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The Editor
Newspart
Via email: editor@newsport.com.au

Dear Sir

DAINTREE DEBATE

The Douglas Shire Sustainability Group (DSSG) has recently made comment on a report by the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) about various alternative means of improving electricity supply to Daintree Coast residents, should government wish to subsidise their electricity supply.

ARENA's recommendation to extend the power grid north of the river would cost \$65 million. ARENA would not meet this cost as it is prevented by legislation from investing in anything other than renewables. High individual connection costs, not mentioned by the ARENA report, will rule out many residents from connection to the grid. Also, the report overstates the number of potential customers by 30%. Of the 900 blocks cited for connection, 300 have been bought back or transferred to the National Park.

A previous environmental assessment into the grid proposal concluded that significant conservation controls would have to be implemented if further residential development were to occur and that about half the blocks would need to remain undeveloped, to prevent significant loss of integrity of the natural habitat.

DSSG supports a solution which maximises the use of renewable energy. Our proposal is much cheaper for government at 1/3rd the price of grid power, it will not subsidise new development and is at no cost to residents. Ours is a constructive proposal and we welcome open dialogue on the issue. We support detailed analysis by the relevant authorities as required in legislation. We are confident that most residents will prefer such an approach.

A much bigger issue is the push for a major upgrade of the Bloomfield Track inevitably leading to a bridge over the Daintree, widening the road to Cape Trib with extensive earthworks in the World Heritage Area and substantial loss of tourism values to this Shire.

Yours faithfully

Didge McDonald
President