



# Australia's Tropical Rainforests

WORLD HERITAGE

## F A C T S H E E T

### World Heritage Listing

*World Heritage listing is a recognition by the international community that an area is such an outstanding example of the world's natural or cultural heritage that its conservation is of concern to all people. In order to qualify for inclusion in the World Heritage List, a nominated area must be of outstanding universal significance.*

In 1988 the Wet Tropics of Queensland joined the World Heritage list - one of a handful of sites internationally which met all four natural criteria:

- represents a major stage of the earth's evolutionary history
- provides outstanding examples of ongoing environmental processes
- contains the highest quality of natural occurrences or areas of natural beauty
- contains the most important natural areas for the conservation of the variety of life.

#### Why Australia's Tropical Rainforests?

- the forests of the Wet Tropics are like a window opening to how the world once was
- the landscape contains clues to how our world continues to evolve

- it is home to many rare and endangered plants and animals
- the Wet Tropics is a place of exceptional natural beauty.

#### Cultural Values

Although not listed for its cultural values, the Wet Tropics Management Authority:

- recognises that the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is a diverse set of living cultural landscapes
- recognises and respects that natural and cultural values are inseparable for Rainforest Aboriginal people
- recognises that Aboriginal rights and interests exist over most of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

#### Wet Tropics is home to:

35% of Australia's mammal species



28% of its frogs species



58% of its butterfly species



40% of its bird species

42% of its freshwater fish species



Millions of years in the making. Protected forever.

# AUSTRALIA'S TROPICAL RAINFORESTS WORLD HERITAGE



## Description of the Area

Australia's Tropical Rainforests World Heritage consist of tropical rainforest, open eucalypt forest, swamp and mangrove forests. In some places the Area is only a few hundred metres wide and in others as much as 50 to 60km wide. It ranges from sea level to highlands above 800m dotted with numerous isolated peaks including Mt Bartle Frere, at 1622m the highest mountain in Queensland.

The Area includes in its 3000km boundary, coastal plains and valleys

and the mountains of the Great Dividing Range. Over 1200km of scenic roads, 150 walks and 200 visitor spots feature throughout the region.

The undulating and spectacular scenery of the Atherton Tableland with its many waterfalls and crater lakes are a reminder of the region's very recent history of volcanic activity, the stories of which are still told by Rainforest Aboriginal people.

## Land Tenure

Australia's Tropical Rainforests World Heritage Area lies between Townsville and Cooktown on the north-east coast of Queensland and covers an area of 894,420 hectares.

Within the World Heritage Area's 3,000km (1,800 mile) boundary there are 2,000 plus neighbours and 733 separate parcels of land including national parks, state forest, freehold (private) land and a range of leases over public land. World Heritage listing does not affect land ownership and about 2% of the World Heritage Area remains privately owned (about 300 separate parcels of land). Because of the complex land tenure, many people ranging from private land owners to government agencies are actively involved in managing the World Heritage Area.

World Heritage listing has not changed any land tenure, and the Authority works hard to ensure landholders have the resources and support they need to properly care for their piece of World Heritage.

Local communities have benefitted from improved planning and management of the region along with the availability of additional government resources. World Heritage listing cultivates local and national pride in the property and develops feelings of national responsibility to protect the Area.

The region's economy also benefits with a study by Driml (1997) estimating tourism use of the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area at \$443 million per annum. This translates to an estimated total gross expenditure for the region including indirect flow-on effects to the local economy of \$753 million.

