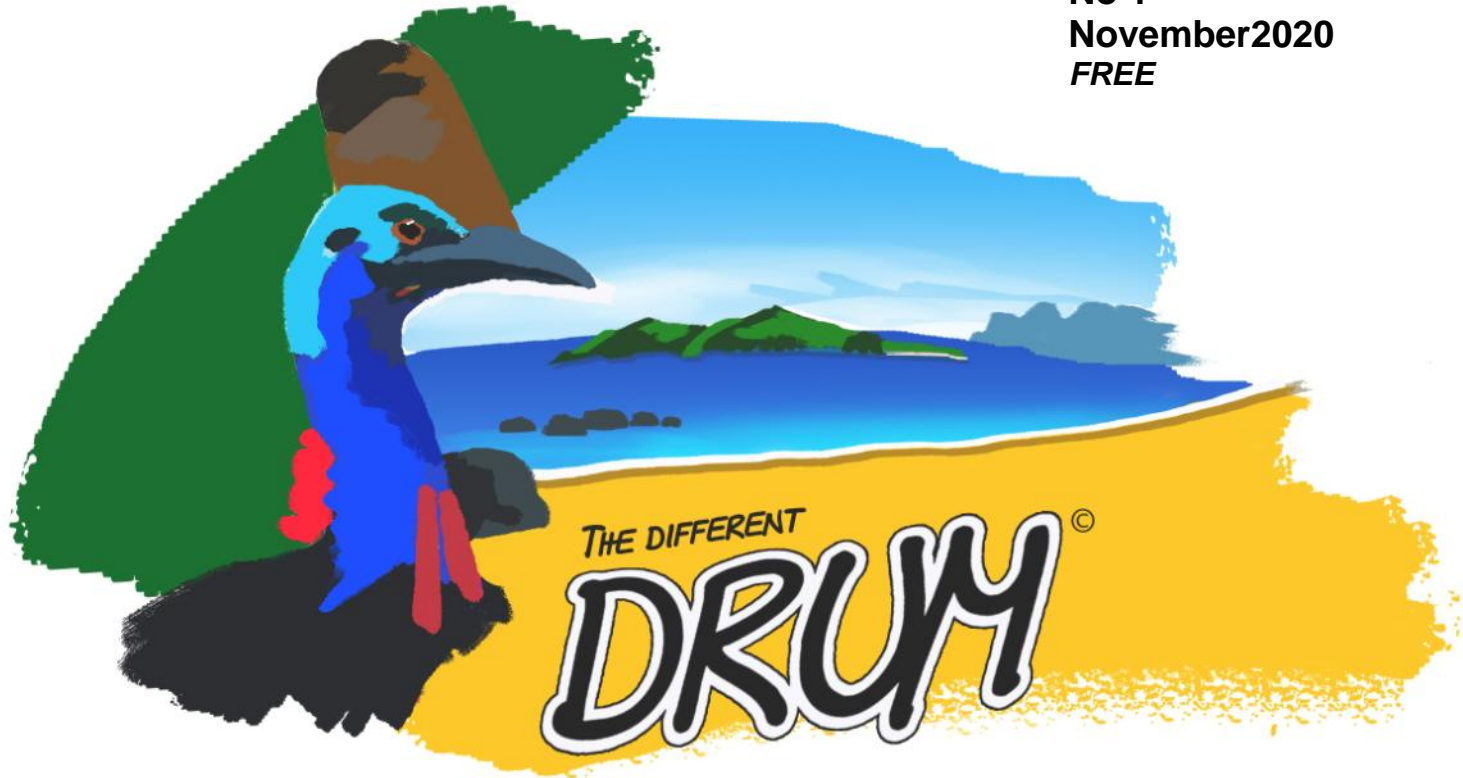


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A community voice for an eco sustainable future



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Cover: John Büsst self portrait courtesy Margaret Thorsbourne



Sometimes there is no need for us to visit wild places – just knowing they exist is all that matters.

Margaret Thorsborne AO

Welcome to the Different Drum

This is the first edition of The Different Drum, a quarterly newsletter, to capture the unique features of the Cassowary Coast and its residents. It is launched by Friends of Ninney Rise who manage the Heritage listed and government owned property at Ninney Rise.

We are very excited to bring out this new quarterly as John Büsst, whose full story features further into the newsletter, was not only a local artist and prominent conservationist but a great communicator. His success, recognised in the listing of his home, was that he brought large sections of the community with him to protect the Reef and the Rainforest.

It is important that a regular channel of communication is available to the many community run bodies and community supported activities. Our area has a proud history of achievements in the areas of conservation and the arts. The Different Drum seeks to celebrate these achievements and encourage continued participation by the community.

*Suzanne Smith,
President, FoNR*



Friends of Ninney Rise

www.ninneyrise.com

"Nature is much to wreck, but man can do it (his last and greatest proof of power and will) and, part of what we ruin, we shall rue it."



Yes, man can do it, and he is doing it.
Not only as a proof of his power
and his will, but as a by-result
of his will to power . . .
He too often seems through ignorance and greed
to end up making the world, for us all
. . . more perilous.
And poorer.
And uglier.

JUDITH WRIGHT 1960

JUDITH WRIGHT, 1969.



Friends of Ninney Rise

Over the last 12 months Ninney Rise has undergone some major upgrades. Friends of Ninney Rise has gradually been working through the recommendations in the Ninney Rise Conservation Management Plan (CMP). We have followed the recommendations of the priority action list outlined in the CMP.

The project began with the reinforcement of the roof structure to bring it up to current cyclone standard. This included replacing the roof and gutters; at which time we succeeded in convincing DES to replace the roofing iron with the heritage colour Thunder Bay used by John Büsser. The down pipes and ground contouring were included in these extensive, (and expensive) list of repairs. As a heritage listed house, it required an official building Exemption Certificate to retain the integrity of the heritage 'fabric'. The guttering has been especially designed to the profile resembling that of the remnant of the Büsser era gutters, found on the bank in front of Ninney Rise and installed with external brackets every 900mm to match the look of the original guttering.

