

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR MEDIA

Wednesday, 25 July 2007



- Hero₂ is a new initiative of the Australian Rainforest Foundation that gives Australian businesses the opportunity to actively invest in protecting and extending our ancient rainforests for the future
- Rainforest in Australia now covers a very small area – 0.5 per cent of the total land areaⁱ
- Total area of rainforest in Australia is 4.214 million hectaresⁱⁱ
- Australia's rainforests are:
 - Equivalent in diversity to the most diverse areas of the Amazon basin
 - Home to many of the world's oldest flowering plants
 - A 'living laboratory' for scientific research into possible future cures for disease and chronic illness
 - Extremely effective in storing carbon for millennia, if undisturbed on protected land
- Almost every native tree and flowering plant in Australia originated in the rainforest
- Our rainforests boast incredible diversity - e.g. 25 per cent of all Australia's plant species are found in an area that comprises 0.1 per cent of Queenslandⁱⁱⁱ
- Queensland's rainforests also have the highest diversity of fauna in Australia:
 - 30 per cent of marsupials
 - 48 per cent of birds
 - 60 per cent of bats
 - 30 per cent of frogs
 - 23 per cent of reptiles
 - 65 per cent of butterflies
- Rainforest tree species planted in natural rainforest climate areas grow very quickly and usually require no watering beyond the local rainfall
- Any new plantings conducted by the Foundation are protected for the lifetime of the trees under the legal covenants that protect the land
- The Australian Greenhouse Office estimates that a single hectare of replanted tropical rainforest will 'sequester' (store), on average, more than 700 tonnes of carbon in 20 years

- The number of tree species in a single hectare of Daintree rainforest is between 190 and 270 (in the Peruvian Amazon rainforest, the maximum is 312 species; in Borneo it's 250)^{iv}
- The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations estimates that deforestation of tropical rainforests worldwide accounts for the loss of 100 species a day^v

- **Regular, tax-deductible pay-roll contributions to Hero₂ go towards:**
 - Protecting old-growth rainforests, home to some of the world's richest plant and animal life
 - Extending our rainforests by planting the right amount of new, mixed species to breathe life back into the environment
 - Recovering rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species
- For example, an employee contributing \$5 from his or her payroll each week for 12 months will protect 54m² old-growth forest; plant 20 new trees (protected for the life of the trees); and contribute \$26 to operating costs for a wildlife hospital
- Hero₂ is a unique program in that employees' pay-roll deductions can be matched by their employers to double the results achieved by the ARF on their behalf

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ⁱ NSW Department of Primary Industries: "Forest Facts: A Closer Look at the Rainforest"

ⁱⁱ Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry: "Australia's Forests at a Glance", 2007

ⁱⁱⁱ Wet Tropics Management Authority

^{iv} Ibid

^v Australian Greenhouse Office: "International Facts and Figures on the Forest Sector"