



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **TEL rescues our Kakadu**

The Cromarty Wetlands, an iconic wetland paradise south of Townsville, are often compared to the internationally renowned Kakadu. The ecosystem's rich and diverse flora and fauna could be lost to future generations if a proposal to consolidate area into a nature reserve is unsuccessful.

Peak regional tourism body Townsville Enterprise has taken up the cause, seeking financial commitments from the North Queensland community and the Federal Government before a June 30 deadline.

The pristine wetlands ecosystem has educational, environmental and ecotourism benefits to the region so Townsville Enterprise has taken an unusual role as champions committing to raise \$250,000 for its preservation and protection.

The \$250,000 represents 10% of the \$2.5 million purchase price for the wetlands – with a proposal on the table with the Federal Government's Caring for Country program to fund the balance.

Townsville Enterprise Chairman John Bearne said a proposal to sell off the area in 21 lots would go ahead in July if the Townsville community and Federal Government could not make a commitment to save it.

"We don't want the Cromarty Wetlands to become the stuff of legends – a story that parents tell their children. These wetlands are magical. They're teeming with bird life. It's an unrivalled natural habitat."

"Once these wetlands are sold off they're gone. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the community to band together to protect an iconic natural reserve that's on our doorstep."

"The wetlands play a vital environmental role that is set to become increasingly important as we move towards an economy underpinned by carbon trading. We have been in discussions with James Cook University and the Texas A&M

University regarding the feasibility of harnessing Cromarty's carbon offset abilities."

"Wetlands are recognised as one of the premier carbon offset ecosystems and community ownership will ensure this habitat is preserved in its natural state and not sold to the highest bidder."

"The Cromarty Wetlands have been hailed as Queensland's Kakadu by birding and conservation experts, and Townsville Enterprise has committed raise \$250,000 to create an iconic ecotourism product to rival the best natural sites in the world."

"The proposal would open up an as yet untapped educational resource to research centres like James Cook University and local school children," Mr Bearne said.

Mr Bearne said the role Townsville Enterprise had taken on was unusual – but that this once in a lifetime opportunity could not be passed by.

"In my knowledge this is the first time our organisation has taken such an active role in a preservation project – but we're always interested in projects that will protect our quality of life for future generations."

"Our mandate is to pursue the sustainable growth and development of the region's tourism product. We are always on the lookout for projects that will have long lasting value for the region."

"The Cromarty Wetlands project we are advocating for includes the creation of low impact tourism facilities and interpretive displays in and around the wetlands area – the project requires the purchase and consolidation of privately held properties adjoining the wetlands. We'd hate to see this finally balanced ecosystem lost to future generations"

"The tourism potential is amazing – but there are also huge educational benefits for school students and opportunities for university research in the region. James Cook University is ideally positioned to take advantage of such a diverse natural environment."

"The potential for carbon offsets and carbon trading based on the preservation of the wetlands is a great opportunity in itself – requiring future research and feasibility studies."

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