A multitude of surprises and problems were revealed in the process and has helped us understand more about the unique construction of the building. Tim, the building supervisor commented about the design of the building that, "He (Büsser) was a very clever man, he was ahead of his time". *(Büsser was a key figure in the Mosalvat artist colony and learnt his building skills from Justus Jorgensen at Monsalvat, Eltham, Victoria. See Büsser story page 5)*

The works on this heritage listed building could not have been progressed without the (CMP) Detailed Fabric Survey (DFS), Colour Study (CS) and Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) which informed our course of action, these have been necessary and invaluable reference documents during this process. Emma Scragg (DFS and CS) and Noel Ruting (VMP) have been most helpful providing their advice to clarify issues as they have arisen.

It was exciting to see the blue roof go on, a big step in restoring Ninney Rise to the Büsser era; a major goal for Friends of Ninney Rise. For FoNR, it has been a constant reminder, reinforcing respect and gratitude for the work of John Büsser, Judith Wright and Len Webb, not only for their legacy in raising awareness of the importance of many of the natural area we enjoy today as National Parks; but of their pivotal roles in the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics being listed as World Heritage Areas.

We are most grateful for the interest that is being taken by QPWS and the help they are giving us to achieve this goal. We would like to thank Maurice Gayler (QPWS Senior Ranger - Assets) who supervised the major works, arranging the necessary heritage building exception certificate and being in constant communication with FoNR executive members Sandal and Liz, throughout the process during 2019.

Everyone knew John Büsser's house because when you drove past, there was this great big sea of blue (roof) and it looked enormous.

(George Kotzas)

We would also like to thank Acting Principal Ranger Coastal Tropics, Ross Domin and Senior Ranger, Innisfail, Cameron Sharpe for their valuable assistance in providing funds and QPWS staff in 2020 to facilitate the completion of the verandah bamboo repair work and install the rodent resistant gutter guard once the roofers had finished.

Our next goal is to paint the exterior and interior of Ninney Rise, back to the original white with blue trim of all doors and windows outside and pale cream and other colours inside; we will be looking for sponsors, volunteers and funding to complete this job.

During 2021 the FoNR Management Committee will also be fully committed to searching for funds to advance the completion of the Interpretation Plan which we commissioned in 2019 and put on hold due to Covid 19. The team we have commissioned to produce the Interpretation Plan are Extent Heritage who have articulated our vision to see Ninney Rise adapted to "define an engaging visitor experience in which its significant stories, collections and spaces are more effectively realized..." and become a living house museum for public visitation, interpreting the life and work of John Büsser and cohort, while supporting educational environment activities and ecotourism.



Artist impression of Ninney Rise original colour scheme

FoNR's vision is for Ninney Rise to act as an "inspiration station" – a place that is activated as a scientific research space by telling stories and supporting events that stimulate a commitment to protect the reef and rainforest. Adopting this interpretive approach provides the best possible opportunity for ensuring the cultural heritage values of the place are enjoyed and sustainably managed into the future."

Sandal Hayes, Secretary FoNR

Our branch of Wildlife Queensland has allowed local residents to be involved in environmental issues since its formation in 1980.

The focus for the first decade was on the expansion of the protected area including the World Heritage Wet Tropics , the promotion of revegetation through nurseries and volunteer planting and research of the cassowary and the Torres Strait Pigeon.

With the formation of C4 and the protection of the Rainforest and Hull River system our focus changed in subsequent decades to the largely unprotected Coastal woodlands and the rediscovered Mahogany Glider management and promotion of Ninney Rise as the heritage legacy of the earlier Wildlife branch of the 60's and 70's.

Our Walking programme began this year despite Covid restrictions...We are always mindful of the conditions of our gathering.

Into Kennedy Bay in May, up Bicton Hill in June and up the Dalrymple track in August. We walked into Elizabeth Grant Falls from the Tully Gorge in September and joined Tangaroa Blue in a beach clean-up of Ramsay Bay, Hinchinbrook Island in October.

Our walks are always enjoyed and help to introduce new members to the special qualities of our region.

Watch this space for notices of upcoming bush walks in 2021.



Photo: Socially distanced walk into Kennedy Bay

[See latest WPSQ \(Cassowary Coast Hinchinbrook newsletter\)](#)

JOHN BÜSST STORY

Ninney Rise , the birthplace of two World Heritage areas the Great Barrier Reef and the Wet Tropics.

Nestled in the rainforest at the northern end of Bingil Bay, North Queensland, Ninney Rise was built by artist and conservationist John Büsst in 1957

Ninney Rise has a unique building style and is set in park-like grounds where the rainforest meets the reef. The very environment, at that time, was threatened with clearing, run-off from agriculture, logging, limestone mining and oil drilling.

In the days when conservationists were seen as cranks, this inspiring location overlooking the Coral Sea, became the meeting place for artists, scientists and activists seeking to protect the reef and rainforest. The work of these visionary people culminated in the Great Barrier Reef and later the Wet Tropics being listed as World Heritage Areas.

Born into a wealthy Melbourne family, John Büsst chose the life of an artist becoming a key figure in the Montsalvat artists' colony in Eltham, Victoria. Led by Justus



Jorgensen, Montsalvat was built by students including John Büsst. Jorgensen instilled in his students a philosophy to live simply, to be self-supporting and to try to keep themselves free of commercial entanglements. Büsst was seen as one of Jorgensen's most successful students and became an important character in the life of the Montsalvat colony. During his time at Montsalvat, Büsst became

a passionate conservationist.



One of the buildings at Montsalvat Art colony

In 1938, 29 year old Büsst visited the Family Island group offshore from Mission Beach to paint the 'brilliant hues of the tropics' He immediately declared "This is the place for me to live, henceforth Melbourne is out - finished with!"

