



# Ecotone

Newsletter of the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre Inc.

Vol 27 Number 1

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## Just Another Regional Plan?

### CAFNEC gets to work on shaping the FNQ2025 Regional Plan

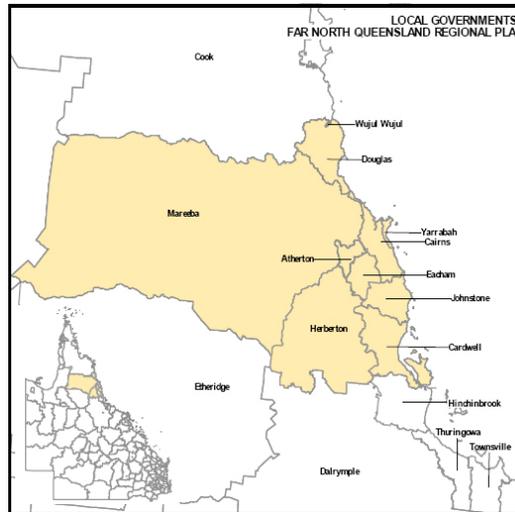
By Sarah Rizvi

There has been a flurry of activity over the past few weeks in response to the first stages of the new FNQ 2025 Regional Plan. This Plan was announced by Peter Beattie in last years State election campaign, and \$3.7 million has been allocated by the State Government to developing this plan.

The FNQ 2025 Regional Plan will be different from its predecessors, as it will be a statutory plan, having regulatory powers, meaning that legislation will be drafted to give this Regional Plan the force of law. Once it has been installed, all development applications in the region will have to be assessed in relation to FNQ 2025, as well as other relevant legislation. It will be the second cab off the rank in Queensland, after the SEQ Regional Plan, which also has regulatory powers. CAFNEC would like to see meaningful indicators built into the planning process to ensure we actually move towards Ecologically Sustainable Development, and ecological sustainability, climate change and peak oil firmly embedded in the decision making process that shape the final Plan. ESD is supposed to be the core objective of the Integrated Planning Act – believe it or not!

The area covered by the Plan will include the shires of Mareeba, Douglas, Cairns, Ather-ton, Herberton, Eacham, Johnstone and Cardwell shire councils, and the two Aboriginal local government areas of Yarrabah and Wujul Wujul. The Plan is design to manage growth in the region up until the year 2025, which will include stipulating which areas are to be protected, and which are designated for development.

CAFNEC intends to have a major role in shaping the Plan. As the region’s peak environmental organisation, we recognize the



much energy, resources and a large array of skills. Please get in touch with us if you have the energy and/or skills to lend a hand.

Monthly e-newsletters will be written on the progress of FNQ 2025 and CAFNECs steering committee, so if you’d like to receive updates by email (or by post), or to find out more, then email Sarah on project@cafneec.org.au, phone or visit the CAFNEC office, especially on Mondays when the FNQ 2025 team will be in. To participate in a web forum, or to access general information and documents about the process, then visit www.fnq2025.com.

importance of having strong representation of environmental values and concerns during the drafting of this new Plan.

A dedicated steering committee has formed within CAFNEC, with representatives from throughout the region, including the Daintree, the Tablelands and Innisfail. This group will be extensively liaising with other conservation groups throughout the region, as well as the general public. Our committee is meeting monthly, and there are three people who are devoting a day of each week to working on the plan. A series of public forums on FNQ2025 will be hosted by CAFNEC later in 2007. The Draft Terms of Reference for FNQ 2025 have been released, and comments are due by Friday, 30<sup>th</sup> of March.

The draft Regional Plan is scheduled to be released in early 2008, and the final Plan is due to be endorsed by Cabinet in late 2008.

Shaping this plan into a blueprint for sustainability will be a mammoth task requiring

### INSIDE.....

- Coordinators Report.....p2
- Campaigners Report.....p3
- Presidents Report.....p4
- Envirofiesta 2007 .....p5
- Avoiding Deforestation.....p6
- False Cape Update.....p7
- The Prolonged ‘Big Dry’ .....p8
- Sustainable Transport..... p9
- Treasurers Report.....p9
- Clean Coal? .....p10
- Waste not, Nuclear Want Not ..... p11
- Enviro-News Snippets .....p11

.....and much more



# Coordinator's report

*John Rainbird*

encourage everyone to get engaged in helping to pressure the government to make sustainability the plan's core objective. For more information check out the website at [www.fnq2025.com](http://www.fnq2025.com) or to get involved contact Sarah on [project@cafneec.org.au](mailto:project@cafneec.org.au).

Sadly large excavator's are still tearing away at the woodlands and hill slopes of False Cape. Despite having both the power and ample reasons to intervene this sad development, Premier Beattie is choosing to ignore the planning conflicts, safety risks, environmental harm, and destruction of scenic values. Member for Mulgrave, Warren Pitt, will not come out against the development due to the possibility of a few benefits to Yarrabah. Whilst we share Warren's aspirations for Yarrabah, we are disappointed the State lacks the vision and commitment to find other ways to assist Yarrabah other than supporting the destruction of our coastal rim. We will continue to work to protect this site. See full story on False Cape for more.

Climate change continues to hold a high political and media profile as its society gradually comes to grips with its implications. CAFNEC has been criticized by some for putting so much energy into this issue because of its global nature. We make no apologies for making climate change one of our highest priorities given its mammoth implications for the FNQ environment and community, as well as the huge under repre-

sentation of climate change campaigning in Queensland compared to other states. We are also proud to have initiated a regional response to the issue through the establishment of the North Queensland Climate Alliance.

With water shortages in the south, eyes are again turning to the north for water and other resources. CAFNEC is part of the Northern Australia Environment Alliance (NAEA) – 10 ENGO's working to progress a vision for the north which ensure its rich natural and cultural values are respected and kept in tact into the future. Pressure on the northern rivers and other resources is going to continue to grow, and it is critical we ensure development in the north is environmentally and culturally appropriate, and that the ecosystems and their processes are kept in tact. Northern Australia provides us with an opportunity on how to do it right, but our leaders are still sadly highly illiterate when it comes to matters of ecology and sustainability.

