As in past elections, DSSG surveyed all candidates for their views on issues of interest to our members. We published those survey results in the Port Douglas Mossman Gazette, and issued media releases about the survey and the results.

The questionnaire addresses what we believe to be the key strategic questions facing a new council - an overall conservation strategy for the shire, action to help the reef deal with the threats of climate change and water pollution, action to conserve and better manage and present the Daintree Coast, keeping the urban footprint within the shire's capacity to meet its

# TO OUR MEMBERS

resource demands, maintaining the agricultural landscape and rural beauty and the ability to ensure water security.

Details of questions and responses from candidates can be found on our refreshed web site.

Of those who returned a favourable response to our priorities, Councillors Zammataro and Noli were returned. Elected Mayor Michael Kerr and Councillors McKeown and Scomazzon provided a response which can be read on our web site.

Unfortunately, the campaign was marred by significant misinformation and slander about DSSG members, which was used to effect against Julia Leu and Natalie Johnson.

## **No Bridge Campaign**

As you will be aware, as its first act, the newly elected Douglas Shire Council suspended the contract for a new solar ferry in April 2020, and embarked on 'community consultation' to test the appetite for a bridge to replace the two ferry plan. DSSG campaigned in favour of a ferry system and against a bridge across the Daintree.

Our campaign included media, flyers and posters. Thanks to those members who actively participated by letterboxing, erecting posters, social media and media stories and donations.

DSSG attended the community meetings and the environment focus group. We also made significant submission, which can be found on our web site.

Of course, the campaign continues pending a decision by Council at its formal meeting 15 December 2020.

DSSG also co-signed, with Cairns and Far North Environment Centre (CAFNEC), Wilderness Society, Queensland Conservation Council (QCC) and the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and Jabalbina, a letter to UNESCO expressing concern at development pressures in Daintree WHA.

Our change.org petition opposing development initiatives of Douglas Shire Council currently has over 30,000 signatures.

As with the Local Government Elections, this campaign was marred by disinformation, defamation and threats from those who oppose our views.

# TO OUR MEMBERS

## ADVERTISEMENT

*We believe that protecting our environment, using our resources sustainably and building a global reputation on those values is the key to a strong economy supporting nature based tourism, clean/green agricultural produce and to ensure Douglas remains a wonderful place to live.*

DSSG is an incorporated association active in Douglas Shire for 15 years. DSSG is not politically aligned. DSSG supports candidates who support ecologically sustainable development and protection and conservation of the unique environment of the Douglas Shire. As an environmental advocacy group, we believe it is important for voters to understand the views of candidates. Our policies (and questions) are designed to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits to the entire community.



### DSSG SURVEYS CANDIDATES ON ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

| Candidate        | <i>Douglas Conservation Strategy</i> | <i>Protection of Great Barrier Reef</i> | <i>Conservation of Daintree Coast</i> | <i>Comply with existing Urban footprint</i> | <i>Build on water security strategy</i> |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Leu</i>       | ✓                                    | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓   | ✓                                       |
| <i>Kerr</i>      | ✗                                    | ?                                       | ✗                                     | ✗   | ?                                       |
| <i>McKeown</i>   | ✗                                    | ✗                                       | ✗                                     | ✗   | ✗                                       |
| <i>Zammataro</i> | ✓                                    | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓   | ✓                                       |
| <i>Scomazzon</i> | ✗                                    | ✗                                       | ✗                                     | ✗   | ✗                                       |
| <i>Rowley</i>    | ✗                                    | ✗                                       | ✗                                     | ✗   | ✗                                       |
| <i>Melchert</i>  | ✗                                    | ✗                                       | ✗                                     | ✗   | ✗                                       |
| <i>Noli</i>      | ✓                                    | ✓                                       | ?                                     | ✓   | ?                                       |
| <i>Johnson</i>   | ✓                                    | ✓                                       | ✓                                     | ✓   | ✓                                       |

- We have used a traffic light rating system to rank the candidates responses, where green is supported, orange is partially supported and red is not supported.
- The candidates are listed above per the ballot draw. All candidates were contacted and furnished with questions.
- Candidates McKeown, Melchert, Rowley and Scomazzon did not answer the questions, but provided an overarching response which can be reviewed on our web site. Those candidates not listed have chosen not to make known their views on these environmental issues.