He leased, then bought land on Bedarra for three thousand pounds. Using the skills he learnt at Montsalvat, Büsst spent three years building a mud brick home in a secluded bay furnishing it with bamboo from nearby Clump Point on the mainland.

For the next 12 years Büsst lived an idyllic lifestyle pursuing his art on the island retreat. During this time, Büsst published a paper on the rare Australian swiflets on Bedarra Island.



In 1950, John married Alison Fichett also from Victoria.



Photo courtesy Virginia Edlington

As tourism increased on the Family Islands, John and Alison sought seclusion on the mainland at Ninney Point, Bingil Bay, described as a place of "extreme quiet and of great beauty".

Adapting the Montsalvat philosophy to the tropical environment they designed and built their new home (now known as 'Ninney Rise') with Büsst's trademark bamboo furnishing.

Patricia Clare, author of *Struggle for the Great Barrier Reef*, wrote . . . "It was surrounded by wide verandahs, with a roof like a shade hat pulled down over the lot" *"The white house stood on its own cliff, the rainforest behind it"* *"Like the grounds, it was the creation of its owner"* *"Büsst had built it"* *"In front the satin shine of blue water stretched away to where the reefs of lime lay hidden"*.



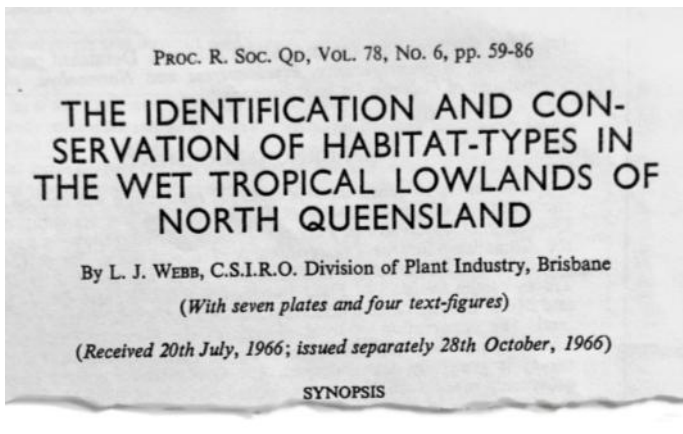
Built from local Silkwood bricks, Büssst explained, *"I am not interested in making anything that won't last for a thousand years"*.



John and Ali Büssst at Ninney Rise

Just as they were settling in John and Alison became aware of proposals for extensive clearing of local rainforest. John immediately used his contacts to fund a scientific study of the conservation value of the lowland forests. In his rainforest conservation campaign, John Büssst worked with Queensland's handful of flora and fauna scientists, botanists Len

Webb, and Geoff Tracey and ornithologists Jiro Kikkawa and Billie Gill. The research established that the Wet Tropics rainforests were of global significance. This partnership between scientists and conservationists resulted in protection of many of the lowland rainforest National Parks that we treasure today.



Critical to this success was Büssst's connections with government leaders. Harold Holt, then Prime Minister, was a friend from Büssst's school and university days. Inspired by Büssst and their love of diving, Harold and Zara Holt bought land at Garners Beach visiting the Büsssts often and to enjoy the reef environment.



Photo, Courtesy Virginia Edlington From left: Zara Holt, Len Webb, Harold Holt, Ali Büssst at Bingil Bay

But then a new threat emerged. The reef was in danger!

Billie Gill, secretary of the Innisfail Branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society remembered... *"In August 1967, John Büssst's wife Alison was reading the Innisfail newspaper, the Evening Advocate. She saw a small notice advertising an application to the Mining Warden's Court for a license to mine limestone for agricultural purposes from the 'dead' Ellison Reef. Ali was at once appalled and showed it to John. The rest is history."* Using his brilliant communication skills and connections, John Büssst immediately set about proving that Ellison Reef was not dead. He was able to get Queensland University marine science students from Brisbane to dive Ellison Reef. The subsequent data proved Ellison Reef was not dead.



Marine Scientist Eddie Hegerl, recounted his story... *"We were taken out in two little tiny home made boats that were unsafe at any speed and we stayed on these boats on the reef for five days and surveyed the reef. We had over two hundred species of fish and 90 something species of coral. We found it was a perfectly normal coral reef."*



They won the court case and established the legal precedent that the reef should not be mined.



The reef was safe! . . . or so they thought. . . the Qld government had leased almost the whole Great Barrier Reef for oil drilling exploration.

Conservationists argued the reef was a natural wonder of the world, that it belonged to everybody. State and national conservation groups joined the 'David and Goliath' battle. The federal Government challenged the Queensland

