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Local partnerships to help our planet

The Cairns City Council has signed up as the first participant of a new program developed by the tourism industry to showcase this region's world leadership in responsible tourism.

The Planet Safe Partnership program aims to strengthen the tropical north's reputation as not only being the world's leading nature-based destination but one which is very active in ensuring the survival of the region's delicate ecosystems.

As part of the Planet Safe Partnership Program the Council has chosen to make a donation to the Australian Rainforest Foundation's new innovative Hero₂ program.

The Hero₂ initiative gives businesses, individuals and organisations the opportunity to actively invest in protecting and extending Australia's ancient rainforests for the future.

The Cairns City Council donation of \$5,000 will be used to:

1. Buy old growth rainforest - 1035 m² will be purchased in the Daintree- this will be equivalent to storing 112 tonnes equivalent of carbon dioxide.
2. Plant 375 trees to establish wildlife corridors - this will not only help endangered species such as the Cassowary by will also lock up 94 tonnes of carbon dioxide over the life of the trees.
3. Support the operation of the Cassowary hospital at Mission Beach.

"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," Roger Phillips, CEO of the Australian Rainforest Foundation said.

"The Foundation's mission is to build awareness and support for our rainforests on a global scale but to do that we also need the support of those people who enjoy this world heritage treasures in their own back yard, this commitment by Cairns City Council is a great start."

Australia's tropical rainforests are extremely sensitive to even minor changes in temperature. The CSIRO's modeling 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 endemic species.ⁱ

i "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

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