2007 is going to be another big year for CAFNEC and FNQ's environment. We are trying to be strategic in our approach so we don't have to keep fighting the same old battles over and over again. The tide is beginning to turn, but it seems to take a long while to percolate through to the regions. It is crucial that we clearly articulate our vision for the future and how we can get there – this is our region and unless we get involved in shaping its future, it will be shaped for us.

When I heard Liberal Senator Bill Heffernan on the radio recently talking about the need to 'look after Mother Earth', I knew major shifts were happening in the Australian political landscape. It appears Green is the new Black! The question is just how deep does this new green penetrate? Prime Minister Howard is still grappling with what green actually means – he is under the illusion that nuclear energy is clean and green. Sadly it appears Federal Labor are going to follow Johnny Howard down the path to an expanded uranium mining industry in Australia. If you don't agree with nuclear power, then don't dig up uranium.

The State government is moving ahead with the development of the FNQ2025 Regional Plan, with draft Terms of Reference now out for public consultation. CAFNEC has set up a steering committee to progress input into this planning framework, and Sara Rizvi is coordinating out FNQ2025 project. We want this planning scheme to provide a framework for a sustainable FNQ, and we

## TAKE ACTION

### Write an un-official submission to the Gulf and Mitchell Rivers Water Resource Plan:

Hon Craig Wallace  
Minister for Natural Resources and Water and Minister  
assisting the Premier in North Queensland  
Level 13 Mineral House  
41 George Street, Brisbane, Queensland, 4000

write an un-official submission, include.

- I strongly encourage the Queensland Government to:  
not grant new water entitlements for the Gilbert, Flinders, Nicholson, Leichhardt and Norman Rivers where existing allocations are not currently used
- not grant new entitlements for Mitchell River where existing allocations are not currently used
- Omit references to supporting growth in irrigated agriculture, and instead promote industries that are compatible with the natural functions of the Gulf's wild rivers, such as ecotourism and sustainable fisheries
- Consider these rivers for protection as wild rivers under the Wild Rivers Act 2005.

see [http://www.cafneec.org.au/temp/WRP\\_info.cfm](http://www.cafneec.org.au/temp/WRP_info.cfm) for more information.

## **EPA Funding**

CAFNEC wishes to acknowledge the support of the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency under the Conservation Organisations Funding Program. Funds received under his program assist with our organisation's on-going operations to create awareness of and promote involvement of the wider community in environmental matters.

\$15,000 has been allocated for the 2006/2007 year.



# Campaigner's report

Steve Ryan

So, what's been going on over the new year and what's in store for the rest of 2007? So far this year there has been a fascinating national debate raging over the interlinked crisis of water and global warming. It's telling that the media has really picked up these two issues and that this years federal election may largely be fought around them.

Due to poor planing and unsustainable practices we have reached a point where we can no longer ignore the finite limits nature places on us. Unfortunately this message still does not get through to everyone. The push to either move farmers north, or take water south are tired attempts to sustain the unsustainable. I hope the less than enthusiastic responses these plans have received in the media are the signs that these old ideas are on the way out.

The global warming debate seems also to be moving along but again fossil fuel industries are getting billions of dollars in handouts whilst renewable energy technologies are being largely ignored. A large windfarm proposed for Archer Point is languishing due largely to the lack state renewable energy target. Our governments are gambling massively on unproven technologies to protect vested coal interests and again ignore proven technologies. We still have a long way to go and it seems our governments will not lead the way.

## Water allocations for the Gulf rivers set to take off

The current Water Resource Plans for the Gulf region are currently being drawn up by the State Government. Water allocation plans that will shape the development of these mighty river systems for decades to come seem to be caught in a bureaucratic timewarp that pre-dates our current water crisis. The draft report recommends a massive increase in water allocations, without a demonstrated demand. Giving out water rights based on ambit claims will create a market where water will be extremely undervalued and open to speculation. This is the situation that got us into the current mess and should not be replicated in our northern rivers. Surely the need for the water should first be demonstrated before an allocation is granted. Careless allocation can be very a expensive mistake as, once given, the allocation cannot be revoked and must be bought back. We see just how expensive this can be in the Murray/Darling right now. Massive overallocation of the Macquarie Valley in NSW is killing the Macquarie Marshes with approx \$280m needed to purchase the 140,000ML required to save the Marshes.

Thankfully the Northedge dam proposal was scrapped in the draft. De-commissioning of Southedge is not yet on the table, and there is even a recommendation that 20,000ML be allocated from Southedge. This massive new allocation could benefit a single private interest, George Quaid, and is for projects not even considered in any regional plan.

Thanks to those who made a submission into the process. The official public submission period for these plans may be over but I doubt the irrigators have gone home to await the result. Write a letter and put your view. Check out the CAFNEC website, call, or write for more information.

## Cape Crusaders to the rescue

Since last November, a committed group of volunteers have regularly placed themselves in front of the machinery at False Cape and held small protests and media events. This work attracted much needed media attention to the issue and was in no small way responsible for a resurgence in public and political activity on this issue. Thank you for the great work.

The Save False Cape Rally on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February attracted a damp but committed crowd of over one hundred who heard from John Rainbird, Val Schier, Yarrabah resident Percy Neal. Many letters to the Premier were signed and sent, and many generous donations received. Thank you to all those who attended and especially to those who helped with putting up posters. *See the article on page 7 for an update on the campaign.*

## Envirofiesta

Organising for the annual Envirofiesta extravaganza has begun in earnest and we are now calling for expressions of interest from artists, performers and business (*See Poster*). This year's event will have a well developed environment groups, businesses and issues section. I hope that improved partnerships with organisations and business will result in an entertaining and inspiring and informative day out. Drop me a line if you have any ideas or contacts for partnerships. Envirofiesta happens because the community brings it together, so don't be shy and get involved.