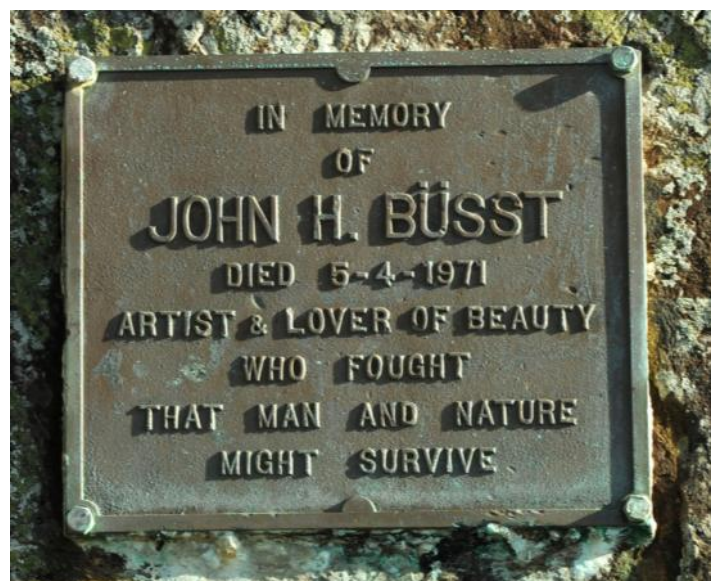
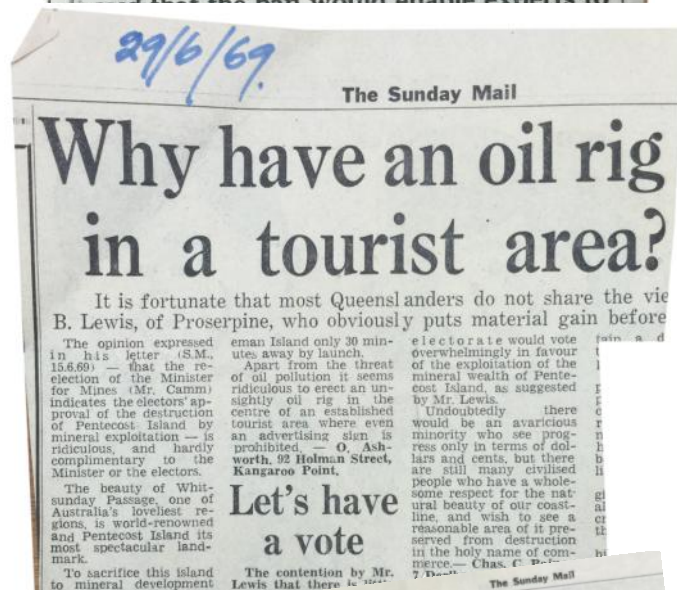
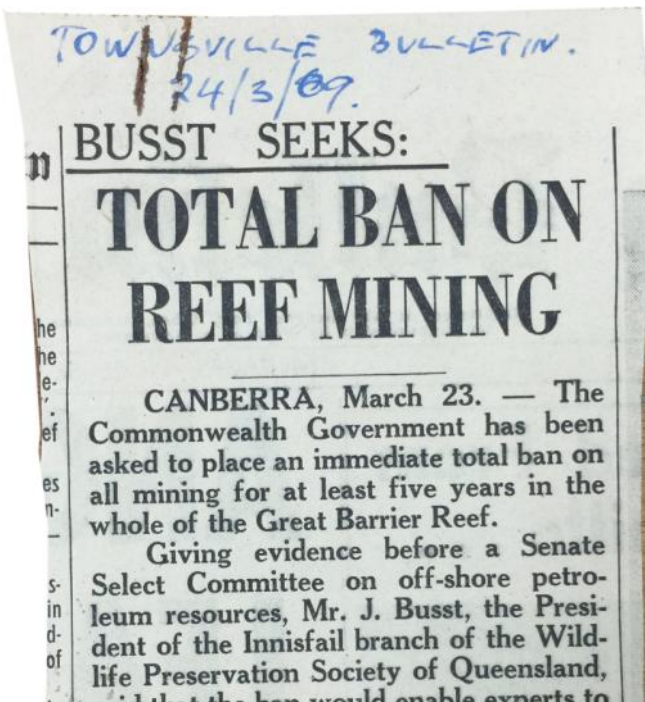
"It was the wildest bad luck as those who wished to exploit the Great Barrier Reef met with the graduate of Montsalvat who was not simply a romantic artist but at once a man of emotion and a wickedly cool organiser" (History of the Australian Conservation Movement by Drew Hutton and Libby Connors)

Known affectionately as 'the Bingil Bay Bastard' John Büssst didn't live to see the end result of this massively successful campaign - the declaration of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and World Heritage Area.



At John Büssst's untimely death in 1971, Len Webb wrote a eulogy titled 'To drop quietly from a twig'

"I do not think that anybody will fill the ecological niche which John Büssst occupied in our life over the past 24 years ... So much for John Büssst, who stirred a lot of mates to optimism and action and ruffled a lot of forests and reefs before the tree shed a leaf"



A commemorative plaque was placed near Ninney Rise with words by Australian poet Judith Wright, fellow conservation leader who was pivotal in the reef conservation success.



government about exploitation and ownership of the reef. With international and local oil spills, the future of the reef became an international issue.



(Judith Wright Photo courtesy Jean Ffrench)

"IN MEMORY OF JOHN H. BÜSST ARTIST AND LOVER OF BEAUTY WHO FOUGHT THAT MAN AND NATURE MIGHT SURVIVE".

[Watch slide show of this story](#)

MAHOGANY GLIDER

Petaurus gracilis

THE GRACEFUL ROPE DANCER

The mahogany glider is one of eight species of glider found in Australia

It is the marsupial gliding possum.

It is little known and rarely seen - Nocturnal - Cryptic- Elusive - mostly Silent

Gliding is an energy efficient way to travel – mahogany gliders rarely come to ground



Mahogany gliders pair for life, they breed once a year, producing one or two young that spend their early life in their mother's pouch. As soon as they are too large to be safely carried in the pouch they are cared for by both parents in the home den. They emerge from the den at about 5-6mths of age.

By 12-18mths old they have dispersed to find territory of their own. The maturing young cannot stay in their parent's territory. Each pair of mahogany gliders share and defend a home territory of approx. 20hectares, using up to 11 different natural dens hollows in living trees within this territory. They move from den to den throughout the year to suit the seasonal food availability.

Tall trees are essential for them as they rarely come to the ground.

How big are they? Nose - tail average 624mm weighs average 375-450g

How far can they glide? Average glide 20-30m
max glide up to 60m from very tall trees

What do they eat? Nectar from eucalypt & melaleuca blossom, sap & nectar from grass-trees and bloodwood, beetles, katydids, spiders lerps & wattle arils

Why is connectivity important? To keep the population genetically healthy; to allow young to disperse to find seasonal food; to adapt to climate change

How many? 1500 – 2000 thought to remain in the wild.

Today the greatest threat to their long term survival is loss of extent and quality of the remaining habitat and fragmentation (loss of the connection between the areas of remaining habitat).

