



# Monitoring system developed for tropics

A new system has been developed to monitor the environmental and social impacts of visitors to the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area.

The Wet Tropics World Heritage Area is one of Australia's premier destinations for tourism and recreation.

Tourism sites in the area receive about five million visits each year by international and domestic tourists and local residents.

The Rainforest CRC, the Wet Tropics Management Authority and Tourism Queensland have developed the new Visitor Monitoring System so that land managers and the tourism industry can work together to rapidly assess the health of visitor sites and detect any impacts as soon as they begin to occur.

Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Industry, Tourism and

Resources and Member for Leichhardt Warren Entsch launched the Visitor Monitoring System at the Rainforest Dome last week.

Its three volumes include a manual which outlines the new rapid assessment monitoring program.

"Tourism and recreation provides enormous economic and social benefits for the Wet Tropics community," Mr Entsch said.

"The manual is a useful and important tool to make sure that visitors continue to enjoy their rainforest experiences and look after the environment."

The manual offers the tourism industry and visitors an opportunity to lend a hand to monitor visitor sites.

The research for this three volume Best Practice Manual was carried out by a team of James Cook University researchers, Dr Joan Bentrupperbäumer, Dr Robyn Wilson, Prof Steve

Turton, Dr Joseph Reser and Sue-El-len O'Farrell.

Prof Steve Turton, co-author of the Visitor Monitoring System, said it would complement the extensive visitor surveys already undertaken in the Wet Tropics.

The system will gather more information about how best to manage more than 180 visitor sites in the Wet Tropics which are used by about 200 commercial tour operators.

David Morgans of Tourism Queensland said tour operators were willing and able to support land management agencies by carrying out rapid assessments of the condition of visitor sites and infrastructure.

Copies of the manual can be obtained from the Rainforest CRC by phoning 4042 1246 or by ordering from their [www.rainforest-crc.jcu.edu.au](http://www.rainforest-crc.jcu.edu.au) website.