## Ninds Creek – Canal Development?

Ninds Creek, Coquette Point, Innisfail is the location of the latest manifestation of the Beattie Government's no-more canal estates policy. That this development is in the final approval stages is tribute to the 'flexibility' of the Beattie policy on Canal estates. The proposal is for a "loch" that will connect the estate's lake with Ninds Creek. Sounds like a canal estate to me. The site has acid sulphate concerns is considered a "key Coastal Site" under the Regional Coastal Management Plan and is part of the Estuarine Coastal Zone.

## Hinchinbrook Breakwalls - That sinking feeling!

The breakwater walls under construction at Oyster Point are falling into the deep soft silts of the Hinchinbrook Passage. Submissions highlighting this danger were ignored and the project approved. The Cardwell Shire Council has taken on this project, on behalf of the infamous Port Hinchinbrook development: why??? Costs have blown-out and the future of the breakwalls are in doubt, as is who will pay for them. For more info, see: [www.hinchinbrook.info](http://www.hinchinbrook.info).

## CAFNEC Website

Due to the excellent skills of Steve Ryan, we have been able to now keep the home page of

**[www.cafnec.org.au](http://www.cafnec.org.au)**

up to date with upcoming news and events. Whilst we are still working on updating the bulk of the site, please check the site regularly for news on events, submissions and other items of interest.

# President's report

*Ellie Bock*

## ....and the times (and climate) are a'changing ....

Dear CAFNEC members and supporters

Welcome to the first Ecotone for the new year – with its continuing challenges, emerging opportunities and hopefully positive changes – and there are many, of course, with a strong environmental focus. As the times really are a'changing this report is a bit lengthy!

Firstly I would like to extend a warm hello to new and renewing members, as well as on-going CAFNEC members. May you and your families and friends have a safe and happy 2007. It is your continuing support and contribution to CAFNEC that allows our organisation to represent important community views, input and opinions on key environmental issues and processes through our very dedicated staff and volunteers.

The Management Committee (MC) has again seen some recent changes. As members and guests who attended the 2006 CAFNEC Christmas Party will know, our capable and vastly committed past President, Di Horsburgh resigned from her Committee role in late November 2006, and fellow MC member Leanne Krueger also tendered her resignation at around the same time. We are sorry to see these wonderful people go, but fortunately for CAFNEC and the Cairns and Far North community, both women remain active in the region's conservation movement. CAFNEC certainly considers both to be key allies in on-going local environmental and planning challenges to be faced this year and beyond.

Subsequently your MC has accepted the nomination of Andrew Simmons and Bill Bray to its table. Andrew has represented CAFNEC on the Local Marine Advisory Committee in recent years, and Bill rejoins the MC following a period of generally less stress in his life. The MC is strengthened by their participation, interests and skills, and on behalf of CAFNEC, I extend a sincere welcome to both.

There are a number of key issues which will occupy the time, energies and concentration of CAFNEC staff, volunteers and MC members over the next few months, in particular:

- CAFNEC organisational review and strategic planning
- Reviewing and up-dating CAFNEC's Constitution and procedures

- Development of a Financial Security Strategy
- FNQ 2025 Regional Plan
- Climate Change

### *CAFNEC organisational review and strategic planning*

#### *Reviewing and up-dating CAFNEC's Constitution and procedures*

For the information of members, the MC has taken on a major review of the organisation including a comprehensive review of current procedural, administrative and operational functions, as well as the development of staff work plans and a Strategic Plan setting out organisational, campaign and fundraising priorities. This process will occur at the same time as a review of CAFNEC's Constitution and established protocols, and is likely to progress throughout the year until the AGM later in 2007.

The aim of the review is not to change the overall dynamic or aims of CAFNEC. It is acknowledged that these are well established and have gained widespread respect within the Australian environment movement over the past 25 years of CAFNEC's operations (in its various forms both un-incorporated and incorporated). Rather, the review aims to renew CAFNEC's vision in its transition over time from a representative forum for regional environmental groups to its current role as the FNQ region's peak environmental non-profit community organisation, and as such to bring the organisation's visions and operations into line with its actual day to day function.

As part of the review, the MC will consider any required amendment to the Constitution (dated 1993) to reflect changes to the legislation CAFNEC is established under (the Qld *Associations Incorporation Act 1981*), and to ensure the organisation's objects can enable CAFNEC to obtain continued government assistance (in particular environment-related funding). The MC will also consider recently revised Federal Government requirements in relation to CAFNEC retaining listing on the Register of Environmental Organisations.

Further information on the review process will be provided through periodic up-dates by e-mail to members, and naturally you are also welcome to contact CAFNEC directly.

### *Financial Security Strategy*

Through the Mittagong Forum (a collective of Australian environmental non-government organisations - ENGOS) CAFNEC has been fortunate to benefit from a recent initiative under the MF Financial Assistance Program 2006. Under the Program, CAFNEC has taken up the opportunity to participate in an organisational review from a fundraising perspective and to move towards developing a Financial Security Strategy.

Whilst still in its early days, your MC considers the development of such a Strategy to be critical in CAFNEC's on-going viability and in ensuring CAFNEC's capacity to have meaningful input into key regional decision-making forums and processes. Too often smaller ENGOS are forced into reacting on the run - lacking the time, energy and resources to plan and strategise for longer lasting change over time. Historically there are very sound and logical reasons for this – as all committed environmentalists appreciate, talking to brick walls has been something of an occupational hazard not to say frustrating.

Nevertheless, with the degree of heat in the current debate on critical issues like climate change, nukes, water and over-development, and the fact that a Federal election looms, the MC believes that now is the time for CAFNEC to devote time to planning for its role as a key regional change agent and to strategising how best to maximise resourcing its role. All members who are interested in contributing to a Fundraising Sub-Committee or providing input into the Strategy are welcome to leave their details with CAFNEC.