Trees in their forests do not develop hollows large enough to provide homes for gliders until they are 80 – 100yrs old. Mature living trees and their dens are essential for shelter, breeding and movement.

The Mahogany Glider is a beautiful creature with an intriguing history:

Discovery; first recorded in Qld Museum 1883

Loss; lost to science for over 100 years

Rediscovery; 1989 Dr Steve Van Dyck, Qld Museum

By the time they were rediscovered in 1989 more than 50% of their habitat had been cleared for pine plantation, banana & cane production & coastal development. In 1993 they were confirmed as a distinct species and declared endangered, the mahogany glider is now one of Australia's most endangered mammals.

For thousands of years Traditional Owners have managed these woodlands with mosaic, cool fire. Fire & rain have shaped this landscape; the mahogany glider has evolved to suit this niche habitat – it cannot exist without this open eucalypt woodland. They live nowhere else on earth.

What can I do to help?

If you care about wildlife – talk about wildlife – share your interest - get involved.

Volunteer if you can and please don't cut mature trees down, they may be a home, feed or connecting tree that is essential for wildlife.... every little bit of help counts!

Want to know more?

[Click here](#)

Bird Tourism in Mission Beach and the Wet Tropics

Helen K. Larson : Wongaling Beach

Tourists are big business, we are constantly told. And “nature tourism” or “nature experiences” are promoted to get people back to the Wet Tropics and connecting with the outdoors and natural ecosystems. Birdwatchers or birders/birdos are big business too but this is not always recognised in northern Australia.

Everyone who comes to Mission Beach wants to see a cassowary, for many reasons. Most want to see one because it's the thing to do. Some (like me when I first arrived) wanted to add the species to their life list of birds seen. Some want to get the perfect photograph of a wild cassowary. Some want to take a selfie with wild animals and birds, a problem increasing in social media.

Birdwatchers come to Mission Beach especially to see cassowaries and the “Wet Tropics specials” (the 14 endemic species, found nowhere else) and will try hard to see them. Then there's the unexpected birds (the leucistic Pale-yellow robin), vagrants (Blue-billed duck, shearwaters) and rarities (Spotted whistling-duck, Red goshawk). Birdwatchers will travel farthest to see rarities and vagrants.

Bird tourism, or avitourism if you prefer, is on the rise world-wide, and not just due to the effects of Covid-19. People will travel a long way to see interesting or rare birds (even now) and it has been shown that they would be willing to contribute to an NGO for the conservation of birds (up to \$100 each) while at the site where the rare bird is.

Protected area managers don't seem to realise this or be interested. Most studies on bird tourism have been carried out in the northern hemisphere (USA, UK and Europe), where bird diversity is lower but the bird-watcher/birding population is higher.

There are few studies on bird tourism in Australia and New Zealand, although we know that birders bring money and conservation awareness with them. Bird tourists and casual cassowary-seekers both spend money in the Wet Tropics – for food, fuel, accommodation, entertainment, local shopping etc. It has been estimated that each cassowary in Mission Beach is worth about \$1 million dollars of tourist income.

Sounds good. But are there negative effects from bird tourism? You bet. Use of playback (recordings, phone apps), people getting too close, removing vegetation (for that perfect photo) or just sheer numbers of people moving about have all been variously shown to have a negative affect on birds.



Cassowaries in Mission Beach don't have an easy life – they have to contend with people feeding them unnatural foods, careless traffic on roads and they also have to learn how to get under barbed wire fences safely. Photo Jeff Larson

In Mission Beach, there is the problem of people feeding cassowaries, which are regarded as “their” birds. These cassowaries become habituated to humans and cars and may approach visitors, expecting food.

Businesses, local communities and NGOs that use cassowaries as symbols for visitors and conservation could focus on catering to birders and the conservation of birds and their habitats.

Cassowaries need looking after and it's up to us to do something about it.

Helen is Birdlife Australia's Guardian of the Coastal Wet Tropics Key Biodiversity Area, a member of several groups within the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and a seriously mad birdwatcher.



Birders will work hard to see a rare bird or carry out bird surveys, such as braving 12°C winter morning weather at Licuala Creek, Mission Beach.



This year, C4 has devoted considerable effort into improving the connectivity of cassowary habitat, knowing that many other species of wildlife will additionally benefit. Our main activities to do this have been growing and planting trees and removing or controlling weeds.

An important area for the long-term survival of cassowaries in the Mission Beach area is the corridor between the forests of Mission Beach and those in the main body of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area to the west of the Highway. The well-developed forests around Mission Beach, growing on rich soils with good water availability, consistently produce a diversity of fruits suitable for cassowaries through the year. This allows a high density of adult cassowaries and the raising of many cassowary chicks.

Currently the Mission Beach area is considered to be isolated due to clearing for agriculture and residential growth, major roads, especially the Bruce Highway, and the Brisbane-Cairns rail line. Although the future of the cassowary population of Mission Beach might seem secure most years, catastrophic events like cyclones and disease outbreaks make all isolated populations vulnerable. Re-linking the Mission Beach area to the greater forest area will allow movement of birds and other wildlife both in and out of this important area.

The Federal government (through EPBC mapping) recognises the importance of the east-west corridor from Mission Beach through Maadi ('Smiths Gap') between El Arish and Feluga, encouraging projects to improve habitat connectivity. After the success of the purchase and gazettal of Lot 66 ('Cassowary Connections') as a Nature Refuge, C4 has continued with the Queensland Trust for Nature in securing 'Gurrbum', a 16ha block on Old Tully Road, to revegetate it and create another Nature Refuge. It's been a good year for growing trees there, though we'll be happy to see some relief from the recent dry spell.

C4 has also been involved in the Wildlife Bridge being constructed over the Bruce Highway. Heavy traffic on the highway prevents any birds safely crossing, so when an



overtaking lane was the next development, some funding became available to offset its impact. C4 will be providing some of the plants for the bridge and will be watching to see that the project achieves its goals of wildlife connectivity.

