



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR BARRON RIVER

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WET TROPICS MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY CELEBRATIONS

Dr CLARK (Barron River—ALP) (11.14 p.m.): Last Saturday at the Cairns Convention Centre, the Wet Tropics Management Authority celebrated the 10-year anniversary of the listing of the Wet Tropics World Heritage area. Having participated in the campaign to achieve World Heritage listing and having served on the board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority during the time when the Wet Tropics Management Plan was finalised, that was a specially enjoyable event for me. The celebrations were initiated by an address from representatives of the traditional owners, Henrietta Fourmile and Vince Mundraby, and a stunning performance from the Pamagirra dancers from Kuranda.

Other speakers included the Federal Environment Minister, Robert Hill, who took the opportunity to announce an additional \$640,000 for a variety of projects in the Wet Tropics. Significantly, in his address Environment Minister Rod Welford acknowledged the contribution to World Heritage listing of conservationists Rosemary Hill, Mike Graham and Mike Berwick; the contribution of Peter Stanton, a Department of Environment officer who subsequently received a Public Service medal for his contribution; and the contributions of forester Sam Dansey, ecologists Len Webb and Geoff Tracy, who did the original vegetation mapping of the Wet Tropics.

However, the highlight of the afternoon was the presentation of the inaugural Cassowary Awards. I take this opportunity to record my personal congratulations to all eight recipients. Those who received the inaugural silver Cassowary Awards were Joan Wright, John Donaghy, Nigel Tucker, Ken Chapman, Margaret Thorsbourne, Ann Graham, Errol Wiles and traditional owner Ernie Grant. Recipients' contributions ranged across conservation, forest rehabilitation, ecotourism and the sharing of Aboriginal knowledge of our rainforests. I do not have time to describe in detail the considerable achievements of each of those recipients. I table that information for the interest of members. I was particularly delighted to see conservationists Margaret Thorsbourne and Joan Wright being recognised, having known and admired both of those truly amazing women for many years.

It is unfortunate that there has been some adverse publicity regarding the anniversary celebrations. It would appear that there was some genuine miscommunication and misunderstanding regarding the event. Some people have been left feeling hurt, both in the authority and in the conservation movement. However, this should not detract from what was an excellent occasion that recognised the scientific and conservation battles of the past, the management of today and opportunities for tomorrow. I congratulate Tor Hundloe, his fellow Wet Tropics Management Authority board members and the staff of the authority for the occasion.

Following Saturday's event there is a strong view amongst conservationists in far-north Queensland that the role that the conservation movement played in World Heritage listing needs to be formally recognised and recorded—a sentiment that I share. Many people would not know that the campaign had its origins in the 1970s when Percy Tresize led the fight against the establishment of a woodchipping industry based on our tropical forests. I was president of the Cairns branch of the Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland during the World Heritage campaign. The role I played was a minor one compared to many of the committed conservationists whom I am proud to call my friends, including Mike Graham, Rosemary Hill, Yvonne Cunningham and Mike Berwick.

I believe that an oral history book should be written comprehensively documenting the conservation struggle to which so many people committed years of their lives in the face of bitter

opposition and personal abuse in the Bjelke-Petersen years of National Party rule in Queensland. Such a book should also document the fact that conservationists were also very much concerned about the future of timberworkers in the Wet Tropics and they recognised that the implementation of the industry compensation package was seriously flawed. I will be taking this proposal forward for consideration to the Wet Tropics Management Authority and ministerial council for their consideration.