### *... and last but not least - Climate Change*

Policy makers have been given a strong message for affirmative action on climate change following the release of the latest International Panel on Climate Change 4<sup>th</sup> Assessment report released on 2 February 2007. As keen climate change watchers will know, this most recent IPCC report identifies that humans have had a very likely impact on the global climate balance since 1750, in particular during the 20<sup>th</sup> and now 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

Although changes in sea level, sea surface temperature, wind directions and strengths, extreme weather phenomena and fluctuating ice sheet compositions are also considered to be natural aspects of our evolving planet and

# EnviroFiesta

## Go Green!

its resultant climates in the context of geological time, there can now be no doubt that the actions of humans as a fossil-fuel powered species is having a marked and escalating impact on Earth's biospheres.

The world's best science has seen a rapid expansion in the range and quality of climate-related data collection, measuring, recording, analysis and projections over the past 25 years. A focus on measuring observable and quantifiable changes in the Earth's atmospheres and oceans has highlighted that humans are contributing significantly to the phenomena of global warming through emissions generated by the continuing use of fossil fuels and through land use change including agriculture. Clearly, we need to take action on climate change to pass onto future generations any kind of positive future.

The present State and Federal governments' continuing inaction on climate change is of grave concern. Our region will experience significant climate change impacts. Pressure must be maintained on all levels of government, including local government, to adopt emissions-reducing measures immediately – **THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW!**

Some members will be aware that CAFNEC Coordinator John Rainbird was selected to participate in the recently announced Al Gore Climate Change initiative. John will be active in all things related to climate change in the region. Contact him at CAFNEC to find out how you can become active in the move towards a zero-emissions future.

Watch out for dates for General Meetings and the 2007 Annual General Meeting. With the many opportunities arising during the coming year, your input will be greatly valued.

*With best regards, Ellie Bock*

### Barron Gorge and Wooroonooran National Parks

Currently draft management plans are being developed for these 2 national parks.

If you are interested in providing input or have specific information that may be useful contact John Rainbird (coord@cafneec.org.au) or Robyn Smith (robyn.smith@epa.qld.gov.au – Wooroonooran) or sarah.offner@epa.qld.gov.au – Barron Gorge)

A day filled with entertainment, colour, art and music. Things to learn, people to meet, catching up, it is a day of community, of inspiration and of support.

## It is Envirofiesta 07 “GO GREEN”

It has begun again. Planning is progressing and recruitment is the order of the day. There are over 70 days worth of volunteer work to be done just over the weekend of the festival. There are still positions needing to be filled within the coordination team. There are hundreds of positions for musicians, dancers, fashion designers, artists, circus performers, storytellers and a whole lot more.

## WE NEED YOU!

Envirofiesta has been one of CAFNEC's main FUNdraisers over the years as well as importantly one of its most public days. Last year close to two thousand people saw a face of CAFNEC. With your help we can continue to improve that in both diversity and quality.

Establishing the location at the “Little Street” park has been given much applause and the appearance of a gate fee for the first

time has also been accepted. Envirofiesta is well on its way to becoming a significant event in the greater Cairns cultural calendar as well as becoming an increasingly profitable fundraiser.

With over 200 artists of various persuasions contributing to the festival, often for free or at best receiving token costs this is easily one of the most concentrated days of art in FNQ.

The experience of being involved in a community event of this size and quality can often be life changing. Register your interest by phoning CAFNEC on 40321746 or email to [envirofiesta@cafneec.org.au](mailto:envirofiesta@cafneec.org.au). Leave us your details, your skills and interests and we will get back to you asap.

Look forward to seeing you all at ENVIROFIESTA 07 “GO GREEN”

*By Paul Christie.*



Cairns and Far North Environment Centre presents its Biggest FUND RAISER

# EnviroFiesta

4th August Go Green!  
Little St Pk, Edgehill

## Expressions of Interest

**Artists** Local Bands, Singer/Songwriters, Dancers, Fashion Designers, Cabaret Acts, Decor Artists, Roving Performers, Circus Skills, Poets, Thespians, Workshop Facilitators, and Independent Film Makers

**Businesses** Sponsorship, Partnership, Donations, Corporate & Trade Fair Stalls, Raffle Prizes, Display Boards and Cottage Markets

**Community Groups** Cultural Presentations, Story Telling, Dances and Community Stalls are available

**Crew** Coordination Team, Stage Assistants, Production Crew and Festival Volunteers

So please contact [envirofiesta@cafneec.org.au](mailto:envirofiesta@cafneec.org.au) or phone CAFNEC on 4032 1746 and leave your details. [www.envirofiesta@cafneec.org.au](http://www.envirofiesta@cafneec.org.au)

# United Nations in Cairns To Talk Tropical Forests and the Climate Crisis

## Reducing Emissions from Avoided Deforestation

By *Fiona Ryan*

Around 20% of the greenhouse gases produced by people around the globe comes from the destruction of tropical forests in developing countries. The tropical forests being cleared also contain half the world's biodiversity with thousands of species like the orangutan losing their habitat. So the obvious solution to help save the orangutan while at the same time saving millions of people from becoming climate change refugees, is to stop cutting down tropical forests. On the 15-17<sup>th</sup> of March in Cairns the United Nations held a Workshop on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation in Developing Countries.

Delegates from dozens of countries were focused on the hundreds of millions of hectares of tropical forest threatened with clearing in developing countries. Ironically, the delegates admired the beauty of the Yarrabah peninsular from the Cairns Hilton unaware that some of its coastal tropical forests are also threatened by real estate development. Fortunately, this cynical Aussie environmentalist kept this to herself.

Trees breathe in carbon dioxide and over the centuries store it as carbon in their wood and much of the carbon makes its way into the soil as the roots grow and trees branches and leaves fall and decompose. When the forest is destroyed or even disturbed much of this carbon returns to the atmosphere, to heat up the planet.