Additional benefits of this bridge are that it reminds all highway users that wildlife are valued in this area and that its presence and importance are recognised by the government.

Already cassowary droppings have been found in our newly-planted area at Gurrbum and cassowaries have been seen in the National Parks on both sides of the wildlife bridge as it is being constructed over the highway. Each of these projects is a step forward in improving the ability of cassowaries and other wildlife to move more safely between protected forest areas.



[Go to C4 website](#)



'Eric the Rubbish Fish' was funded with a RADF grant in a partnership between [Mission Beach Cassowaries](#) and artist [David White](#). The sculpture, made from recycled rubbish, was commissioned for display at the 2019 Community Cassowary Festival. The empty chamber at the back can be constantly filled and emptied so we have a visual reminder of the amount of waste we create. 'Eric' was donated to the CCRC and is available for the community to use at venues and events to raise awareness of our waste.

To book Eric for your function please contact Kath Hansen
cdo@ccrc.qld.gov.au



The Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) is a Queensland Government and Cassowary Coast Regional Council partnership to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland

A NEW ECOSYSTEM MARKET

Terrain NRM has just completed a one-year project exploring the feasibility of a Cassowary Credits ecosystem service market, to benefit landholders and the natural environment. We are now moving on to phase two – getting cassowary credits up and running in the Wet Tropics region.

WHAT ARE CASSOWARY CREDITS?

‘Cassowary Credits’ is a proposed market-based scheme to reward landholders who make changes for a public benefit. Like Carbon Credits and Reef Credits, Cassowary Credits are earned for a measurable improvement – in this case in rainforest habitat. They are an investment option for philanthropists and for government and corporate entities looking to offset their biodiversity impacts. A cassowary credit is earned through rainforest reinstatement, repair, threat mitigation or enhanced protection. It is an innovative approach to nature conservation in the Wet Tropics region. It targets land that is unsuitable for agriculture, including sections within larger properties.

WHAT IS THE ‘KICKSTARTING CASSOWARY CREDITS’ PROJECT?

In this one-year project, Terrain NRM explored the feasibility of a cassowary credits scheme to attract investment for large-scale rainforest restoration in the

Wet Tropics region. We investigated environmental markets and worked with landholders and land managers to determine how a market-based scheme could operate as an incentive. The goal was a regionally focused model that maximized participation by also benefitting the broader community and by addressing constraints on the uptake of market-based schemes in the Wet Tropics region. This project was funded by the Queensland Government’s Land Restoration Fund. The result is a cassowary credit scheme that is considered a feasible new ecosystem service market.

HOW THE SCHEME WORKS

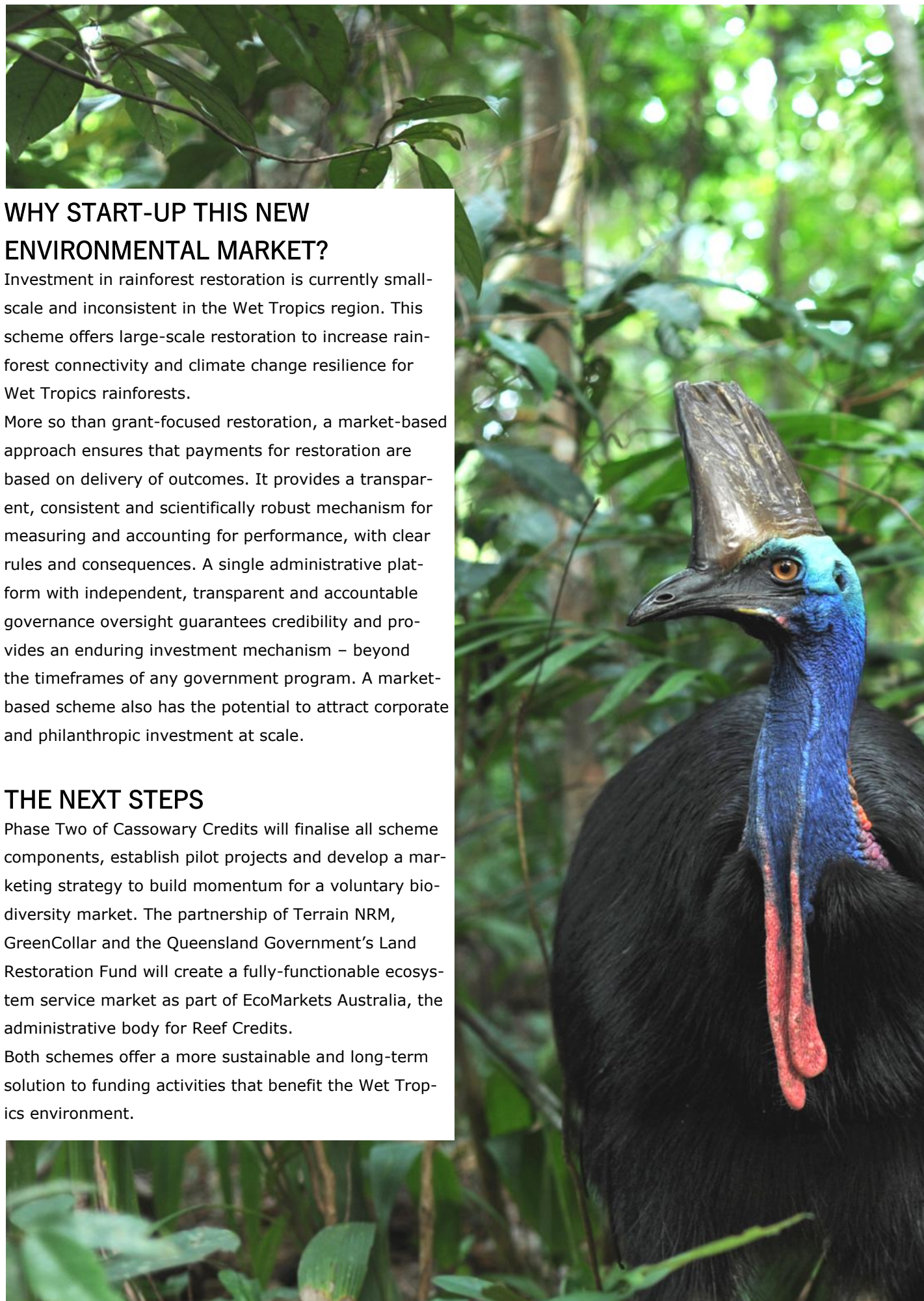
The Cassowary Credits Scheme is structured similarly to carbon credit schemes. But it is tailored to the Wet Tropics region.

