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Via email to: [QldEcotourismTrails@ditid.qld.gov.au](mailto:QldEcotourismTrails@ditid.qld.gov.au) and [WangettiTrail@ditid.qld.gov.au](mailto:WangettiTrail@ditid.qld.gov.au)

## **RE: SUBMISSION RE WANGETTI TRAIL ALIGNMENT**

Douglas Shire Sustainability Group Inc. makes the following submission re the proposed Wangetti Trail alignment.

### **1. Creating a Regionally Significant Mountain Bile Experience**

DSSG recognises and supports the economic benefit of supporting the Wet Tropics region to emerge as a premier Mountain Biking destination of international significance. In lieu of the currently proposed high impact mountain biking trail option (between Palm Cove and Wangetti), we would suggest that two parallel and complimentary alternatives are possible.

Rather than creating high impact mountain biking infrastructure and experiences in highly intact and protected parts of the World Heritage area, we consider that a differentiated wilderness (low impact) walking trail on the current alignment and a separate more western mountain biking option is possible (maybe a "Greater Wangetti Trails Experience").

Under this model, the currently proposed Palm Cove to Wangetti Trail section could be retained as a low impact wilderness walking experience. Together with the proposed northern section, this could create an internationally significant low impact walking trail product.

To complement this, however, we suggest the creation of a more westerly mountain biking segment to the product that builds upon and uses existing trail and mountain biking infrastructure. This approach would start by linking into the existing mountain biking infrastructure that starts at the JCU campus at Smithfield. The route would start at JCU (or indeed the Palm Cove jetty), progress up to the Saddle Mountain Radar Site, then travel back down existing trails linked to or associated with Black Mountain Road, joining up with the Quaid Road and Progressing down to Wangetti.

This approach (West Wangetti Bike Trail) might enable the reopening of existing forestry trails on the Western slopes, and perhaps even provide an opportunity for transitioning the Quaid road into a more targeted and low impact tourist access opportunity;

Secondly, there is a bigger picture (regional) mountain biking opportunity here that could be based on a cohesively designed, managed and promoted network of connected but iconic mountain biking trails (and potentially a region-wide circuit) across the Wet Tropics. This approach would make greater and more innovative use of the existing network of forestry and related trails throughout the world heritage area, resulting in a more region-wide product and experience.

## 2. Enhancing Commercial Opportunities in the Wet Tropics Region

DSSG remains deeply concerned about the creation of new tenure instruments, which can be commercialised, within the protected area estate within the Wet Tropics World Heritage area.

However, we do consider that, with the right strategic planning and with the appropriate development approval protections, special private development opportunities might be targeted and facilitated in private lands adjoining or in the right strategic locations across the Wet Tropics, but outside the World Heritage Area.

There would be value in developing a Wet Tropics-wide strategy to identify these opportunities and to progressively see these opportunities realised. In considering these approaches, there should be a particular emphasis on ensuring these enhanced development rights come with the requirement for the product to actually enhance environmental and cultural values off the protected area estate (or even contributing within), resulting in a net environmental and economic gain for the region. The right commercial opportunities might be identified/facilitated in association with the revised West Wangetti West Bike Trail proposal outlined above.

## 3. Progressively Improving Ecological Health of Ecosystems in the Wangetti Trail District

Separate to the proposed Wangetti Trail itself, this submission seeks to highlight the reality that there is significant and continuing decline in the ecological health of terrestrial and marine ecosystems adjacent to the proposed Wangetti Trail. Changed burning regimes and progressive weed invasion are resulting in significant ecological change in Themeda-based grassy ecosystems right along the Cook Highway. Additionally, fringing coral reefs (most notably at Yule Point) experienced tragic decline during the 1970s with little recovery since.

If our proposed approach to a Greater Wangetti Trails Experience (Western Bike and Eastern Walk) is taken (and even if not), we see a great opportunity to explore the formation of some form of Greater Wangetti Ecosystem Restoration Trust. Such a trust could partner the region's traditional owners and establish a long term resourcing and works delivery strategy to enable the progressive restoration and maintenance of these important and diverse ecosystems.

A dedicated focus on restoring fringing reefs would be the first in the GBR, and enables a great narrative concerning this area being the most prominent interface between the two World Heritage Areas.

We look forward to further opportunities for public comment as the project develops.

Yours faithfully



Laurene Hull  
Secretary