Poor countries cannot resist the money provided by the loggers and ranchers who clear the forest. A lot of forest destruction is driven by poverty. After decades of promises, carbon trading offers the prospect of real money to fund forest conservation. The Kyoto protocol is channeling billions of dollars to projects that reduce greenhouse pollution from the burgeoning industries of developing countries. However, the lions share of the Kyoto carbon credits are going to large developing countries like India and China. Countries like Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and the countries of Latin America hope to get small proportion of these funds which will be enough to help them reduce deforestation. By reducing deforestation they could punch way above their economic weight in the global effort against climate change. Their cause was aided by the high profile Stern Review on the economics of climate change by the ex World Bank economist Nicholas Stern. The Stern Review found that reducing deforestation was a cost effective and relatively quick way reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

One country, Brazil, seemed to find a lot of problems but offer few answers that would deliver the funds required to stop deforestation. When Brazil emphasized the technicality that the workshop was about reducing deforestation and not ending deforestation it seemed clear that Brazil did not want to end deforestation but other countries would be quite annoyed if Brazilian intransigence stopped them from getting support to end deforestation in their own territory.

Happily, the delegates came out of the Cairns conference on Friday with a real hope that a workable system to reduce

emissions from deforestation may be achieved before the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol begins in 2012. The next meeting will be in Bonn, Germany in May.

Avoided deforestation, as saving forests is called in the UN Climate negotiations, is a vital part of the climate change solution.

The economic analysis shows that by reducing deforestation they (developing countries) could punch way above their economic weight in the global effort against climate change.

The Australian government 'stumped' the \$200,000 dollars to host the Cairns conference. Despite not being in Kyoto, Australia was able to contribute intelligently to the non-Kyoto Protocol aspects of the process. Australia's delegates, repeatedly proposed Kyoto-like mechanisms such as harnessing private sector funds. I hope this signifies the government is re-engaging with the global community on climate change after refusing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol.

Alleviating third world poverty and saving the polar bear by saving the orangutan's home – that is just too good a deal to pass up.

*Fiona Ryan is the Climate Change Policy Analyst for The Wilderness Society and has advised environmental groups on forests and carbon issues since the UN Climate Conference in 2000.*

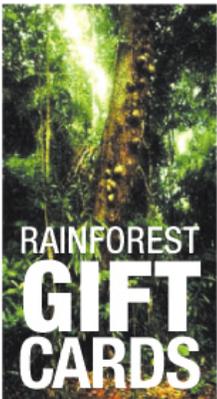


**Rainforest Rescue**

## GIVE A GIFT

THAT WILL LAST FOR GENERATIONS

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**Make a tax-deductible donation today and help save this Australian conservation icon.** Daintree Gift Cards that indicate the area of rainforest you have protected on behalf of your friends and loved ones are also available.

**ORDER A RAINFOREST GIFT CARD TO SEND TO YOUR LOVED ONES.**

Ph: 1300 763 611 Web: [www.rainforestrescue.org.au](http://www.rainforestrescue.org.au)

# False Cape Update-

The Premier has the power to act. Why does he sit on his hands?

By Steve Ryan



A clear need for intervention by the premier and regulatory reform have emerged after recent events in the Campaign. Protests on the False Cape site and months of lobbying state MPs and Ministers has revealed that only intervention by the Premier can save False Cape. State agencies are

powerless to act despite having ample grounds. The Premier has executive powers, but seemingly will only use them to facilitate development, not reign it in. What can be done to change his mind?

The work on the False Cape development site has been occurring since the end of last November, being facilitated by a council hell bent on assisting this developer to overcome all obstacles. A website promoting the development notes that a fair chunk of the residential blocks were sold to investors in the Middle East. One wonders if they know what they are buying? Investors are now being sought for the resort and seconds suburb.

In June 2006 the EPA refused approval for the destruction of a Coastal Reserve to give a road access to the development. The EPA decision has been appealed by the developer and is likely to go to court in June 2007. In this context, it is difficult to view the the granting of works approvals by the council as anything but a cynical attempt to undermine the EPA decision.

The February, representatives of CAFNEC, Save Our Slopes, Save False Cape group and more, met with the ministers for the Environment, Emergency Services, Local Government and Planning at the Community Cabinet in Atherton. Members for Barron River and Cook also attended. Warren Pitt, MP for Mulgrave, did not attend, but did send a staffer. All ministers acknowledged failures in the process and all claimed to be powerless to act.

On the issue of public safety, the minister for Emergency Services claimed there was nothing his department could do to ensure landslide and rockfall hazards were investigated as it was the responsibility of Cairns City Council to do this. Despite being aware that this has not yet occurred, he is powerless to ensure that this serious safety issue is dealt with.

The Premier, Coordinator General, and Deputy Premier all been personally approached on this issue. They are aware of it, recognise the validity of the our position but all lack the will to use their powers to act.

The Beattie Government must continue to feel the growing ire of the Cairns public. A first step in this next phase of the campaign is the release of a television commercial that will bring the issue to a wider audience. A series of public events will be held over the coming months to raise funds for the campaign and keep the public engaged and informed.

A review of the Integrated Planning Act is underway and at very least False Cape can illuminate some of the Acts many failures and provide the leverage for reform. Indeed, the consistent ministerial response has been that this campaign has done just that. However, we won't be relying their word and will continue to push for action now. With many similar old approvals waiting to come to life, the state needs to show it has the backbone to act to preserve our coasts. Please continue to pressure the Premier to act to Save False Cape – he needs to know the community of Cairns are not prepared to weather such inappropriate developments and such flawed processes which destroy our coastline and hillslopes.

## Take Action to help Save False Cape

Write to the Warren Pitt and/or the Premier and ask him to immediately intervene and stop the False Cape development.

### If you live in the Mulgrave electorate:

Hon. Warren Pitt MP  
94-96 Norman Street  
PO Box 314, Gordonvale Qld 4865  
Email: mulgrave@parliament.qld.gov.au  
Fax: 07 4056 3340

### Outside the Mulgrave Electorate:

The Premier  
Hon. Peter Beattie  
PO Box 15185  
City East  
Queensland 4002

## **Main Points about the Reef Cove development Proposal**

- Ask the premier to immediately intervene and stop the False Cape development
- you believe this is an inappropriate development for the site
- it will degrade the scenic amenity of the Cairns Scenic Rim
- the destruction of this coastal bushland should not occur
- the proposal does not comply with important relevant planning codes
- Ask why significant safety concerns regarding the potential for rockfalls have not been addressed and what he will do about it?