It has:

- ◆ A regional focus – incentivising large-scale rainforest restoration in the Wet Tropics.
- ◆ The ability to change the landscape without compromising agriculture in the region. There are about 50,000 hectares of land that would benefit from revegetation and ecosystem repair.
- ◆ A flexible permanence model – landholders can incentivise and participation isn’t limited.
- ◆ Financial viability – it allows credit (and grant) stacking, reduces auditing costs, generates more credits early on in a project and accounts for additional benefits to attract a premium price.
- ◆ Benefits for regional communities and Rainforest Aboriginal People through incentives and the use of regional service providers where possible.

Landholder projects are audited and payments are based on actual achievements. Investors buy verified improvements and a quantifiable contribution toward rainforest habitat improvement targets. Credits are issued when results are delivered and audited, guaranteeing a credible improvement to the Wet Tropics bio-region.





WHY START-UP THIS NEW ENVIRONMENTAL MARKET?

Investment in rainforest restoration is currently small-scale and inconsistent in the Wet Tropics region. This scheme offers large-scale restoration to increase rainforest connectivity and climate change resilience for Wet Tropics rainforests.

More so than grant-focused restoration, a market-based approach ensures that payments for restoration are based on delivery of outcomes. It provides a transparent, consistent and scientifically robust mechanism for measuring and accounting for performance, with clear rules and consequences. A single administrative platform with independent, transparent and accountable governance oversight guarantees credibility and provides an enduring investment mechanism – beyond the timeframes of any government program. A market-based scheme also has the potential to attract corporate and philanthropic investment at scale.

THE NEXT STEPS

Phase Two of Cassowary Credits will finalise all scheme components, establish pilot projects and develop a marketing strategy to build momentum for a voluntary biodiversity market. The partnership of Terrain NRM, GreenCollar and the Queensland Government's Land Restoration Fund will create a fully-functionable ecosystem service market as part of EcoMarkets Australia, the administrative body for Reef Credits.

Both schemes offer a more sustainable and long-term solution to funding activities that benefit the Wet Tropics environment.

Local Government Planning — a scheme for our future

Perhaps you have occasionally wondered how decisions are made affecting the place where you live. Apart from projects such as swimming pools, meeting places, playgrounds and other infrastructure fulfilling 'needs' or 'wants', the community tends to leave decision making up to those they have elected to represent them. Decisions such as development approvals generally go unnoticed unless there is a direct impact on individual residents or a neighbourhood. A term known as NIMBY (Not in my Back yard).

How did that happen? Why weren't we consulted? "I thought it was only supposed to be 2 storeys here" come the surprised comments when a 5 storey building goes up, or a fast food outlet is built, or that beautiful rainforest backdrop, the reason you chose to buy your block, is bulldozed.

The law governing land use and public input is constantly being altered. Mostly these important changes go unnoticed by the people who are most affected.

In early 2012, at the end of their term of government, Premier Bligh abolished the statutory plans that governed coastal development. Next, the Newman government grossly amended the Nature Conservation Act, opened national parks to cattle, and introduced major structural changes to development assessment processes. You may remember the term 'cutting green tape'. That term simply means reducing environmental protection. By declaring a development a major project, assessment processes were side stepped, allowing serious environmental damage.

Since then, successive governments have added to the erosion of environmental protections. The Federal government has largely devolved responsibility of environmental assessments to the states and the states have stopped making local councils comply with state planning legislation. Local government lacks adequate checks and balances and binding legislation within their planning mechanisms. A local government Planning Scheme is only a guideline; it is only as strong as the policies incorporated by local government into their schemes and how committed they are to sticking to them.

For decades the community has had a strong voice when planning schemes have been under review. Local council visions and State regional planning are a testament to the community's strong desire for Mission Beach to retain its special character based on low key, low rise development, relaxed village atmosphere, long uncrowded beaches, rainforest growing down to the sea, villages separated by rainforest and farmland and the cassowary.

In the last 4 years, under the former local government management, planning scheme guidelines were often ignored with many developments approved under a Material Change of Use (rezoning) with inadequate or no conditions to mitigate the impacts on the environment or character of Mission Beach. The regional plan recommends constraint in development; whereas CCRC policies and strategies have been written to maximize growth. Mission Beach is subject to the vagaries of speculators and developers negotiating deals with local council behind closed doors; placing supposed economic benefits for developers ahead of community lifestyle and long term vision. The plans recently proposed by Mayfair 101 to make Mission Beach an international tourism mecca seriously undermined the intent of the state regional plan; further, the developer's private (commercial in confidence) meetings with the council meant that the community could have no input into the grand plan that would have changed the landscape and character of Mission Beach forever.



There is growing community concern about the direction Mission Beach is taken under Council focus on maximising growth - within an area recognised by the state for its high biodiversity and recommended as a priority conservation area.

The rainforest growing down to the sea, a defining character of Mission Beach is being cleared incrementally for private views, without local and state laws being enforced. Buildings are located carelessly, compromising the 'wilderness' natural amenity that drew so many to settle here. The community is rightfully feeling somewhat disenfranchised as they see changes that, if allowed to continue, will change Mission Beach to become like 'just any other place'.

