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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

DSSG has canvassed members for input on the Douglas Shire Council Foreshore Management Plans, and made a comprehensive submission to Councillors on the plan.

DSSG appreciates the Council's plan to focus resources on management of some of the Shire's foreshore areas.

While acknowledging that the coastal area of Douglas Shire comprises several different landscape features, we are of the view that an overall foreshore management plan is appropriate and necessary.

The key features of an overall management plan would include strategies for:

- Protection and regeneration of the Littoral Forest
- Protection of fauna and flora, particularly those identified as endangered or threatened.
- Appropriate infrastructure including access
- Protection of the foreshore areas for resident amenity and quiet enjoyment
- Weed and domestic animal control
- Public Education including signage
- Enforcement policy

"An overall plan would create the framework and include the general principles of foreshore management" said Didge McDonald, President.. "An overall plan could then be complemented by individual specific beach plans, where different environmental issues could be canvassed".

DSSG has called for a commitment from Council to proper and consistent enforcement and public education. "We are aware of several examples of ongoing vegetation removal and creation of pathways - some people have effectively taken over parts of the foreshore for personal use, creating pathways and gardens of invasive species", said Mr McDonald

"The littoral forest is listed as critically endangered, and must be preserved by re-vegetation and weed control".

Beach littoral forests can provide protection against beach erosion by acting as "shock absorbers" to incoming wave action. Littoral forest on the northern Wet Tropics World Heritage section of Wonga Beach protects an endangered dune-swale system (a series of parallel small sand dunes with remnants of small lagoons (swales) between them). Littoral forests can protect our shorelines against rising sea levels.

DSSG provided examples of degradation of the foreshore and its littoral forests. These included paths and vehicle access points being driven through the littoral forest all along Wonga beach, often facilitating vehicle access to the beach. These paths and tracks are often accompanied by uncontrolled fires and littering. Disturbance of nesting and feeding shorebirds is a major consideration for this beach.

Efforts to revegetate cleared areas at 4 mile beach have been thwarted by continual removal of native vegetation, path making and planting of invasive species. Oak Beach, Cooya and Newell Beaches are also under pressure from unlawful clearing and informal path-making.

"DSSG commends the Council's focus on our foreshores, particularly re-vegetation and weed management. We'd like to see an overall management plan, a commitment to enforcement and public education, and recognition of its stewardship role for our critically endangered littoral forests". said Mr McDonald.