# The Prolonged "Big Dry" in Australia

By Glenn Walker

The prolonged "Big Dry" in Australia has battered much of our landscape, rivers and farms, particularly in the south of the country. We are now saturated with images and stories of bare-earth paddocks, bone-dry rivers and barely surviving farmers, forever reminding us of our rainfall woes and the realities of climate change. In response to this grim southern reality, images and stories of a water-abundant north are creeping into our media. We see shots of the wild rivers of northern Australia in a big wet, footage of huge sheets of water crawling to the floodplains of the Gulf of Carpentaria and hear of tens of millions of megalitres being "wasted to the sea".

It's tempting to join the dots: drought in the south, abundant water in the north; disaster in the south, hope in the north. Why don't we simply shift our farmers from the south to the north where the rain is? Why don't we tame these wild rivers and create a new fertile agricultural landscape in the north? It's tempting, but it's perilous.

The dream is based on the false perception that high annual flows from rivers indicate an area's suitability for irrigation. It's the same brand of crude thinking that has seen many of Australia's southern river systems degraded to a point of no, or extremely costly, return. The north is no irrigation oasis. The high annual flows of the rivers mask their wet/dry nature. Most of the water comes in sharp bursts over the space of a few months, with bone-dry stretches marking the rest of the year.

In Queensland, the vast plains of the Gulf of Carpentaria are the irrigation mirage of the smart state. For decades a small group of determined irrigators and politicians have waxed lyrical about the potential to grow water-guzzling crops such as cotton on the wild rivers of the Gulf, calling for more government subsidies, more dams and more water licences to kick-start their daft dream.

Not surprisingly, successive governments have remained reluctant to throw much support behind such high-risk ventures. Until now, that is. With the drought evoking visions of a water-abundant north and more

politicians recklessly joining the south-to-north dots, the Queensland Government has released plans to open the floodgates to irrigation in the Gulf.

Released in November for public comment, the draft Gulf and Mitchell water resource plans – created to ensure the "sustainable allocation" of water for the community and the environment – feature a major increase in water available for irrigation. In total, these water plans promote a 143% increase in water extracted from the Gulf planning area, and a whopping 1182% from the Mitchell River Basin. Worst affected would be the Flinders River, where new water reserves of 100,000 megalitres of water a year have been set aside, mostly for irrigation development. The Flinders River is typical of most northern tropical rivers. It is still wild and free-flowing, as yet spared the over-development of the south. Its natural flows are the heartbeat of many ecosystems. It is completely unsuitable for irrigated agriculture, with highly variable wet/dry extremes. The water earmarked for extraction from the Flinders could ruin this wild river. This is not "sustainable allocation" of water.

A sustainable water plan would recognise water is already being used by the environment, existing communities and industries. It would see there is simply no room for water-guzzling crops and river-polluting irrigation operations. A sustainable water plan would protect the natural flows of rivers such as the Flinders and the ecological assets of the Gulf country. Northern Australia's rivers cannot provide the panacea to water shortages and agricultural production woes in a prolonged dry spell.

It is time the Queensland Government shook itself free from the delusion of an irrigated Gulf country and accepted that free-flowing wild rivers, and a healthy northern Australia, are worth much more than a few irrigation bucks.

**Glenn Walker was Queensland Conservation's water policy officer, at the time of writing. He is currently the Wilderness Society's Wild Rivers Campaigner.**

## Great Place to Shop!



Next time you shop at Piccones Supa IGA, Pease Street, Manunda, don't forget to nominate CAFNEC as your benefactor for the Local Community Benefits Program.

It's easy. Just let the operator know when you are going through the checkout that you wish to nominate CAFNEC. A percentage of the dollar value (in points) of your purchase shall be credited to CAFNEC.

At the end of the nominated period, all of the points are tallied, transferred to a dollar amount and then paid to each benefactor organisation.

This is an easy opportunity to fundraise for our organisation while shopping! So we really need to let everyone know and keep reminding them to maximize our points.

**Support CAFNEC through Piccones Supa IGA on Pease Street.**



**New to CAFNEC MC - Andrew Simmons, Jeremy Little - and Bill Bray is back!**

**Jeremy Little**—Jeremy was born with a passion for the environment and followed a career in the environment, completing a science degree in ecology. Subsequently, he has also completed certificates in photography and in business management.

Jeremy spent 10 years working with State Government, including for National Parks in NSW and QLD and as an environmental consultant. He was most recently employed as senior ranger for the greater Daintree area having previously worked throughout NSW in bushfire research, biodiversity survey and research and as a ranger. He is currently undertaking a doctorate at JCU on climate change impacts on vegetation and fire dynamics.

Jeremy first moved to FNQ 9 years ago, following an interest in rain-forest ecology and has been a CAFNEC supporter since this time. He has supported professional, environment and conservation groups in formal and informal roles since childhood. He believes that non-government organisations are critical for a healthy society and is a strong advocate for social and environmental justice.

# Sustainable Transport

By Matthew Gray

Sustainable transport is a term that has been used many times by many different people, and can have just as many meanings. We do know that current modes of transport are largely unsustainable due to their reliance on non-renewable fuels and their social and environmental impacts.

Rather than thinking about sustainable transport as something absolute, we should think about different transport policies, technologies, approaches and mixes as being more sustainable or less sustainable than others. From this perspective, more sustainable transport, for example:

- has lower greenhouse gas emissions;
- emits lower levels of toxic gases, liquids or particles;
- results in lower social and ecological costs;
- consumes less (or no) non-renewable fuel;
- promotes healthy lifestyles and better physical and mental wellbeing;
- will continue to service our needs for generations to come.

Exactly which technologies or policies are most sustainable can be difficult to say, but we can take a few punts. In South East Queensland 80% of all trips are made by private motor cars; it may be even higher in less densely populated parts of Queensland. We need to reduce this by increasing the rates of cycling, walking and public transport use and car pooling.