This infographic is intended as a guide only. Full questions, responses and additional comments from candidates are available on our web site – [www.dssg.org.au](http://www.dssg.org.au).

Authorised by Didge McDonald, 104 St Crispins Ave Port Douglas, for Douglas Shire Sustainability Group Inc.

# TO OUR MEMBERS

## **DSSG Strategic Areas 2020**

DSSG adopted the following strategies for the 2020 calendar year. Below is a summary of activity in advance of those strategies.

### **Daintree Environment Protection**

In November 2019, the Queensland Government released its final report on the Daintree Electricity Supply Study. The study has considered a range of power options for the Daintree Coast, including various models of micro grid and stand-alone power systems (SPS). DSSG welcomed the report, noting that the report's conclusions clearly demonstrate that stand-alone power systems (SPS) remain the best option for the Daintree Coast. A grid is a threat to the environmental and cultural values of the Daintree Coast, with the direct impact of a power station and reticulation and indirectly by facilitating development.

DSSG attended one of two Environmental Workshops held by Council on 12 December 2019 in Cow Bay and Port Douglas. The Environmental Workshops provided a high-level overview of Council's current environmental initiatives and introduced the Lot 83 SR596 project. Ideas for Lot 83 SR596 were discussed and included: carbon sequestration planting; an interpretation kiosk; a dedicated research area; additional solar capacity for the Daintree Ferry; a walking trail and viewing platform; and the sale of 'tourist trees'. On 11 February 2020, Council adopted a comprehensive concept plan for Lot 83 Crown Plan SR596. The Concept Plan recommended that a dedicated stakeholder reference group is established with representatives from local environmental groups, Traditional Owners and local businesses. The stakeholder reference group will be involved in designing the project initiatives, which aim to complement existing Daintree Rainforest experiences and leverage local expertise through partnership opportunities. DSSG welcomed the Plan.

Unfortunately, there was a change of focus with the election of a new Mayor and two new Councillors in March 2020. Among the first actions of the new Council was a motion to pledge support for an electricity grid for the Daintree Coast, halt the tender process for a new solar powered ferry, and explore community appetite for a bridge across the Daintree River.

In addition, the new Council has, for an undisclosed reason, halted the project to develop a 30 year plan for Daintree community, and removed the Daintree Landholders Kit from its web

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site, citing lack of community interest. Council also decided it would abandon the Lot 83 concept plan and sell the land.

In a few short weeks after the election, most of the initiatives DSSG had supported and promoted toward conservation of the Daintree Coast had been slashed from the Council plans.

As a volunteer organization, and in the face of COVID restrictions and associated dire economic impacts, DSSG has found it difficult to prevent these things happening. The new Council enjoyed something of a short honeymoon, as residents learned of these wholesale changes in direction and new threats posed to the World Heritage Area.

One bright light is that Lot 83 has been sold to QTFN and Rainforest Rescue and will be used for tree planting and forest regeneration.

## **Healthy Waterways and Protecting the Reef**

In December 2019, the Queensland Government commenced new reef protection regulations. The regulations are being strengthened to address land-based sources of water pollution flowing to the Great Barrier Reef. This includes agricultural and industrial sources of nutrient and sediment pollution from all six Reef regions—Cape York, Wet Tropics, Burdekin, Mackay Whitsunday, Fitzroy and Burnett Mary. DSSG has welcomed the new regulations which will be rolled out over the next three years in different regions based on improved water quality management priorities.

In February 2020, DSSG provided a letter of support for GBR Legacy’s Coral Biobank project. We welcome the support of Douglas Shire Council for this project, noting that in December 2019, Council adopted a strategy to support the Great Barrier Reef Coral Biobank, and has donated land in Port Douglas for the development.

Water storage became a live public issue in late 2019. DSSG wrote to Council and received a comprehensive briefing from staff on the water storage issues in the Shire. We learned that our water consumption is up to five times that of southern parts of Queensland, and that we are restricted from extracting more water from our existing extraction sites as an ‘environmental flow’ must be retained. The current Council plans to “Develop options for long-term water storage capacity of at least one billion litres”. DSSG is concerned at the potential environmental impacts of excessive water storage in Douglas Shire, and favours better education on water usage. We are pleased to note Council has plans for an education campaign.

