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# Future for forests in question

**Tony Grant**

CONCERNS that many of the world's most unique plant species may not survive the 21st century were raised by a prominent American scientist during a speech at James Cook University in Cairns.

Dr Peter Raven, a science and technology adviser to US President George W. Bush, spoke of the need to structure policies in a way that considered the long-term sustainabilities of ecosystems.

Dr Raven, who will address the International Congress of Entomology in Brisbane this week, said Australia and the Far North in particular was one of the richest places in the world for archaic and interesting plants and animals.

"Many of these have survived from a period of 25 million years ago when Australia was covered with moist forest," Dr Raven said.

He said while it was encouraging that steps were being taken to preserve areas such as the Daintree rainforest, more needed to be done to ensure generations would be able to appreciate them.

"In the 1980s, the entire area of moist forest along the east coast of Australia was four times the size of metropolitan Sydney.

"Today, it's about three times the size."

He said the forests were a fantastic resource, but clearly not adequate enough to base a logging or chipping industry on in the long term.

Dr Raven, who also was an adviser to former US president Bill Clinton, said Cairns and the Far North should do more to maintain its tourist attractions.

"You keep chewing up the forests and expect the tourists to keep flocking up here," he said.