Private motor vehicles are a major source of greenhouse gases, toxic pollutants, injuries and fatalities as well as directly killing literally millions of native animals every year, and using vast flexible affordable public transport, leaner, cleaner cars, and legislate to make this mandatory. Rail is a substantially more efficient and cleaner transport mode for long-haul freight, yet the bulk of freight in Australia is carried by road. We must invest more in rail to capitalise on this economic and environmental advantage.

Our transport options are directly linked to the broader planning framework. The development of areas is often dictated by existing transport infrastructure. In other cases, developers build facilities on outlying sites which then require roads etc to be built out there to service them. Either way, transport is a key component of how sustainable a city or region can be. The yard stick of sustainability needs to be applied to all planning and development. Whilst this is currently an aspirational objective in many government policies, there is little in the way of any mechanisms to either assess or drive this outcome.

Matthew Gray, Sustainable Transport Project Officer  
Queensland Conservation Council E: [transport@qccqld.org.au](mailto:transport@qccqld.org.au)

**John Rainbird with one of the new laptops provided through funding by the Gambling Community Benefit Fund.**



# 2006 Envirofiesta and Bike Tour

By Michael Bryan, Treasurer



Envirofiesta made a net profit of \$7905. Of this \$6180 was transferred to the CAFNEC operating account as net fundraising and \$1725 was added to the Envirofiesta reserve account which is kept to pay early bills for the next year's event.

Envirofiesta 2006 cost over \$20,000 to put on, plus a vast amount of voluntary work. It was made possible at this scale by grants of \$9,379 from Arts Queensland and \$5002 from Cairns City Council Regional Arts Development Fund, and by \$5874 collected at the gate. Fundraising came from the café, garage sale, raffle and CAFNEC stall.

The Bike Tour was on a smaller scale than in previous years. Expenses were \$12,500, not counting voluntary work and were just covered by entry fees. In addition various donations were made to the CAFNEC Gift Fund by participants totaling \$4400.

These two events not only contribute financially but bring people together and show CAFNEC activity to the public. They are vital and impressive achievements.

## VERY HIGH TECH!



New photocopier up and running! It couldn't have come at a better time. Our old photocopier was dying a slow and painful death, causing much grief and exasperation to staff. Persistence and a well constructed application finally paid off and CAFNEC was awarded a grant of \$6,100 for a digital copier from the Reef Hotel Casino Community Benefit Fund. The new copier was installed in January and has made a huge difference to our operational capacity and efficiency.

It has been noted that frustration levels in staff have also shown a marked decrease!

We wish to acknowledge the Queensland Government and Reef Casino Trust who established the Fund to financially assist local groups carry out projects and activities that make a valuable contribution to the community.

## But Wait There's More!

Technologically speaking, CAFNEC has moved ahead in leaps and bounds due to a second successful funding application. The Queensland Government's Gambling Community Benefit Fund provided \$6304.55 for the purchase of 2 new laptops, accessories and a data projector.

Our staff are now equipped to take their professionalism to a new level and we are well positioned to accommodate our volunteers and make the most of their skills.

CAFNEC wishes to thank the Queensland Government for providing financial assistance through the Gambling Community Benefit Fund. The purchase of this essential equipment would not have been possible without the funding.



# Clean Coal?

By John Rainbird

Both the Qld State and Federal governments are pinning their hopes for a solution to climate change on what they call “clean coal”, know technically as Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS). CCS has three main aspects – capturing CO<sup>2</sup> from burning coal for power, transporting the liquefied CO<sup>2</sup> and then storing that captured CO<sup>2</sup> so it doesn’t get into the atmosphere. Given the fact that there are still vast coal reserves, and coal is the main source of energy for electricity in Australia and many other countries, is the approach taken by our government valid? Let’ look at the key issues:

**Time** – there is a general consensus amongst climate scientists that if we are to avoid severe climate change, we need to achieve *deep* cuts in emissions within the next decade or so. Clean coal is still an experiment, and it will be at the very least 5-10 year before the technology is resolved. Within that time numerous coal fired power stations will be built around the world using old technology. Introducing the technology commercially on a large scale will not happen with the next to decades. Retrofitting the technology to existing power stations is one of the more difficult and costly aspects of achieving ‘clean coal’

**Cost** – CCS can only begin to be economic with a high carbon price. Yet CCS supporters, like Australia, ironically refuse to agree to the kind of targets and timetables which would put a price on carbon. Most of the world’s coal fired power stations will be using existing technology. The IPCC Special Report on CCS states “Retrofitting existing plants with CO<sub>2</sub> capture is expected to lead to higher costs and significantly reduced overall efficiencies than for newly built power plants with capture.” Whilst many people attack renewable energy because applied broadly it would push up the cost of electricity, clean coal will push up the cost of power by at least 2.5 times.

**Technical challenges** - In September 2006, ABC TV’s Catalyst program pointed out that to bury all of the CO<sup>2</sup> emitted in just one day from Australia’s 24 coal-fired power stations would require pumping into underground cavities the equivalent of a one-square kilometer lake of 200-litre drums of liquified CO<sup>2</sup> — *every day!* To make geosequestration work is an engineering feat on a scale bigger than anything we’ve ever tried in Australia.

**Safety** – whilst CO<sup>2</sup> is not toxic, it can kill by asphyxiation. We are talking about burying billions of tones of CO<sup>2</sup> underground,

and it needs to stay there FOREVER. “A sudden and large release of CO<sup>2</sup> would pose immediate dangers to human life and health, if there were exposure to concentrations of CO<sup>2</sup> greater than 7–10% by volume in air.” – IPCC Special Report on CCS.

