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Media Statement - Douglas Shire Sustainability Group Candidate Questionnaire.

The Douglas Shire Sustainability Group (DSSG) will be asking a series of questions of all candidates standing for election on March 28 in order to inform voters where candidates stand on key sustainability issues.

“The conservation and sustainable use of the Shires outstanding natural values and beauty have been challenged at every Council election for the last 40 years and this year is no different.” DSSG president, Didge McDonald said. “Douglas has been blessed with two World Heritage areas side by side, the two actually meet one another on the Daintree Coast and 80% of the shire is World Heritage listed.”

The world heritage listing of both the reef and rainforest, and the global recognition those listings bring, have become the foundation of our biggest economy – tourism; and is increasingly important to agriculture as the cane industry heads towards a bio-refinery.

The questionnaire addresses what DSSG believes 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 shires capacity to meet its resource demands, maintaining the agricultural landscape and rural beauty and ability to ensure water security.

“If these values are lost, the urban footprint is expanded beyond the capacity to supply water, the reputation of a reef in decline spreads or the Daintree Coast is further developed, Douglas will lose its reputation as a special place and we are headed for serious, long term economic decline.” Mr. McDonald said.

“DSSG understands there are serious challenges facing tourism and agriculture, they are well understood by both industries. We believe these are best addressed by actions that demonstrate we remain a leader in responsible environmental management, not by abandoning those values for short term gain and a quick fix.”

The responses of all candidates will be ranked using a ‘traffic light system’ and results will be published in the March 12 edition of the Port Douglas & Mossman Gazette.

Candidates can simply answer yes, no or maybe to the questions, however if they wish to make additional comments, we will publish full responses on our web site.

The questionnaire has been sent to all candidates who have already indicated they are standing for election and will be sent to others who may nominate during the nomination period as they become known.

Laurene Hull Secretary