

**Question on Notice
No. 949
Asked on 8 June 2007**

MR WETTENHALL ASKED THE MINISTER FOR STATE DEVELOPMENT, EMPLOYMENT AND INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (MR MICKEL)—

Will he detail the government financial assistance given and committed to the Australian Tropical Forest Institute and the Tropical Herbarium at the Cairns Campus of James Cook University and explain what benefits the government expects to flow from such assistance?

ANSWER:

Tropical expertise is a sectoral area identified for initial development under the recently launched Cairns and Far North Queensland Centres of Enterprise initiative. Tropical knowledge is emerging as one of the leading industry drivers of the 21st century.

The Australian Tropical Forest Institute

In 2001-02, the State Government awarded the James Cook University \$7.814 million towards the \$9.6 million Australian Tropical Forest Institute. James Cook University is contributing \$1.66 million to the construction. CSIRO is contributing \$175,500 to operational costs (\$87,500 per annum for the first two years). This Institute, located at the James Cook University Cairns campus, will work to become a globally-recognised hub for research and management of tropical rainforest biodiversity and ecology.

The Australian Tropical Forest Institute will also house the Tropical Landscapes Joint Venture and the Australian Tropical Herbarium. The Queensland Government, the Australian Government, CSIRO and James Cook University have jointly contributed funding and support for these projects.

Australian Tropical Herbarium

The Australian Tropical Herbarium, to be located in the Australian Tropical Forest Institute, will combine the plant collections from the Australian National Herbarium at Atherton, the Queensland Herbarium at Mareeba and those at the James Cook University. The Australian Tropical Herbarium Agreement, a joint venture between CSIRO, the Queensland Government, the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage and James Cook University, took effect on 30 April 2006.

The Queensland Government, through the Department of State Development, has allocated \$920,000 towards the establishment of the Australian Tropical Herbarium which includes \$250,000 towards a state-of-the-art molecular bioscience laboratory). This laboratory will focus on tropical plant biodiversity.

By becoming a knowledge bank of tropical Australian plant and fungal diversity the Herbarium has the potential to guide biodiversity research in South-East Asia and the South Pacific region.

By combining the resources and facilities of the key partners and the critical mass of a single, comprehensive herbarium collection the Australian Tropical Forest Institute will have the potential to develop into the world's premier centre for discovering and building an understanding of tropical rainforest systems. It will attract internationally renowned scientists and internationally focussed biodiscovery industries to the region.

This will support the Queensland Government's efforts to establish Queensland as a centre for biodiscovery, which is an important component of the State's biotechnology industry and a key plank in the Smart State Strategy.