In the context of local council decisions favouring supposed economic benefits there is a compelling case to protect the intrinsic values of Mission Beach, not only to reinforce the community strong sense of identity but also to maintain what makes Mission Beach so special to visitors.

Does the CCRC need to be reminded of long term community wishes instead of being led by speculators looking for short term gain?

The vision for Mission Beach in the Cardwell Shire Council Planning Scheme is one example reflecting community sentiment that has been reinforced over decades whenever opportunities have arisen for input into planning.

How much value does the local council place on community lifestyle and wishes?

The council must listen to the community at least as much as they do to developers and speculators. Without Federal and State government involvement in decision making, there is an urgent need for local council to introduce strong binding strategies and policies based on identification and protection of the special natural values underpinning community identity. By adopting a more inclusive approach, to meaningfully consider community input, not only will the CCRC properly represent those who voted for them, it makes good economic sense in the short, medium and long term.

Below is the vision for Mission Beach in the 2007 Cardwell Shire Council Planning Scheme. It is as relevant today as it was then.

The only way this vision can be realised is for a long term (master) plan to be developed for Mission Beach, identifying and protecting the points of difference which make it such a special place.

Shire wide policies are not appropriate when our region has such exceptional natural diversity.

Why isn't the same protection given to intrinsic values as to the art deco architecture in Innisfail?

How much does the local council consider the goose that lays the golden egg? It is beginning to show some very real signs of stress.

L G-Mission Beach Cassowaries Inc

Cardwell Shire Council

Planning Scheme

4.5 MISSION BEACH COASTAL ZONE

4.5.1 Introduction

The Mission Beach Coastal Zone includes the coastal communities of Wongaling Beach and South Mission Beach. The following Vision Statement reflects the Planning Scheme's Desired Environmental Outcomes and will assist in achieving appropriate development within the Mission Beach Coastal Zone, particularly in the assessment of Impact Assessable development applications.

MISSION BEACH COASTAL ZONE – VISION

The outstanding natural attributes of the area, which form part of the internationally significant Wet Tropics World Heritage Area, and which are central to the survival of the Southern Cassowary, an endangered species are to be maintained and presented for the benefit of current and future generations. A fine balance between the interaction of the human and natural environments is to be achieved to ensure that natural assets are protected and conserved, whilst enabling, where appropriate, their use and appreciation by residents and visitors alike.

The need for balance, where development adapts to the capability of the natural environment to sustain that development, provides the opportunity to carve a unique residential and tourist destination, where conservation and economic well-being are firmly inter-dependent. This Vision recognizes that the economic future of the coastal area, primarily tourism, is substantially dependent upon successfully maintaining, managing and presenting the natural attributes, including scenic character, habitat, unspoilt beaches and islands, coral reef and good farming lands.

To achieve this, it is important that the built environment does not dominate the natural environment. Therefore the bulk and scale of urban development must be carefully controlled to ensure development is low scale and architecturally representative of coastal village character.

In addition, while a mix of residential housing options is provided for both permanent residents and tourists, the location of higher density residential uses is carefully controlled to protect the amenity of residential areas.

The Mission Beach Coastal Zone consists of two (2) distinct urban areas being Wongaling Beach and South Mission Beach that are separated by the natural environment and rural pursuits. It is desirable to retain the distinct village character of these two areas by ensuring that physical and visual separation is maintained and by reinforcing the distinct village character of each distinct urban area.

The opportunity for achieving environmentally based urban and tourism experiences is central to realizing this Vision.

Native landscaping

Terrain produced a landscaping guideline for Mission Beach to encourage planting of local native species in parks, gardens, streetscapes, new developments, etc. The guideline identifies suitable trees, shrubs, palms, cycads, gingers, cordylines, tree ferns, ferns, lilies, orchids, vines, sedges, etc. Mission Beach is a natural greenhouse with incredible native plant diversity to choose from, particularly luxuriant rainforest species. Native landscaping will help maintain and restore the natural unspoilt look and feel of Mission Beach. Wildlife will benefit too. Standard landscaping safety procedures always apply, e.g. planting trees adjacent to structures isn't recommended.

Some of the species are available from C4's nursery.



Native lasiandra:
Melastoma malabathricum



Box fruit: *Barringtonia asiatica*



Crinum lily: *Crinum pedunculatum*



Bingil Bay palm/Arenga palm:
Arenga australasica



Coral tree:
Erythrina variegata



Banana bush: *Tabernaemontana pandacaqui*



Flame tree: *Brachychiton acerifolius*



Zamia palm: *Lepidozamia hopei*



Native hibiscus/Cottonwood: *Hibiscus tiliaceus*



October Glory: *Faradaya splendida*



Friends of Ninney Rise

Application for Membership

The aims of Friends of Ninney Rise are;

- ♦ to assist the conservation of the cultural heritage significance of Ninney Rise;
- ♦ to promote ecotourism at Mission Beach and ongoing reef and rainforest conservation through interpreting Ninney Rise's leading role in saving the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics rainforests;
- ♦ to assist retain Ninney Rise in public ownership with opportunities for appropriate public access particularly for tourism and conservation purposes;
- ♦ to assist the economically viable use of Ninney Rise;
- ♦ to facilitate tourism, conservation, community and government partnerships.

Membership Fees (inclusive of GST)

\$30 – couple / family \$20 – pensioner couple
\$25.00 – single \$15 - pensioner single

Payment can be made
via direct deposit to;
Friends of Ninney Rise Inc.
BSB 633000
Acc No 168 086 643

Please make sure you include your name in the description field.

Then email your name and phone number to friendsofninneyrise@gmail.com

Thank you for becoming a member of Friends of Ninney Rise

The Different Drum is collated and distributed by the Friends of Ninney Rise (FoNR)

All enquiries to; friendsofninneyrise@gmail.com

www.ninneyrise.com

Acknowledgment

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