

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
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**Businesses looking for 'green creds' should save our rainforests first:  
Australian Rainforest Foundation**

**Wednesday 25 July 2007** – The Australian Rainforest Foundation today challenged businesses to be much more active in protecting and extending Australia's fragile rainforests, with the launch of its 'Hero<sub>2</sub>' environmental package at the Climate Change Summit in Sydney.

The Climate Change Summit (July 25-26) is the first Australian conference to bring business and government together to take a cold, hard look at the impact of climate change on their respective sectors, and look for creative, multi-faceted solutions that can be implemented now.

"The Climate Change Summit is an opportunity to put the spotlight on Australia's fragile rainforests, of which we have precious little left: just 0.5 per cent of our landmass. We estimate this could be as little as a quarter of what was here when Europeans landed," said Roger Phillips, CEO, Australian Rainforest Foundation.

Australia's rainforests are as diverse as any on the planet, including the Amazon basin. They are home to many of the world's oldest flowering plants and provide a 'living laboratory' for scientific research into possible medicines for disease and chronic illnesses.

"Businesses are under pressure to mitigate the impact of their operations on the environment and are increasingly seeking genuine green credentials, but I'm suggesting they're in danger of missing the forest for the trees, if they don't look first to protect the astonishing environmental treasures in their own backyard," said Phillips.

The Hero<sub>2</sub> initiative gives businesses the opportunity to actively invest in protecting and extending Australia's ancient rainforests for the future. Hero<sub>2</sub> is unique in that employee contributions via simple payroll deduction can be matched by employers to double the results.

Contributions to Hero<sub>2</sub> go towards:

- Protecting old-growth rainforests, home to some of the world's richest plant and animal life

- Extending the rainforests by planting the right amount of appropriate, mixed species to breathe life back into the environment
- Recovering rare, threatened and endangered plant and animal species that disperse the seeds of rainforest trees

When individuals or businesses sign up as a 'Hero<sub>2</sub>', the Foundation is able to plant rainforest species on land that is protected under legal agreements for the lifetime of the tree.

"Planting the right tree in the right place is critical to securing their long-term survival for maximum benefit to the environment," Phillips said.

"We hear a lot about how global warming may melt the polar ice-caps and raise sea levels, but we don't hear enough about the impact on Australia's fragile rainforests, which are also susceptible to climate change," Phillips said.

Australia's tropical rainforests are extremely sensitive to even minor changes in temperature. The CSIRO's modelling in North Queensland predicts that the habitat for many native vertebrates in highland rainforest will be reduced by more than 50% with only one degree of warming, which will put enormous pressure on those endemic species.<sup>i</sup>

- **Roger Phillips is speaking on "Selling green products and working with NGOs" at the Climate Change Summit today and is available for further comment.**

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**Media contacts:**

Rachel Harris, ph: 0422 315 580  
Anne-Marie Sparrow, ph: 0417 421 560  
Cube, ph: 02 9578 2000

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<sup>i</sup> "Sensitivity of tropical forests to climate change in the humid tropics of north Queensland", Hilbert, D.W.; Ostendorf, B.; Hopkins, M.S. (2001), *Austral Ecology* 26 (6), pp. 590-603