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The Wet Tropics Healthy Waterways Partnership released its 2020 report card in July. The water quality grade in 2018-19 for the North inshore zone improved from 'good' to 'very good' and the score increased from 66 to 85. Other waterways and estuaries in the Shire remained 'good' or 'very good', with a small decline in water quality of the Mossman freshwater basin. DSSG is a member of CAFNEC, Terrain NRM and QWALC – all of whom are partners in the Healthy waterways partnership.

We note that recently Council adopted a strategy to “Explore opportunities for increasing net free fishing zones in the Shire and the development of a Recreational Fishing Strategy”. DSSG looks forward to public input to development of this strategy, as net fishing can be particularly damaging to the sea bed.

*DSSG will continue work through Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC) and Council to improve water quality in our waterways and the GBR lagoon - and identify and mitigate sources of pollution.*

### ***Climate change response including zero emissions***

As previously noted, the newly elected Council has ditched a Healthy Reef program and sold Lot 83 which was a planned to be part of an offsets strategy. Council has adopted a strategy in its 2020/21 Operational Plan to “Conduct comprehensive community sessions on the Shire's desired position for managing Council’s carbon footprint” by June 2021. Whilst the outcome of such a process cannot be foreseen, DSSG is of the view this indicates no commitment to managing Council’s carbon footprint. We find this inaction on emissions to be out of step with most other Councils in Queensland, especially when climate change poses major threats to our environment, and special World Heritage areas.

Council’s Corporate Plan 2019-2024, which was devised in 2019, includes a commitment to continue to develop renewable energy options for Council operations, and to develop a Waste Strategy with the aim of moving towards a circular waste economy. We are disappointed to note there are no actions to progress these commitments in the 20/21 Operational Plan.

The Corporate Sustainability Strategy has expired and a new one was due to be presented to Council in August 2020. DSSG is disappointed this is not seen as a priority, as it has not yet been presented.



# TO OUR MEMBERS

Council completed its Coastal Hazard Adaption Strategy which addresses coastal climate change projections up until 2100. DSSG has supported this project and is encouraged to note progress.

Fortunately the Queensland Government has progressed its renewable energy strategy and committed to achieving a target of **50 per cent** renewable energy by 2030 and is progressing well toward that goal. DSSG supports action on reducing emissions.

## **Other activities**

In 2020, DSSG has maintained relationships with Terrain NRM, Rainforest Rescue, Queensland Conservation Council, Douglas Local Marine Advisory Committee, Cairns and Far North Environment Centre, Environmental Defenders Office, Douglas Shire Council, Plastic Free Douglas, Tangaroa Blue, Stop Adani Douglas Shire, GBR Legacy.

DSSG was represented on the Douglas Local Marine Advisory Committee by Didge McDonald. Didge attended one meeting in 2020, due to COVID restrictions. The LMAC discusses issues such as Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report and Water Quality Report, Marine debris, Low Isles and fisheries issues. LMAC has supported our opposition to vehicles on Wonga Beach.

## **DSSG Strategic Areas 2021**

As overarching themes, DSSG will continue to work on the existing three strategic areas:

- Daintree conservation
- GBR conservation and water quality
- Climate change responses

## Planning Scheme

We expect Douglas Shire Council will proceed to make changes to the Planning Scheme in 2021 - which will require some campaign activity in response. We are disappointed that the newly elected Council has terminated a contract and dropped the project to develop a Port Douglas 'Blueprint' Masterplan. The proposed Mossman Blue Print Masterplan will now comprise streetscapes only. We support the concept of Masterplans to guide sustainable development.

# TO OUR MEMBERS

## Enforcement of regulations to protect environment

We are concerned about the impact of Councils policy to permit ATVs on Wonga Beach, and are keen to be involved in monitoring that impact on vegetation and wildlife, particularly in the sensitive northern end of the beach.

DSSG has lobbied Council and will continue to monitor the enforcement of laws around clearing of forest and large trees throughout the Shire, including in the Daintree.

## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

The Committee has reconciled and organised all finances and established a separate operating account for any grants it may auspice. The organisation has obtained income from donations and membership dues. Our expenditure has been higher due to campaign activity. It was not necessary to engage an external auditor this year as our income levels did not require external audit.

## OPERATING HIGHLIGHTS

The Committee elected in November 2019, comprised the following:

President: Didge McDonald, Secretary: Laurene Hull, Treasurer: Carolyn Toohey, Members: Roisin Allen and Allen Sheather. Mike Berwick and David Carey were seconded to the Committee in November 2019 and April 2020 respectively. The committee has met in person six times, and made 50 decisions out of session, via electronic means. We also held four pro-ferry campaign meetings. We have redesigned our web site and continued a strong social media presence. We have increased our membership base.

## LOOKING AHEAD

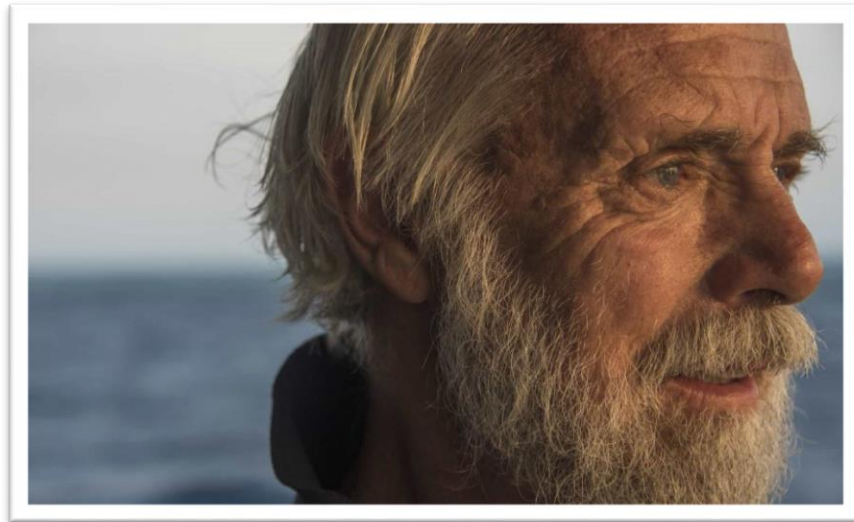
In 2021, DSSG aims to increase membership across the Shire area, and develop community relationships further. DSSG will advance our three strategic areas and continue to lobby governments in advance of our mission.

We will continue to hold elected Douglas Shire Councillors to their election commitments. We will continue our participation in consultative groups such as Local Marine Advisory Committee. We will seek to consult with members and encourage their involvement in all activities.

# TO OUR MEMBERS

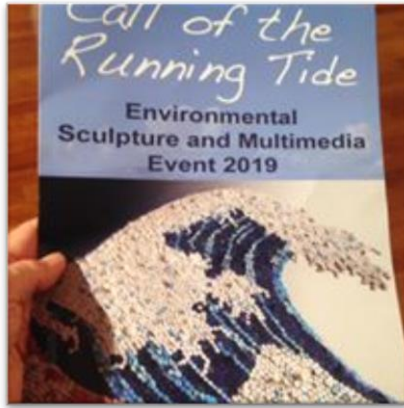
## Vale John Rumney

JOHN RUMNEY was a true pioneer of ecotourism on the Great Barrier Reef and one of the region's great characters. He championed the viewpoint that fragile environments like the reef have more to gain from well-managed and sustainable tourism than to lose from it. Anyone fortunate enough to have experienced the Great Barrier Reef under John's guidance, leadership, passion and immense knowledge, was sure to become an advocate and ambassador for life. John was a valued member of DSSG and we extend our condolences to his family and many friends. We appreciate the time we had with him.