**Distraction** – One of our main concerns with the governments approach is the fact that whilst CCS is enjoying massive support and investment, there is not a comparable investment in efficiencies and renewable technologies – they are essentially putting all their eggs in one basket. CCS may well play an important role in helping reduce emissions in the coming decades, but it will not be of much use in achieving the deep cuts needed now to try stabilise the climate. Governments should be investing heavily in efficiency and existing renewable technologies which can achieve the deep cuts required. Renewable energy can provide base load and peak load power. Wind energy forms the largest single component in Spain’s energy supply -27%. With proper support and investment in efficiencies and renewable, we might find that we can actually leave polluting technologies behind once and for all – perhaps this is why they suffer so much resistance?



## New to CAFNEC MC -

**Andrew Simmonds**—I was brought up on the Atherton Tablelands in a family integrally involved in the efforts to conserve the region’s forests during the bitter World Heritage Listing process. I discovered like minded people studying Environmental Science at Griffith University, and whilst being thoroughly successful in these studies, I also became thoroughly demoralised with the collective environmental and social justice plight under the then new Howard regime. After a number years travelling across Australia and in other parts of the world, I returned to my home territory in 2005. Feeling the changing tide of community and political will to take charge of the juggernaut of destruction global society had set in motion, I knew that my rejuvenated passion for environmental advocacy could only lead me to the heroic doors of CAFNEC.

Following my marine interests, I represent CAFNEC on the Cairns Local Marine Advisory Committee, established by GBRMPA to represent community stakeholders. It provides the Authority with a conduit for community consultation and capacity building and provides the community with an avenue to participate in the planning and policy issues faced by the Authority and to educate the wider community to marine and associated issues. I am also a member of the CAFNEC 2025 Steering committee.

I look forward to continued service to the organisation, its members and the general community in our responsibility to enforce the sort of policy and planning decisions that will facilitate sustainable community and environmental well-being.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me personally (40 370 451 / 0427 958 302 / andrewsimmo@optusnet.com.au) or at CAFNEC (project@cafnecc.org.au) with any queries or suggestions you may have which are relevant to my involvement with the organisation.

## Three Climate Messages take to stage

Three of the Al Gore Climate Messengers, John Rainbird, Sue Hayes and Sue Jenkins, gave a illustrated talk on climate change at the Jute theatre on 22 March. Over 230 people attended and gave a strong indication they wanted strong action on this critical issue. More talks will be delivered through the region - contact CAFNEC or ACF if you would like to organise a talk in your community.



Sue Jenkins, Sue Hayes and John Rainbird

# Waste not, nuclear want not

By Kevin Kamps



John Howard's nuclear task force report has proposed up to 25 large-scale atomic reactors in Australia. But electricity is merely the fleeting byproduct from reactors. The actual product is radioactive waste, which remains deadly for a million years.

These wastes have been accumulating around the world for 65 years, but we still don't know what to do with the first cupful. The best minds in nuclear science have striven to solve the dilemma, but still have not found a safe way to dispose of atomic fuel rods.

In the U.S., the supposed solution – dumping it at Yucca Mountain, Nevada – is ever more dubious. The site is geologically unsuitable, with active earthquake faults and potential volcanism. If buried there, the wastes will contaminate the drinking water supply below, ruining a farming community, endangered wildlife refuge, national park, and Native American tribe downstream. The dump-site may – and should – never open.

If reactors are built on the east coast of Australia, they will become de facto long-term storage sites for the thousands of tons of high-level radioactive waste that would be generated. If and when a nuclear sacrifice zone is opened somewhere in Australia, then waste shipments could hit the roads, rails, and waterways. The reactors, wastes stored on site, transports would all be at risk of accidents and attacks which could release catastrophic amounts of radioactivity.

Australia has the opportunity to nip these radioactive nightmares in the bud, by instead supporting efficiency and renewable energy as genuine solutions to the climate crisis.

Kevin Kamps, Nuclear Waste Specialist  
Nuclear Information & Resource Service  
Washington, DC

**CAFNEC intends to host a debate in Cairns on nuclear energy in the coming months - stay tuned!**



## Enviro-News Snippets:

Seattle mayor Greg Nickels is hopeful that the US will soon join the global effort to tackle climate change. More than 400 US mayors are committed to curbing emissions - something the White House has so far refused to do.

2007 is International Polar Year. Indigenous people of the circumpolar region are doing it tough in the face of already severe impacts of global warming, with communities having to move as the land underneath them thaws and melts. The cost to move one small village of 300 people ranges from US\$130m to US\$200m because moving means reconstructing entire water, electrical, road, airport and/or barge landing infrastructure, as well as schools and clinics.

Scientists have identified a leopard found on the South-East Asian islands of Borneo and Sumatra as a new species. Genetic and skin tests, dubbed the Bornean clouded leopard, or *Neofelis diardi*, have shown that it is al-

most as different from clouded leopards found on the Asian mainland as lions are from tigers.



The global fishing industry brought in a record US\$71.5 billion last year, most of it from ocean fisheries that lack ecological oversight. A report from the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization finds that 25 percent of ocean fisheries are virtually depleted, and 52 percent "fully exploited."

A Scottish nuclear plant operator was fined \$273,000 for dumping solid nuclear waste in a public landfill, and for discharging contaminated water into effluent pipes that washed up on local beaches for more than 20 years.

## Ecotone

Is the newsletter of the Cairns & Far North Environment Centre (CAFNEC). Ecotone is published every three months and sent to over 300 readers.

Reader contributions, including letters, are very welcome: content is subject to the editor's discretion.

### Disclaimer:

Views expressed in Ecotone are not necessarily those of CAFNEC as a whole.

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ECOTONE is produced by CAFNEC  
Edited by John Rainbird, Steve Ryan, Marie Short. Layout/Design by Renee Cashman.

## Climate Change and Energy -

*What role can energy efficiency and renewables play?*

**A presentation by Wendy Miller - Queensland Sustainable Energy Industry Development Group.**

**WHEN:** Tuesday April 17, 7-9pm

**WHERE:** JCU Crowther Lecture Theatre A3.2 (the smaller one)

**A joint CANFEC and North Queensland Climate Alliance (NQCA) presentation.**

**For more information contact:**  
[coord@cafnecc.org.au](mailto:coord@cafnecc.org.au)

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