



WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

MEDIA RELEASE: WEDNESDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2007

Permit issued for Kuranda Range Road upgrade

The Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA) Board has issued a permit for the Department of Main Roads (Main Roads) to construct the Kuranda Range Road upgrade in the World Heritage Area.

The Board's decision follows several years of planning and consultation with the regional community.

WTMA executive director, Andrew Maclean, said the design put forward by Main Roads to upgrade the existing road was the most suitable option for the World Heritage Area.

"WTMA has worked closely with Main Roads to ensure that the design submitted for Board approval met the highest possible environmental standards to protect the World Heritage Area," Mr Maclean said.

Main Roads estimates the road upgrade will take 10 to 15 years. Should the State Government decide to proceed with the upgrade, the Authority has a commitment from the Department of Main Roads to provide sufficient resources to ensure high standards of environmental management and rehabilitation during the road's construction.

"Permit conditions require Main Roads to contract independent environmental auditors during the road's construction and beyond. They must submit their environmental assessments to WTMA for analysis. WTMA staff will also be allowed access to the construction site for regular inspections.

"The extensive use of bridges will protect the rainforest and watercourses and allow the canopy to grow underneath. Wildlife will be able to cross under the road safely, avoiding traffic. Larger culverts will allow watercourses to maintain more natural flows and aquatic animals will be able to move freely up and down creeks and rivers.

"The Board agreed that short-term impacts on the forest during the road's construction will be outweighed by the long term benefits for biodiversity. Rehabilitation works will start as soon as possible during the road's construction. Overall, the conservation and protection of World Heritage flora and fauna should be improved," Mr Maclean said.

The Board has received assurances from the Queensland Government for the removal of the Smithfield to Kuranda powerline to help offset the visual impact of the road. Mareeba Shire Council has also committed to protect the environmental values in the Myola area.

The WTMA permit is consistent with conditions in the recent decision by the Commonwealth Minister under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to allow the road upgrade.

1/1 ENDS

Media opportunities:

WTMA executive director Mr Andrew Maclean is available for interviews.

Contact: Deanna Belbin 4052 0531 to arrange an interview.

For further information about the permit decision:

Contact: Campbell Clarke 4052 0542.

See http://www.wettropics.gov.au/media/med_issues.html and www.kurandarangeupgrade.com