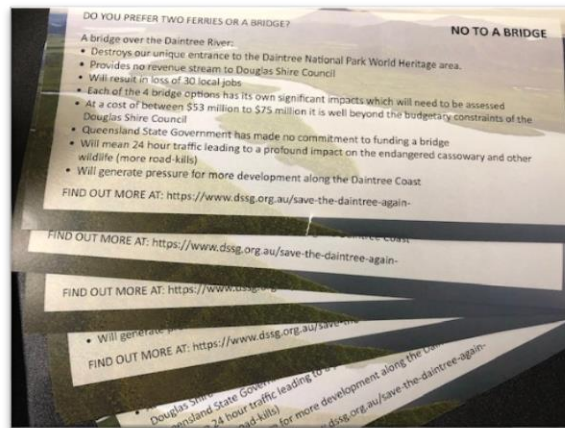


# TO OUR MEMBERS

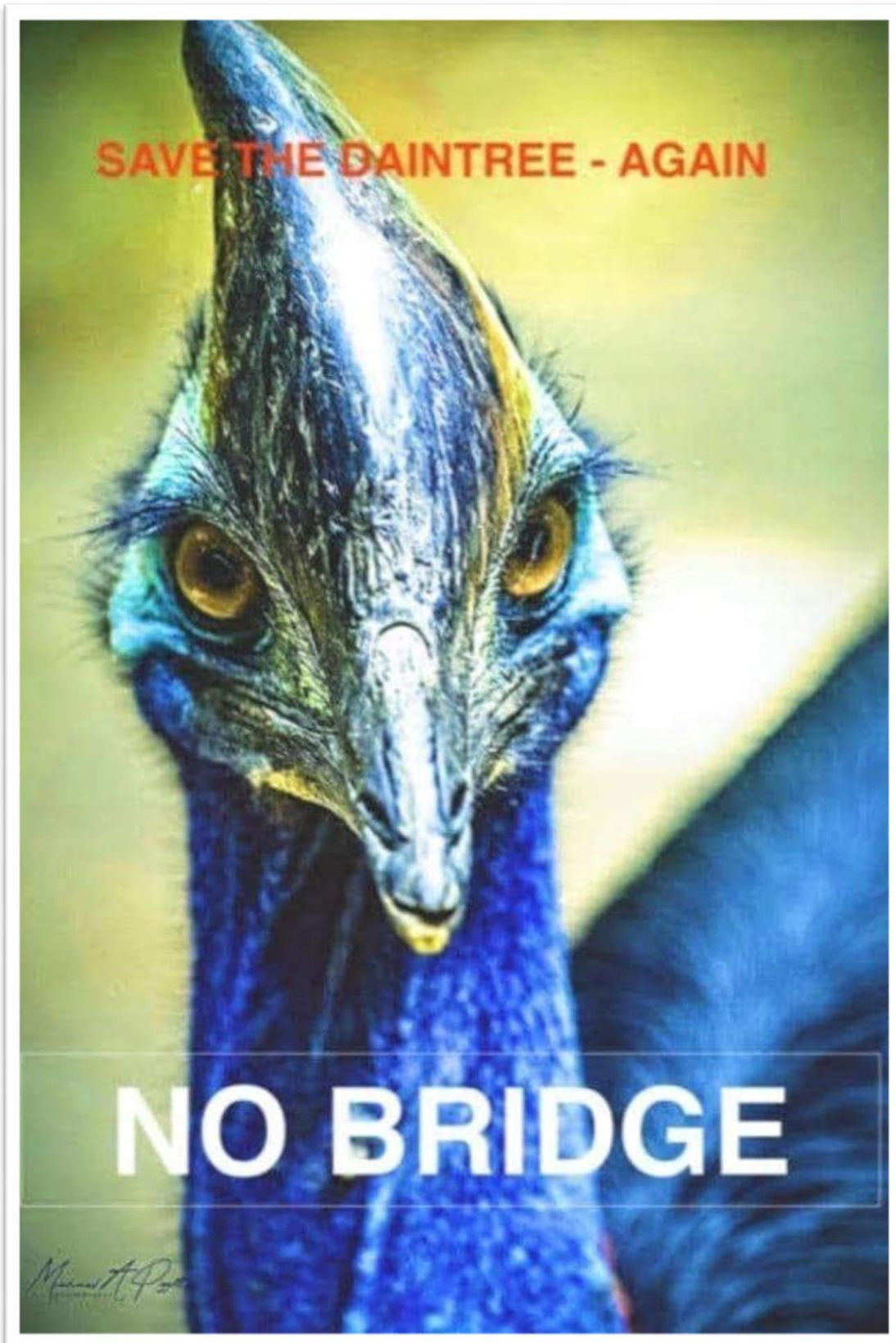
DSSG supported the 2020 workshops for “Call of the Running Tide” environmental art project, Port Douglas 2021.



DSSG campaigned against a bridge over the Daintree River August – December 2020.



TO OUR MEMBERS



# TO OUR MEMBERS

## Written Statement re Financial Report

### Financial Statement

The Douglas Shire Sustainability Group keeps financial records in a way which properly records the Group's income and expenditure and dealings with its assets & liabilities.



Didge McDonald  
President

### Auditors Report

During the 2019/2020 Financial Year, DSSG qualified as a Level 3 Association under the Office of Fair Trading's *Association Incorporation Act* which governs the activities of Incorporated Associations.

As a Level 3 Association, DSSG has not been required to have an Independent Auditor complete a full financial audit of its accounts, but must provide a completed Profit & Loss to the Office of Fair Trading as part of our Annual Return.

A detailed Income and Expenditure Report has been completed and is available to Members on request.

DSSG continues to operate its banking services through the Bendigo & Adelaide Bank Ltd., Port Douglas branch.

At the end of the Financial Year 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2020, there were 2 operating accounts in place:

- 1) General
- 2) Secondary

### Statement of Financial Position:

- The association has no liabilities @ 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- Bank account balances @ 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 total \$2,237.72
- Petty Cash @ 30<sup>th</sup> September 2020 \$47.15

### Statement of Comprehensive Income (Profit & Loss)

- Income           \$ 1,041.98 (Memberships/Donations)
- Expenditure     \$ 2,579.11 (General operating expenses)

Carolyn Toohey  
Treasurer

# TO OUR MEMBERS

## DOUGLAS SHIRE SUSTAINABILITY GROUP INC.

### DETAILED PROFIT & LOSS STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2020

|  | NOTE | 2020                   | 2019                 |
|--|------|------------------------|----------------------|
| <b><u>GENERAL ACCOUNT - SALES &amp; RECEIPTS</u></b>   |      |                        |                      |
| Interest   |      | 1.98                   | 16.94                |
| Membership   |      | 780                    | 600                  |
| Donations & Fundraising                                |      | 260                    | 110                  |
| Income   |      | 0                      | 0                    |
| <b>Total</b>   |      | <b>1041.98</b>         | <b>726.94</b>        |
| <b><u>GENERAL ACCOUNT - EXPENSES</u></b>               |      |                        |                      |
| Accounting & Audit                                     |      | 56.6                   | 24.55                |
| Advertising  |      | 410                    | 0                    |
| Bank Charges   |      | 4.5                    | 4                    |
| Stationery   |      | 1183.01                | 0                    |
| General Expenses                                       |      | 892                    | 444.35               |
| Subscriptions / Memberships                            |      | 33                     | 33                   |
| <b>Total</b>   |      | <b>2579.11</b>         | <b>505.9</b>         |
| <b><u>NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</u></b>                    |      | <b><u>-1537.13</u></b> | <b><u>221.04</u></b> |
| <b><u>SECONDARY ACCOUNT - SALES &amp; RECEIPTS</u></b> |      |                        |                      |
| Income   |      | 0.35                   | 0                    |
| <b>Total</b>   |      | <b>0.35</b>            | <b>0</b>             |
| <b><u>EXPENSES</u></b>                                 |      |                        |                      |
| <b>Total</b>   |      | <b>0</b>               | <b>0</b>             |
| <b><u>NET FUNDS GAINED (EXPENDED)</u></b>              |      | <b><u>0.35</u></b>     | <b><u>0</u></b>      |
| <b>TOTAL OPERATING SURPLUS (DEFICIT) AFTER TAX</b>     |      | <b>-1536.78</b>        | <b>221.04</b>        |

# TO OUR MEMBERS

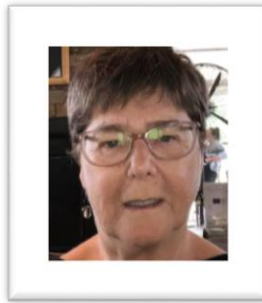
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